

AEGIS 4th European Conference on African Studies (ECAS 4)

Uppsala, Sweden 15-18 June 2011

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Abstract

Title: Civil war and high banditry as a new fact of nomads' displacement culture in C.A.R

This present paper intends to explore the survival strategy developed by men and women in the context "post" civil war in the central Africans countries in general and in the Central Africa Republic in particular.

Until now nomads are defined as people who spend their life moving around seeking for their cows' pasturage. Furthermore nomadism itself is known as a specific culture of numerous ethnic groups. So mobility/migration characterise nomads life style.

Then, this migration is a voluntary one. They migrate freely along transplanting their culture everywhere they settle: pasturing, milking, dancing (youth) and practising "*Soro*" etc.

Beside this the context of civil war in CAR has implied another and even more tragic displacement: The *Mbororo* coming in large number as refugees from Central African Republic to the Meiganga and Bertoua regions; South East of Ngaoundéré (Adamawa region of Cameroon). Due to the warlike situation in the Central African Republic, with political instability and increase criminality in the bushes the *Mbororos* have lost their cattle. Most of the herds are either stolen or taken as a tribe for the kidnapping of the *Mbororos* children.

Insecurity in the bush and civil war in Chad and in the Central Africa Republic increased the robberies' activities both in town and in the bushes where some rebels are settled. These robbers kidnap the *Mbororos*' children in the bush and ask a huge ransom otherwise the kids are certainly killed. Many children have been simply victim or killed in this sort of situation. Rebels rely on the local population in the villagers to survive if not nomads in the bushes are asked to provide them both money and food. Thus *Mbororos* have no option than moving to another place securer and saver again. This place is the Eastern and Northern Cameroon

where they confront another challenges: Marginalisation; something which contributes to reinforce or built their identity.

I should underline that the growth of the new technology such as mobile phone has played an important role in increasing the criminals' strategies (De Bruijn 2008). For example it facilitates the contact with their patrons who, living in town, guide them and gives them information about the intervention of the army after their criminal operation and attack.

What I question in this paper is how the nomads' identity such as "*Mbororoku*" is transplanted in both cases? I presume in their free movement which is nomadism, the confident to implant the culture come first while in their new situation it is marginalisation the face which contributes to reinforce their identity.

Introduction

This paper deals with the political instability which has always created a dynamic of mobility and peoples' displacement in the sub-region of Central Africa. The democratization process in that region lies on the civil wars, armed rebellions and criminality. The army is perceived as the gravedigger of democracy and security, because she is implicated in various ways in the crisis of peace in countries like Chad, Central African Republic, Congo or the Democratic Republic of Congo (De Bruijn 2008; Saibou 2008; Schilder 1994). Self interest of politicians aspiring to the presidential chair leads to the instigation of some militaries to a faction and arming desperate civilians, with the consequence of establishment of rebellions. Unfortunately rebels rely on civilians for their maintenance and supplement in finances, foods, even equipments etc. whereas in the region concerned by our research people who have means to supply them in finances are the Fulani people. They have cattle they can sell to pay the ransom. This is why we will focus on Fulani ethnic group because very often they constitute essential victims and /or actors of the situation due to their huge number, their way of life and to their economic property. In this sense (Saibou 2008:5) wrote that "in Bangui during the mutinies of 1996 against the regime of Ange-Felix Patassé, men of the armed forces often preceded the "unskilled" in ransacking the property of civilians"

Fulani people are pastoral nomads always following their cattle herds all over West-Africa from Senegal to Sudan (Boutrais 1998, Riesman 1992), from Niger to Central African Republic (C.A.R) towards Chad, Nigeria and Cameroon.

In central Africa Fulani who still practising nomadism are named *Mbororos*. Our researches rely on their present situation in the Adamaoua and Eastern region of Cameroon. They have been facing dramatic event in the C.A.R and now migrate into Cameroon. Many of them acquired refugees' status, some refuse to be assimilated to this status and other simply didn't manage to obtain it while other Cameroonians have been "refugeenise" themselves just to benefit from the WFP services.

