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"Then the Fulani Herdsmen came with their Pastoral Culture, and that marked the end of our Cattle…": Perspectives on Cattle Rearing in Wungu Traditional area, Ghana

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Abstract
Ghana is experiencing declining growth in cattle, which is leading to food insecurity and a high import bill for cattle products. This study seeks to explore the perceptions of local Mamprusi cattle owners and herdsmen. The study employed ecological, cultural, and market-driven theories to position the analyses. The study used key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and case studies. The study found that Mamprusi local cattle owners do not take cattle rearing seriously after entrusting them to Fulani herdsmen, who they blame for the declining growth of the cattle. Climate change and population expansion have also contributed to the downward growth of cattle. The study also found that large-scale cattle rustling perpetrated by unknown assailants poses a serious threat to cattle growth. The study recommends the use of technology such as Global Positioning System, trackers, and drones to assist in monitoring and tracking cattle movement.

Keywords: Fulani herdsmen, Mamprusi, Cattle, herdboys, cattle owners

Introduction
In the late 1940s, during the reign of Naa Nyani, the first Fulani herdsman arrived at Wungu at the invitation of the chief to take charge of his cattle. The centuries-old use of local herdsboys to herd cattle was soon coming to an end, and Fulani

herdsmen replaced them. During the next decade, the Fulani established themselves as cattle herders and took charge of the cattle rearing of not only the chiefs but also commoners and wealthy Mamprusi who invested in cattle rearing. The Fulani positioned themselves well, took over the cattle-rearing business, and instituted careful measures that set the tone for their complete control of the cattle-rearing in the area.

The primary and direct result of the Fulani presence in Wungu traditional area was a shift in cattle management. The appropriation of cattle products like milk, cheese, cow dung, and even the welfare and sale of cattle were in the hands of the Fulani herdsmen. The Fulani herdsmen took responsibility for the fundamental cattle management duties, including their daily care, milking, treatment, and even determining which cow was available for sale and when the cattle owners should visit the kraal. The Mamprusi soon lost the skills of managing cattle, and the Fulani became coterminous with cattle in the area.

In spite of the fact that cattle remain critical to the socioeconomic development of the people, the locals believe that they are losing control and interest in cattle rearing to the Fulani herdsmen. Social science researchers have generally neglected studies into the role of Fulani herdsmen and the growth of cattle-rearing businesses among local Ghanaians. This study generally utilizes key informant interviews, focus group discussions, documentary reviews, and observations in focusing on the circumstances leading to the taking over of cattle-rearing activities by the Fulani herdsmen and their role in the articulation and growth of cattle rearing in the area.

