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Bases of Cattle Rustling in Momo Division, of Cameroon 1959-2020

¹ Akah Sohbih Ernest, ² Joseph Nfi Nfon, ³ Aloysius Nyuymengka Ngalim

¹ PhD Fellow/Researcher, The University of Bamenda, Cameroon

² Associate Professor, The University of Bamenda, Cameroon

³ Associate Professor, The University of Buea, Cameroon

Corresponding Author: Akah Sohbih Ernest

Abstract

The paper examines the bases of cattle rustling as it anchors on this phenomenon between the Fulani and indigenes of Momo Division of Cameroon, between 1959 and 2020. Using both primary and secondary sources as well as the thematic and chronological methods of analyses, the study revealed that the absence of collaboration between the Fulani and indigenes became a source for rustling. Again, unemployment and Poverty among Fulani herders encouraged this phenomenon, as some of them could not provide for their basic needs. In addition, illegal transhumance, self-acquisition motives and inheritance norms or practices laid the foundation for such occurrences

in Momo Division. The study also found out that; poor remuneration for herders, inefficiency of headsmen and conflicts between the Fulani and indigenes made matters worse. This activity was reinvigorated by the availability of clandestine markets and networks where rustled cattle could easily be disposed of. The study concludes that in spite of efforts made the government and other actors in minimising the problem, the activity has continued unabated and has remained an impediment to the sustainable development of the cattle industry in the area with its associated consequences.

Keywords: Cattle, Fulani, Momo Division and Rustling

Background and Setting

The practice of cattle rustling is not new as the practice is common in grazing communities in general and Momo Division in particular. There is no doubt that the cattle sub sector plays an irreplaceable socio-economic role in the economy but the practice of rustling has affected the sector negatively over the years. This practice in the Division can be trace to the migration of the Fulani into the area with their cattle in the late 1950s. With increase in the number of cattle and rise in conflicts between the Fulani (mostly headers) and indigenes (a majority of them being farmers) rustling soon erupted in the Division. The foundation of this phenomenon is ascribe to the rise of conflict and distrust between Fulani and indigenes where each group targeted the cattle of the other. This was facilitated by unemployment and poverty as well as poor remunerations offered to headsmen, working for grazers. Furthermore, new and expensive lifestyles embraced by, especially the children of pastoralists or batter still, Fulani, illegal or uncontrollable transhumance and the presence of unskilled herders as well as inadequate control of cattle during transhumance became the bases of rustling.

The development of this activity in the area and the negative social and economic effect, which accompanied it, did not leave the government and other actors in the sectors indifferent. In this direction, non-governmental organizations and the government of Cameroon initiated development schemes, most remarkably, as means of minimising the dangers such activities in the area. In this dimension, cattle conservation and crop farming were encouraged as it offered supplementary agro-economic activity for Momo residents.¹ Through the Rural Sector Development Strategy of 2005, the Government of Cameroon, in alliance with other non-governmental development agencies sponsored programs aimed at empowering both the indigenes and Fulani in the agro-industrial sector. They also encouraged a dialogue platform between the two groups and

¹ J. M. Anyang, *The Meta Myth*, (Yaounde: Kanes Center, 1999), 98.

through these approaches, they believed that they could empower the communities economically and brought renewed trust and confidence among them.

Again, the 2010 Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) also reinforced the 2005 efforts, as it was believed that these initiatives would check cattle rustling activities in the area.² In 2010 GESP, it highlighted that if rustling was not checked, the cattle economy was doom to fall in the area.³ In spite of the quest to terminate rustling, the practice has persisted over the years. It is because of this persistence that the paper revisits the bases of the activity in the area from 1959 to 2020. This is necessary to establish the profound bases of rustling which might help in igniting solutions to the minimisation of this activity in the area.