Indeed this situation of the Mbororos reveals the issue of the place and space, displacement, community and identity embodied with borderland, frontiers and marginality in order to reevaluate such an ideal as central analytical anthropology's concepts as that of culture and idea on cultural difference (Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson 1992) even though Mbororos are those who live a life a borders crossings.

The interest of this study stand out despite of many of general theoretical works in the field of nomadic studies, one cannot say that the interpretation of the pastoral societies in the context of the (in) security and political instability has been thoroughly developed as far as variant of social transformation(Nikolay 2002) is concerned.

Our field of study covers the frontiers of Cameroon and Central Africa Republic (C.A.R.). In the followings lines I will examine the Historical background of the Fulani migration in order to understand the impact of the displacement on their culture, the sub-regional political instability for the best understanding of the facts of their present day movement and the construction of new identity thereof.

I- Fulani's migration from Nigeria to CAR towards Cameroon.

According to (Eldrige 1992) Fulani settlers entered the Adamawa from present-day Nigeria or northern Cameroon since the 13th century. These settlers and nomads were never numerous. Over time, however, the steady stream of Fulani immigrants allowed them to spring up in many areas. These early Fulbe converted to Islam sometime in the 17th century, beginning with the settled, or town, Fulbe. In 1804, Fulani in the territory and beyond were growing. In 1847, Fulani horsemen controlled territory from the Niger River to the west and the Logone to the east and from the Sahara to the north and the Sanaga River to the south to form the Sokoto Empire. The Fulani emirate was divided into districts under governors; the Adamawa Plateau fell into the Ngaoundéré subdivision.

Fulani are further subdivided into two subgroups: the sedentary, or town, Fulani and the pastoral Fulani, or Mbororo. The sedentary Fulbe are more numerous and inhabit most of the province's major towns. The pastoral Fulbe create only temporary settlements, preferring instead to range across the province and beyond with large herds of cattle. These Fulani are lighter skinned than their town brethren, tall and thin.(Regis 2003)

The close relationship between the Mbororo and their herds lends a great cultural importance to a Fulani's number of cattle, and the more heads of cattle a man has, the wealthier he is. This often leads herders to never kill their animals, however, and to keep sick animals alive for fear of losing a portion of one's net worth. This underline the high value cattle represent for them

(Adamou 2007) Thus for Mbororos, pastoralism is a subsistence pattern in which they make their living by tending herds of large animals.

Indeed, nowadays pastoralism forms depends whether a Fulani practice nomadism or transhumance.

Pastoral nomads follow a seasonal migratory pattern that can vary from year to year. The timing and destinations of migrations are determined primarily by the needs of the herd animals for water and fodder.

Transhumance pastoralists follow a cyclical pattern of migrations that usually take them to cool and grassiest in the Southern during the dry seasons and the savannah plateau in the rainy seasons. This is seasonal migration between the same two locations in which they have regular encampments or stable villages often with permanent houses.

The previous description of nomadic people's way of life should be relativized though not all pastoralist societies can be accurately described as following a nomadic or transhumance way of life. As conditions change, pastoralists usually adjust.^{i 1}

Because nomads live in areas of climatic extremes they've had to be flexible and opportunistic. Mobility allows them to profit from widely-dispersed resources whose availability varies from year to year. This has the case when nomads experienced a serious erratic rainfall crisis in 1980e following tse tse diseases in the Adamaoua region. Nomads, who made up about 10 % of Adamaoua 60.0000 population, had been so badly hit their already drastic way of life were affected. They massively follow their peers to C.A.R. "the promise land" at least at that period.