The Wungu Traditional Area

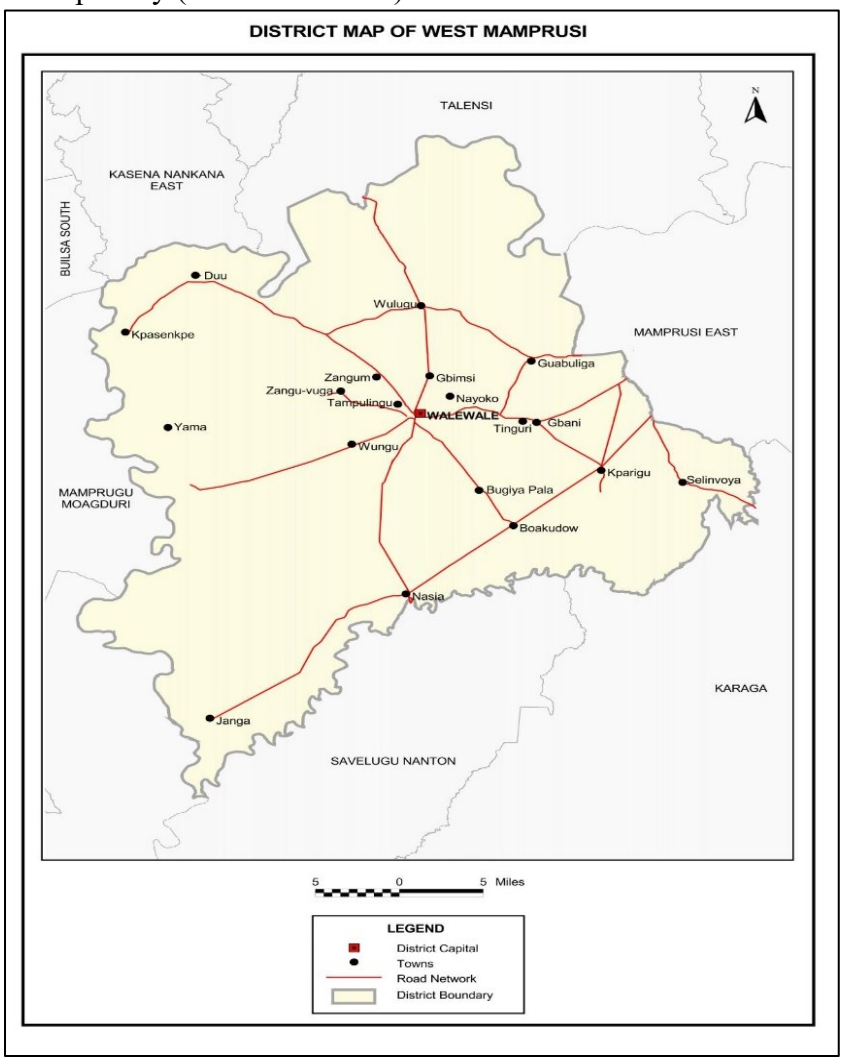
Among the most significant historical towns in Mamprugu is Wungu, whose existence dates back to the 15th century and is the traditional town of the Mamprusi in the West Mamprusi Municipal in the Northeast region of Ghana. Wungu's beginning can be traced back to the current reigning dynasty in the 18th century (Tonah 2005). It is the historical and traditional capital town and the second-largest town in the West Mamprusi Municipal (GSS, 2021). It is located six kilometers southwest of Walewale, the capital of the West Mamprusi Municipal. Wungu remains the principal and traditional center of social, political, and cultural importance. But after the Bolgatanga–Tamale trunk road was constructed and went through Walewale, Wungu lost its status as the primary economic, social, political, and administrative position to Walewale. Nevertheless, Wungu has an enviable position as the traditional provincial capital, the largest and richest province in Mamprugu, even though it has lost its modern political and commercial status to Walewale (Drucker Brown 1975).

The Wungu traditional area extends to the west, across the White Volta, and covers the Mamprugu Moagduri District, popularly known as "Overseas." The majority of these settlements are inaccessible, particularly during the wet season. The traditional

area has over fifty towns and villages, including Walewale, the municipal capital. The Wungu traditional area is relatively underdeveloped, with inadequate communication, transportation infrastructure, and medical resources.

The White Volta drains the area, and the majority of the settlements are riparian. Farming and rearing of livestock remain the major occupations of the people and opportunities for employment outside agriculture are scarce. The majority of the population is made up of peasant farmers who grow vegetables (such tomatoes, peppers, and okro), tubers (like yam, cassava, and sweet potatoes), legumes (like groundnuts, beans, and soya beans), and cereals (like maize, millet, sorghum, and rice). Other small-scale crops that are farmed are watermelon, mint, and Bambara beans. The majority of households in the area also make a living from raising small amounts of livestock and poultry (Abubakari 2022).

Chieftaincy is one of Wungu's most significant characteristics. The bulk of people who live far from the central government still value the customary authority bestowed upon the position of *naam*. The overlord of Wungu province, who enskins over 80 distinct chiefs, title holders, and elders across his province, is synonymous with the word "*naam*" (Abubakari 2008).



Source: Google Maps

Figure 2: Map of Ghana



Source: Google Maps

Who are the Fulanis?

The Fula people, commonly referred to as Fulanis, are a significant community dispersed throughout Africa, with a predominant presence in the West African region (Dunmade, 2018). As indicated above, the first Fulani to come to the area was in 1947. Subsequently, their numbers started increasing in Ghana following the Sahelian droughts in the 1980s that occasioned the depletion of pastures, the drying up of water sources for cattle, and the death of large numbers of livestock (Tonah 2006). In recent

times, the activities of Boko Haram in northern Nigeria, the attacks by ISIS, and other Islamic Jihadist and terrorist groups in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Nigeria pushed most of the Fulani into Ghana. Those in Ghana are predominantly settlers who migrated from the neighboring countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and northern Nigeria (Tonah, 2006). Most of the Fulani migrants adhered to the Islamic faith. The Fulani people predominantly choose a nomadic way of life, making them the biggest pastoral community globally since they engage in the herding of sheep, goats, and cattle (Olaniran, 2024).