Worthy to note is the fact that Momo Division is one of the seven (7) Divisions of the North West Region of Cameroon. It is Located on latitude 5.90° 05" or 5° 54' 1.9" North of the equator and longitude 9.97° 45" or 9° 58' 28", East of the Greenwich Meridian, with an elevation of 1.312 metres (4.304 feet) height average. It is the ethnic home of the Widikum people, with Mbengwi as its Divisional Headquarter.⁴ The Division was created by Presidential decree number 68/DF/431 OF 26/09/1968 and today has five Sub Divisions; namely Mbengwi Central, Batibo, Njikwa, Ngie (Andek) and Widikum. The 2005 population statistics of the Divisions has been presented on the table below.

Population of the Various Subdivisions, Momo Division

S. No	Subdivision	Population
1	Batibo Sub Division	44619
2	Mbengwi Sub Division	31,591.
3	Ngie Sub Division	17,697
4	Njikwa Sub Division	16,634
5	Widikum Sub Division	28,152

Source: Bureau Central Recensements Études de Population (BUCREP), Yaounde: SOPECAM, 2005

The vegetation is mostly guinea savanna which is good for cattle grazing. Cattle rearing in Cameroon in general and Momo in particular.⁵ As mentioned earlier, the presence of the Fulani in the area in the 1950s laid the bases not only for grazing as a major economic activity but also for rustling. These pastoralists (Fulani) spread with their cattle over much of West Africa, from Senegal, Mali, Ivory Coast, Northern Ghana, and Nigeria in the far West Africa, over to Central Africa, to Chad, Central Africa Republic and Cameroon.⁶ They are also found in considerable numbers in Guinea Conakry, Niger, and Burkina Faso.⁷ The Cameroon Fulani are divided into two broad Fulbe groups: The Town

or sedentary Fulani and the Mbororos who are mainly nomadic or semi-nomadic pastoralists or cattle herders and the power base of the Fulani was the Northern Sahel region of Cameroon.⁸ The second group of Fulani are the Mbororo were the latter residents of Momo and the concern of the study.

Suffice to note is the fact that, from the beginning, in the late 1950s the group was made up of two Fulbe Clans: The Sariganko'en and Jaramako'en with Ardo Juli and Ardo Sabga as clan heads respectively.⁹ Over the years from the 1950's to the 1970's the Aku, a Fulani sub group, the Mbororo, and the Fulani entered Mbengwi and Momo Division in the Bamenda grassfield. This was triggered off by the attractive green savanna which offered abundant and excellent grazing grounds for their cattle. In fact the Aku, Fulani, Mbororo applied to settle and graze their cattle in Momo Division. The Fon and Chiefs of Momo Clans consented after due consultation with their collaborators. With their presence and increase in their grazing activities, the quest for rustling surfaced as collaboration with indigenes was not the best.

Absence of Collaboration, Unemployment and Poverty among Fulani Herders

The absence of collaboration amongst grazers was one of the major reasons that gave rise to cattle rustling. In spite of the sustainability of the cattle industry in Momo Division, lack of an organization among grazers and inability of the grazing community to organize a syndicate to fight, defend and protect their common interest was not healthy for rustling. Hence, inadequate cooperation amongst grazers in their grazing communities had done more harm than good to both the Fulani cattle grazers and the indigenous cattle investors.¹⁰ If grazers were well organized with breeders' cooperatives in the grazing communities, the criminal activities of cattle rustlers could have been easily checked and controlled to a greater extent.¹¹

Increase in the Number of herd-less Fulani pastoralist made matters worse. There was, and is still, no gain saying to the fact that, the early Fulani migrants settled amongst Meta crop farmers as traditional cattle grazers. They were seen as wealthy migrants who owned cattle. However, some lost much cattle due to epidemics; and draughts to the extent that they became herd-less and were employed by their fellow brothers (wealthy herdsman), to work for them. Most often, some of them ended up rustling the cattle of their masters especially when their remunerations were poor. Rustling therefore became a poverty driven action due to the increasing number of herd-less Mbororo-Fulani who were also employed by indigenes who took interest and invested in the cattle sector. Thus, employment of Fulani as

² Growth and Employment Strategy Paper; Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development (Aug. 2009), Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (2010).