¹ www.anthropo.Palomar.edu/subsistence/sound/herbivors/mp3 consulted on the May 28, 2011 10h37

II- The impact of the Central Africa's sub-regional political instability on nomads displacement

As it is stated in Saibou's 2008 article, the stability of two countries (Cameroon and Gabon) in the central Africa region is far from being a guarantee for them for the crises happening in their neighborhoods. The consequence of the militarization of the banditry lay down on the nomads' people who must leave their places to the spaces new of them. He further writes this *"Apart from the extreme cases of the Great Lake region, the Congo, the Central African Republic or Chad constitute examples of countries where confrontation between political forces was transformed into clashes between ethnic factions within the army"* sadly these factions reinforce insecurity and interethnic conflict. Knowing that Mbororo represent the richest population in the CAR and in the same time less represented either in government or in the army, one can easily measure the tension they have to face. The (New Internationalist 1995) treating the nomads of C.A.R condition states that Nomadic peoples face many threats today, but the most serious is the attempt to stop them moving around. However this vision is considering one face of the situation. Stopping Nomads moving around is dramatic but transforming their free movement to a displacement is more drastic. Usually these cow Fulani (Mbororo) are admired for their freedom and mobility make them seem to have retained a greater of autonomy than their fellow in towns had been since the colonial time. (Regis 2003)

For a better understanding of the embroglitic² (in)security situation in sub-regional Central Africa, (Vicent Tuda Ebode 2008) has done a great analysis of interdependency of the States of the sub-region and collateral damage on its population. Politicians in this region spend their time accusing each other the arming the rebels or the arms transiting. Thus each one legitimizes the displacement of population in its neighbour country as a discharge. He write in his article that President Patassé has, in his period, accused Cameroon of serving arms transit which nearly put him down of the power³. Then he stated again that, in fact remembering the Chad role in putting president Bozizé in power, one would think that any

² Et pourtant devant le risque de déstabilisation de la zone CEMAC et afin de ramener la sérénité et la confiance dans les relations entre le Tchad et la Centrafrique, sécuriser le Président centrafricain Ange Félix Patassé, pour lui faire accepter le départ des ses allies libyens et des rebelles du MLC de Jean Pierre Mbemba, les chefs d'Etats de la CEMAC, réunis en octobre 2002 à Libreville, vont adopter des mesures militaires appropriées. Ils décident ainsi de déployer un contingent de 300 à 350 éléments en République Centrafricain, devant être composé des Gabonais, camerounais, Congolais, Equato-guinéens

³ Le président Patassé avait également, en son temps, accusé le Cameroun d'avoir servi de transit aux armes ayant failli le renverser.

weakness of Chad will have collateral effects on the redistributing of the power in CAR and then any aggravation of a situation in CAR would have repercussion in Chad⁴.

From these two statements we understand that displacement of the central Africa sub-region population is not of the politicians' concerns. They just care of their maintenance in power.

That is why when President Bozizé was asked about the return of the Mbororo refugees in their country in C.A.R, he argue that, they who have been affected by the civil war and who ran to Cameroon are not real citizens of C.A.R. they better remains in their former country which is Cameroon. In another hand, Mbororo have accused him of sending rebels to persecute and ransoming them when he was leading the rebellion. For him not only they were not real Central-africans but also they were pro Patassé; his political rival. This explains the massive massacre of nomads and their migration to Cameroon where most of them become refugees. Yet the recent dramatic chaotic of political and economic power losses in the C.A.R have created tremendous feeling of uncertainty and alienation among the displaced Mbororo.

III- The construction of new identity in the recent trend of the pastoralist settlement

The following section provides a brief overview of the Mbororo refugees of the C.A.R's post conflict living now in Cameroon. There follows an exploration of the often contradictory notion of "normal Fulaniness"⁵ and "refugeeness", which coexist in the contemporary settled community in which I did my fieldwork. Identities vary to rest of ancestry, notion of physical attribute, administrative registration as refugees. For many, cattle ownership become a nostalgic icon of their past wealth and glory.

Besides being Mbororo all of them, now they have in common the refugees status. In our recent fieldwork, we identify "type of refugees" in Mandjou in the Eastern region of Cameroon bordering C.A.R.