Until now, the Fulani herdsmen were not materialistic and led a simple life. A Fulani family's complete belongings may be transported by a pair of donkeys. Despite their impoverished material culture, the Fulani prioritize the preservation of their racial purity, the welfare of their cow herders, their language and traditions, their ceremonial practices, and above all, their cattle (Olaniran, 2024). Raising cattle is generally not a lucrative endeavor in most regions but rather a non-profitable undertaking. The Fulani see both their offspring and the yield and growth of their cows as divine blessings; they do not perceive their efforts as "creating" these outcomes but rather as preserving and nurturing them. Cattle possess a heightened sensitivity to perilous creatures, and their acute olfactory abilities enable them to discern the whereabouts of water even when it has precipitated at considerable distances. Each individual cow is aware of its own name and can answer either individually or collectively with the rest of the herd (Dunmade, 2018). The Fulani's prioritization of the well-being and security of their livestock over their own convenience and comfort is a valuable advantage during the current period of intense economic strain in the Sahelian countries (Dunmade, 2018).

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The escalation of accusations against the Fulani herdsmen for causing the decline in cattle growth, as observed in the three case studies presented could be explained in terms of cultural, ecological, environmental and market driven forces. Olaniyan and Yahaya (2016) have explained cattle rustling in terms of pastoral culture and climate change. Prior to the 1990s, the dominant explanatory model linked livestock theft to the cultural traditions of pastoralists or to the impact of ecology on pastoralism. During this period, livestock raiding was limited to specific areas, occurred during certain times of the year, and involved the use of predominantly traditional weaponry. The amount of violence associated with these raids was relatively minimal. While raiding may have seemed uncontrolled, it was really regulated by acceptable customary standards of engagement among the pastoralist communities (Triche, 2014). In the cases presented above, there have not been instances where violence was applied to take away cattle; the frequent accusation of herders for missing cattle may have lent credence to the pastoral cultural practice. Though violence had not been applied yet in

stealing cattle, as in the case of Nigeria, the Fulani herdsmen themselves mentioned that they had sighted other pastoralists holding powerful weapons. These people may be renegades of ISIS, Boko Haram, or other terrorists who have come to take advantage of the peaceful environment of Ghana.

The second explanatory model was the presence of a market that facilitated the stealing and sale of stock and attracted individuals who were not traditionally involved in cattle rearing (Okoli and Okpaleke 2014). With the improvement in transportation infrastructure, the introduction of tricycles, the expansion of cities, and the increasing demand for meat in restaurants, hotels, fast food joints, eateries, and 'chop bars', it is relatively easier to steal and dispose of stolen cattle. This could have encouraged criminals without pastoral backgrounds to engage in cattle rustling.

The act of stealing cattle could also be motivated by the concept of localized "stock redistribution" among participating pastoralists (Olaniyan and Yahaya, 2016), and this activity could be explained in the first case study, where Mba Yidana cattle were taken away by a pastoral Fulani he engaged. All efforts to locate the cattle failed. They could have been sent across the borders to Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Togo Benin, or Nigeria, as we saw in the third case study. This translocational and international nature of moving cattle is completely strange to local cattle breeders.

The third explanatory model is the impact of climate change. For the past decade, climate change has been widely associated with the declining growth of cattle (Scheffran et al. 2012). Climate change occasioned the decreasing pasture and water for cattle, the increasing farmer-herder conflicts, the prolonged transhumance, and the cross-border migration of cattle. As the herders explained, cattle rearing is increasingly unattractive and difficult. They attributed this to climate change.