³ Ibid.

⁴ MINEPIA, Ministry of Livestock Fishery and Animal Industry.

⁵ V. G. Fanzo, *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges, Volume 1 Times the Century*. London: Macmillan Education Ltd. 1989.

⁶ J. D. Fage, *A History of Africa* (Hutchinson, London, 1978), 4-6.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ File N° NW/ Q 9/9, 1995/1, "Opening Political Space in Cameroon: The Ambiguous Response of Mbororo, MBOSCUA," 1996, 5-6.

⁹ N. F. Awasom, "The Hausa and Fulani in the Bamenda Grassfields 1903-1960", University of Yaounde, 1984, 77-78.

¹⁰ Saibou Issa, *Les coupeurs de route, Histoire du banditisme rural et transfrontalier dans le bassin du lac Tchad*. Paris: Karthala, 2010.

¹¹ Peter Asaah, aged 73-year, retired veterinarian, Mbengwi, February 20th 2022.

herdsmen encouraged rustling because at times they stole cattle because of their low wage rate.

A good example is Ibrahim Musa Usmanu who migrated from Wum in Menchum Division to Mbengwi Sub Division with 135 cows in 1992. He settled precisely at Chup north in Guneku village. He came along with his mother, 3 wives and 23 children. By the year, 2002 Musa had no cattle despite the fact that he migrated with 135 cattle from Wum. Consequently, Musa had no inheritance to pass onto his children just like other pastoralist who had lost their cattle due to one reason or the other. Musa thus resorted to rustling. In order to make himself a good rustler, Musa became a cattle herdsman for other grazers. As times went on, Musa resorted to cattle theft as this was the only means through which he could take care of his large family. His activities landed him a two-year prison term in 2005.

No alternative means of livelihood within grazing communities facilitated rustling. It is but true that the higher the rate of unemployment in a society, the more unstable and complicated the economic situation with rustlers of the community. In Momo Division, cattle rustlings seem to have been aggravated. This was so because of the fact that, a majority of youths, dominated by Fulani, in the grazing communities were unemployed. This study sustains the argument that; the unemployment was partly because of the fact that the population of the young Fulani was increasing at a geometric progression. Meanwhile the herds of cattle were increasing at an arithmetic progression. Consequently, their family herds of cattle were relatively too small for the young Fulani youths to take care of their large polygamous families.

Hence, a good number of these youths remained unemployed because there was no alternative means of livelihood within their grazing communities. These youths, as young as they ended up marrying at very tender ages, as permitted and legalized by their cultural practices or ethos. However, because of their low standards of living, scarce resources and low family income level, they resort to cattle theft from wealthy cattle merchants in their grazing communities. The cattle rustling syndicate was therefore made up of the greater percentage of these unemployed youths in the various grazing communities. These married youths had to indulge in cattle theft take care of their young wives and children, most of who were under educated because of lack of enough finance.

Most Fulani pastoralists, who migrated to Mbengwi, Ngie, and Njikwa Sub Divisions, were reluctant to do any other jobs apart from rearing cattle. This was so because culturally, Fulani were talented cattle herders and seemed to have preferred such a profession than any other one available in Momo. Hence, even when they were introduced to alternative means of livelihood, most of them were reluctant embrace any other economic other than cattle rearing and they preferred rustling which was to them was like a cultural practice of testing a person's personal bravery and prowess especially when stealing from no Fulani.¹² Furthermore, most pastoralists were not educated to be self-employed. Their high rate of illiteracy was a also a handicap of gaining employment or engaging in new jobs.

A good number of Fulani respondents interviewed preferred staying far away from urban area with less job opportunities.

¹² Mallam Issa Ahmadou, aged, 60 year. Herbalist, Acha cattle market. Acha, July 15, 2018.