- Refugees who were authorities in C.A.R
- Refugees who were riches peoples in CAR

⁴ En fait lorsqu'on sait que le rôle joué par le Tchad dans l'arrivée au pouvoir du président Bozizé, on devrait s'attendre à ce que toute fragilisation du Tchad ait des effets collatéraux sur la distribution du pouvoir en Centrafrique et que toute situation aggravante en Centrafrique ait des répercussions au Tchad.

⁵ Way of beeing Fulani

- Refugees who were Ardube (plural of Ardo meaning Mbororo chief)
- The ordinary refugees who were cattle herders /nomads

I expose some cases I found relevant to the building a new identity below:

Alh Musa: ex-mayor

We visited Alh Musa several time during my stay in Mandjou. He was born in Cameroon in the Meiganga region. He is by now about seventy years old. His parents move to the C.A.R went he was a little boy. He has been to school. When he grows up registered to the herders association and become the president of that association. Few years letter on, he began politic. However the commune he belongs to is a Gbaya people commune as in CAR each commune belongs to a specific ethnic group. His success in politic as far as leading the commune was few. Nevertheless Alh Musa succeeds to become mayor of the commune. He and his staff executed a lot of development projects. They built health center and school, recruited the personnel. Alh end a mandate and win the second. Before the end of the second mandate he felt sick and went to Mora in the Extreme-North region of Cameroon for a treatment. This took him long time. Back home civil war is intensify, his commune is attack and some his family members as well. They urge him to not go back otherwise he will be killed. The rest of family members decide to migrate to Mandjou in the Eastern region of Cameroon. He joint them there and now settle down for good.

When I asked Alh Musa where can a Mbororo like him feel home? He says “whenever a nomad settles it is there his home”

Alh Musa stated that he would never go back to the C.A.R unless if the C.A.R authorities themselves request him formally. But some of his sons and grandsons went back because it is there they feel ease. Business is easier there he adds.

Alh President

Alh president is the refugees’ president in Mandjou. He is one of the few refugees who still have means (cattle) he left C.A.R very early when the civil and high banditry started. He worthy and has a good sense of leader. I first met him at the hospital registering refugees for a vaccination again meningitis. Since then I kept visiting him. Later one he told me that he is a traditional doctor as well and offered a medicine for the “blindage”

Tongo

In the Ardo Adamou's tent

We found Ardo Adamou with eight or nine persons. What touched me it was the activity these people were involving in. all of them were fabricating arrows and arcs. This tells me already from which context these come from. No! I was not right may be. After few days during a discussion they told me, that arc is their domain in their childhood. They are great hunters and chiefs guardians. These artifacts are part of their culture. Civil war has nothing to do with that.

During my stay there, I notice some conflict between the local Mbororo and refugees.

Beside the marginalization of the refugees, there is agro-pastoralist conflict with the extraordinary fact that it is not the common agro-pastoralists conflict opposite Fulani and non Fulani people.

In Tongo, refugees have started cultivating, they have what is call in Cameroon " Champ communautaire" that means many people cultivate together and share the benefit. Then what happen often is that local Mbororo cattle use to destroy refugees farms, but this is minimized. However refugees now have decided to seize local authorities or court for these cases. In Tongo there is one case in this sense going on. I am following in it various sense and impact as far as relationship between refugees and local Mbororo.

Conclusion

The growing (in) security difficulties of the Central Africa sub-region and its ultimate break up have thrown Mbororo into deep societal transformation.

Their situation has changed dramatically within the last decades as national borders become important for circulation, and national states institutions, have gained an increase importance in the organisation of life. In addition draught, warlike situation and criminality heavily influence the *Mbororo* of C.A.R and the neighbour countries today.

Here in their new place, they have developed new strategies of survival. They acquire new status and rebuilt their identity. Plus being marginalised Mbororo in C.A.R they became refugees and face new challenges in Cameroon.

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