It was therefore easy for a non-Fulani, with the available capital, to engage in cattle grazing and the reverse was true for a Fulani who found it difficult to engage in crop farming activities and cattle rustling. Worst still, their community elders who condoned with them and did not give any severity to criminality in cattle theft activities did not often sanction these rustlers. Illegal transhumance, greed and inheritance norms also accounted for the rise of cattle rustling in Momo.

Transhumance, Self-acquisition Motives and Inheritance Norms

The inability of some cattle grazers to practice zero grazing; intensive grazing and the planting of modern improved pastures, encouraged extensive grazing and transhumance due to scarce pasture.¹³ Hence archaic traditional method of grazing made way for cattle rustling. When pasture diminished during the dry season, cattle were force to move to other areas in search of better pastures.¹⁴ During transhumance and the practice of extensive cattle grazing, the management of cattle herds at times exposes the cattle to theft and cattle rustling where there was no solid night paddock. By the end the transhumance period, some of the cattle disappear as not some of them had been rustled during such movements. These complexities that gave way to cattle theft was aggravated by the illegal transhumance attitude of the Fulani grazing communities. When cattle grazers practice extensive Transhumance without taking authorization from the Administration, cattle rustlers found it easy to steal cattle to and from their zones or areas of Transhumance.¹⁵

Under normal conditions, the administration was supposed to issue a legal document to all cattle grazers on transhumance, stating the number of cattle, the destination and the times to undertake the movement. With these transhumance visas, the inability to e control the movement of cattle from rustlers were checked. Recently the movement of cattle carcasses' from one place to another in whole or parts was associated with cattle theft. When some rustlers stole one or two cattle, they slaughtered them and put them in vehicles or taxis for quick and safe markets for sales illegally. Thus, the administrative control of the movement and number of cattle killed/slaughtered became very difficult and ineffective on government official records.

Worthy to not is the fact that another cause of cattle rustling the last few decades was the self-acquisition motives. The raids occur at any time with the aim of acquiring cattle for commercial purposes and individual gain by unfaithful *Gainakos*. While the first category of raids hinges on communal interest and was motivated by the community through social norms, the latter was based entirely on private interests and controlled by organised armed

¹³ *Voix du Paysan/Farmers Voice*, no. 617/105 of 8th June 1994.

¹⁴ Ngalm Aloysius Nyuymengka, "The Cattle Industry in the North West Province of Cameroon,1972-2003", PhD. Thesis University of Nigeria Nsukka, August 2006.

¹⁵ P. H. Gulliver, *Nomadic Movements: Courses and Implications in Pastorallism in Tropical Africa*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

groups.¹⁶ Otang Paul, the former Divisional Delegate for Ministry of Livestock Fishery and Animal Industry (MINEPIA) Momo Division posits that, "... cattle theft was coordinated by a network of syndicate individuals."¹⁷ They comprised of herdsmen, pastoralist who mismanaged and own herds of cattle, relations of the cattle owners, transporters (indigenous owners of trucks and even taxis), some technical and law enforcement authorities.

The issue of lost inheritance by Fulani pastoralist was another catalyst that instigates cattle theft. Traditionally, when the Family head of Fulani pastoralist with many cattle died, a new head of the family and community was chosen to inherit the entire household. These household include; children, women (wives) of the deceased, cattle and other properties. The loss of such inheritance by heads of the family provoked other members of the family to resort to cattle rustling in order to earn a living. It was also the obligation of wealthy Fulani pastoralist to encourage the prosperity of their grown up children by offering them cattle to start up their lives and families elsewhere. However, some of these children are unable to manage the cattle handed to them by their parents. Some went as far as selling all their inheritance in order to pay for expensive pilgrimage trips to Mecca. The negative consequence of such acts was that their traditionally nomadic families left in abject poverty. In the end, the Fulani were not sure of their next alternative source of living and so they indulged in stealing cattle from other grazers.

Poor Remuneration, Unskilled Herdsmen, Conflicts, and Available Markets

Poor remuneration for the Herds men was another basis for cattle theft. When the monthly salary paid to herdsmen was below the minimum official rate stipulated by the government, their standards of living became questionable. At the end, the herdsmen were unable to take care of their various households because their per capita income level was low. Also, the rate of literacy within the grazing communities remained relatively low and coupled with the poor nutrition and inability to obtain good health facilities, herdsmen were force to cooperate with rustlers in the stealing their master's cattle and those of nearby neighbors, in order to improve on their standards of living.¹⁸ A case in point was Bongadu Stephen Nfor, an indigene from Nso, who evolved from a herdsman to a professional butcher in Bamenda town.¹⁹

Bongadu testifies that he migrated from Nso to work as a herdsman for J. A. O Atteh cattle farm in Mbengwi at the age of 25 years. Bongadu worked for 15 years as a herdsman to Atteh but engaged in stealing Atteh's cattle from time to time. The booty was sold to butchers in Mbengwi. Each time a cow was stolen, by his Bongadu and

his cohorts, the later made sure that before informing his master that a cow was missing, it had been slaughtered and sold by the butchers in Mbengwi. Unscrupulous Butchers who were always ready to buy stolen cattle: Were motivators of the Santa-Pinyen cattle rustling cartel group, bordering Ashong in Batibo Sub Division. These Butchers, South of Momo Division, have continued buying cattle at very low prices far below the official cattle market figures over the years.

This was so because they were aware of the fact that such cattle were from doubtful sources. Thus, by buying such cheap cattle often, the butcher was sure of earning more profits in the cattle enterprise. Had it been that all butchers were in unionism not buy cattle from illegal vendors and markets that were cheaper than the official market price, cattle theft would have been controlled and properly checked. As a result, the practice continued unabated. A case in point was Alhadji Hamdalas Harouna, a wealthy cattle merchant born in Acha Tugui, who changed from a Christian to become an Islamic faithful. When interviewed orally by the researcher, Harouna revealed that he was a school dropout who grew up as a professional butcher in Momo. His father was an indigenous Meta Man who had never owned cattle.

However, Harouna, as a village butcher later on derived pleasure in buying cattle from cheap sources to slaughter and sell in his community. He made enormous or abnormal profits out of this trade more than other butchers did in Mbengwi. That notwithstanding, Harouna had once been imprisoned for cattle theft for nine months and after serving his jail term, he continued as a butcher. Because of the enormous wealth made from this activity, he decided to migrate with his entire family of four wives and nine children to Douala where he lives as cattle transporter between Acha cattle market and Douala.

The use of unskilled herdsmen especially children was also responsible for rustling. This was so because children were unskillful, when compared to adults and matured Fulani herdsmen. Their involvement exposed cattle to rustling without major difficulties. Consequentially, when children were force to accompany cattle that was grazing on transhumance, the result was higher frequency of cattle theft, in the grazing communities. Again, their inability to take care of the cattle encouraged straying of these animals in the open arenas in search of drinking water, and pasture made them preys to rustlers. The straying of cattle thus increases the rate of cattle theft amongst cattle grazers who practiced their traditional method of extensive grazing.²⁰

Worth nothing is the fact that some unskilled herdsmen who rightly or wrongly believed that cattle had been grazing well all day long and can always return home in the evening even without the herdsmen, were indirect agents for risking their stocks of saleable cattle to rustlers. As the cattle attempts to return home late in the evening without guards, some of the cattle fell prey to rustlers. Some of them could not take care of permanent fences and paddocks constructed to protect cattle from thieves as well as prevents famer-grazer quarrels.

¹⁶ John Markakis, *Resources Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, (London: Sage 1993).

¹⁷ Paul Otang, aged 55 years. Divisional Delegate MINEPIA Mbengwi, G.R.A. Mbengwi, January 3, 2019.

¹⁸ Walters Dasi Gah, Aged 53-year, Veterinary Doctor, North West Reginal Delegate MINEPIA, G.R.A Mbengwi, June 14, 2018.

¹⁹ Alhadji Salifu Njikam, 80-year, Former Assistant Government Delegate of Bamenda City Council. Bamenda, December 13, 2017.

²⁰ Aloysius Nyuymengka Ngalim, "Cattle Rearing Systems in the North West Region of Cameroon Historical Trends on Changing Techniques and Strategies", *Journal of Educational Policy and Entrepreneurial Research (JEPER)*, ISSN: 2408-770X (Print), ISSN: 2408-6231 (Online), Vol. 2, No. 5 May 2015. 175-189

They often than not did not lock up these animals or even bothered to see if the fences and paddocks were in order. Such negligence facilitated rustling and some of the animals strayed far away from their grazing zones especially in the nights, into the wrong arena for rustlers. As if that was not enough, herdsman stayed home in rainy season, allowing cattle to stray off into the hands of rustlers. This was because they believed that there was enough pasture around and so cattle could not go off to far distances in search of food and water but the reverse was true. From the forgoing discussion, one would feel that only the unskillful nature of herdsman were responsible for rustling. However, the consumption of drugs and high affinity for women by herdsman exposed cattle for rustling. With these, they could not focus on their duties as they abandoned their cattle in search of women at nights and even during the day. In relation to drugs, some of them became careless and through the influence of these products abandoned their duties resulting to the theft of cattle.

Furthermore, the Anglophone crises, which have been rocking the area since 2017, have led to increase insecurity in the area. The struggle for dominance between government forces and the separatist fighters have open up the area to rustling by both sides of the divide.²¹ These opposing groups and camps had been holding each other responsible for the rampant new waves of cattle rustling taking place during this crises period. They both use modern arms to capture cattle on transhumance or moving to the weekly cattle markets for sales in the grazing communities. This type of cattle theft has been prompted by the excessive consumption of alcohol and drugs, which has led to devastating effects on the innocent civilian population. However, there were also some reported cases of cattle theft by these groups without the influence of alcohol and high affinity for women. Rather, hatred and jealousy among cattle owners was the main reason for cattle rustling as some of them sponsored gangs to steal the cattle of their competitors, in order for them to dominate the area economically.²²

Disputes between Fulani and Non-Fulani herders was a major concern as this facilitated cattle rustling along ethnic lines. In this area, the Farmer-grazer disputes has been rife over the years and stand as an inhibiting factor to the process of well-being and development of the cattle economy, as it has given rise or intensified cattle rustling. Worth citing is the manager of the Monastery cattle ranch in Mbengwi who argued that intensified conflicts can lead to cattle rustling. This is how he puts it;

It however does not mean, just that disputes have a negative end. When well-managed, disputes can bring great benefit to the agro-pastoral communities. But when poorly managed, they can escalate into cattle rustling, violence and destruction. Whether a dispute becomes a catalyst to cattle rustling activities or an opportunity for peace and growth depends on decisions taken when it occurs.²³

²¹ Kennedy Mkutu, *Guns and Governance in the Rift Valley: Pastoralists Conflict and Small Arms*, (Oxford: James Currey, 2008).

²² J. Markakis, *Conflict and the decline of pastoralism in the Horn of Africa*, (London: Macmillan 1993).

²³ Brother Paul Anthony, 69 years. Monk Mbengwi, January 15, 2019. Cistercian Monastery Mbengwi Sub Division, Mbengwi, February 19, 2019.

Disputing claims over access to and ownership of land have led to ethnic and interethnic disputes coupled with cattle theft.²⁴ Consequently, this had and is still having a bearing on agricultural performances and aggravated the poverty situation of most grazing communities in Momo, thus provoking cattle rustling. To make matters worse, attempts to resolve these land related disputes have always followed a distinctly centralized top-down approach without consideration of the historical and cultural systems and values of the indigenous communities involved.²⁵

However, the Fulani syndrome in which Fulani wanted total control over grazing activities was detrimental to the growth of the cattle enterprise. This was so because some contemporary *Fulani* were not owners of cattle, due to their own negligence, epidemics and mismanagement. They (Fulani) resorted to cattle theft because they desired to have total control over grazing investments but it was difficult to realise. This was because some non-Fulani had invested more capital into cattle grazing than the traditionally skillful *Fulani* cattle grazers. However out of frustration, some land grabbing elite and herd-less *Fulani*, were against community solidarity in Momo Division coupled with other reasons. These groups of land grabbing elites and *Fulani* promoted cattle rustlers. Some of land grabbing indigenes even created cattle rustling syndicates, which threatened the existence of *Fulani* grazers in Momo.²⁶

Besides, who were not victims of cattle rustling from the syndicates suffered huge losses from proceeds of their sold cattle. They were often attacked and huge sums of money ceased from them on their way home from weekly markets. This often occurred when there was the absence of "Ubuntu" (communal solidarity) between the indigenes and the cattle raisers who allowed cattle to destroy their crops.²⁷ Such discord between farmers and grazers stem from competition over land which was a scarce natural resource. While grazers accused croppers for trespassing into grazing land, crop farmers on the other hand accused grazers of trespassing into farmlands.²⁸ This situation of misunderstanding of interest had evolved into discords, wars and rampant cattle theft in the grazing communities. With

²⁴ Ngwa, E.N. "Settlements, Grazier or agricultural Land: A Confrontation of interests in the North West Province of Cameroon" in *Annals of the Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences*. Department of Geography, University of Yaounde, 1981.

²⁵ C. M. Lambi and C. A. Ngwa. "Conflictual Wetland Utilisation in Ngokettujia Division, the Upper Nun Valley of Cameroon" in *Conflict Prevention, Management and resolution*, Buea, University of Buea, 2009.

²⁶ Absalom Woloa Monono, "Inter-Community Land Conflicts in the North West Region Cameroon: The Case of Bali-Nyonga and Ngten-Mbo 1885-2016." PhD. Thesis. The University of Bamenda, July 2022.

²⁷ N.W.R A File N° 30/3885/Vol. II, Farmer-Grazer Law, Presidential Decree N° 78/263 of July 3rd 1978. Brother Paul Anthony, 69 years. Monk Mbengwi, January 15, 2019. Cistercian Monastery Mbengwi Sub Division, Mbengwi, February 19, 2019.

²⁸ N. W. R. A File N° E29/12885 Vol. 1, Land Tenure System, Presidential Decree N° 76/166 of April 1976.

the outbreak of open confrontations among farmers and grazers, rustling soared, Fulani cattle were from time to time, intercepted by rustlers in neighboring communities, reducing the supply of cattle to the destined markets.²⁹ The market prices where these cattle were destined rose up very high because of the abrupt shortages of what was the original quantity of cattle expected in the destined markets.³⁰ From the above light, unscrupulous indigenous butchers and criminal traders take advantage of the illegal markets in Ashong, Ngie, Njikwa and Oshie to buy cheap meat and stolen cattle from rustlers. Such developments brought hatred and was impediments to peaceful co-existence that had been between the sedentary Fulani and indigenous³¹ especially between the Fulani, cattle rustlers and the people of Ashong, Meta, Ngie, Ngwo, and even Oshie.³²

Conclusion

The study sought to establish the bases of cattle rustling in Momo Division in the North West Region of Cameroon. Based on the findings, study found out that the poor remunerations and financial capacity of the herders and the need for better standards of living necessitate their involvement in rustling. Added to these the transhumance also laid the bases for rustling as cattle as this activity became a healthy ground such activity in Momo. Self-acquisition motives and inheritance norms, poor remuneration, unskilled headsmen, conflicts, and available markets as well as the absence of collaboration, unemployment and poverty among Fulani herders have been identified as bases for rustling. Even though the government, indigenes and Fulani of Momo Division have intensified efforts in curtailing rustling, there is the need for synergy between all actors and addressing the root causes of the problem, only then it be eradicated.

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