Livestock rearing before the Advent of the Fulani Herdsmen

Livestock rearing, particularly cattle, sheep, and goats, has been part of the Mamprusi agricultural system since antiquity. According to Mba Issah, a 78 years old farmer at Wungu:

> Cattle were kept by wealthy people and some title men who had enough manpower in their homes, especially young boys and men. Cattle required full daily attention and commitment. As a result, if you did not have young men who would take care of them, it would be difficult to keep them. In the 1940s, it was common to see three or four households pulling their young boys together to take care of their cattle. The young herders could arrange, among themselves, to herd the cattle in turns, maybe 3-4 days or weekly, depending on their arrangement. Pastures were everywhere, and they needed not to go far away. Farming was labor intensive, and farm sizes were relatively

> smaller. So there was vast grassland for grazing. The only dangers were wild animals, such as hyenas and lions. Occasionally, tsetse flies, snakes and cattle diseases were inimical to cattle rearing. When the herdboys were grown between 18 and 22 years old, they were relieved of herding responsibilities and moved to farming.

Some of the respondents and the participants in the focus groups corroborated Mba Issah's above account. Cattle rearing was purely an internal household issue. Cattle owners had the opportunity to check the cattle daily. When a cow was sick or missing, it was immediately detected, and measures were taken to contain that.

From the interviews and the FGDs, it was revealed that cattle theft was very rare. The only danger to them was disease and wild animals sometimes. They added that, during the dry season, herdsboys were not obliged to follow the cattle daily. Calves were tethered while their mothers went to graze and returned to them. In some instances, cattle could go out for weeks and sometimes months but would eventually be returned home (Olaniran, 2024).

They indicated that it was common for strayed cattle from faraway villages to join their cattle home, most especially bulls. They were normally allowed to follow the cattle, sometimes for weeks or months, until the owners discovered them and took them back. If their owners did not show up, they were given to the chief of the village. The respondents indicated that, apart from milk, live cattle were sold outside the villages. Specific cattle traders bought them and transported them as far as Tamale, Techiman, or Kumasi for sale. It was not economical for them to transport one or two cows. Usually, the cattle dealers would buy cows and wait until the number was sufficient to transport them to the markets for sale. It was not easy for one to steal a cow and sell it. How to keep it and hide it from the owners for weeks was a problem. Secondly, the danger of following it in the bushes at night was scary, and thirdly, if your family was not known to have cattle, and they found you selling a cow, they would report you.

The study further gathered that cattle were not kept for consumption by the family except when it was slaughtered for rituals. Cattle were kept for 5 main purposes: 1. First and foremost, for economic reasons, as a store of wealth, they could be sold at any time when the family needed money to buy food, contest for chieftaincy titles, pay for health or treatment of family members, marry off their sons and daughters, or to buy a tangible such a tractor, a grinding mill or a vehicle. 2. For rituals, such as the funerals of a great chief or a wealthy person, for sacrifices to the community gods and ancestors, on rare occasions. 3. For prestige and in trust of the family. 4. For transportation and farming, and 5. Muslims make sacrifices during the Eid ul Adha festival or sell cattle to embark on a pilgrimage to Makkah, Saudi Arabia.

The advent of Western Education and the end of the local herdsboys

The first primary school to be established in the area was the Wungu Primary. The first batch was enrolled in September 1947. Although some natives of Wungu had already attended school at Gambaga, which was the first to get primary school as far back as 1911, now that the primary school was in Wungu, the colonial Government compelled the chief, who in turn pressured his elders to send their children of school-going age to school. So, every year, new students were recruited at the chief palace.

The chief of Wungu at that time was Naa Nyanni Kariwani Wuni, who sent his children to school, even when the school was not in his village. So, when the school was established in Wungu, the chief sent more of his children to school. At that time, the colonial authority obligated chiefs to enroll their children in school. The chief himself enrolled his children and encouraged other households to send their children to school. That means most of the children who would serve as herdboys were in school. To fill this vacuum, the chief recruited the first Fulani herdsman to take care of his cattle and those of his family members (Tonah, 2005). This was a great relief to the herdsboys. Herding was considered a difficult task because the cattle must be sent to graze every day. There is no holiday, and even on occasions such as festival days when everybody is at home, herdsboys must go to the bush with the cattle. Running after difficult cows and bulls to control them and searching for missing cows in the bush could best be done by younger people or pastoralists.

In those days, they used to plant early millet around the houses. To avoid leading the cattle into people's crops, the Fulani Naa Nyanni decided to locate his camp on the outskirts of the village. In the years that followed, other wealthy people with cattle also hired Fulani herdsmen to come and take care of their cattle. This was how the Fulani gradually took over the herding business in the area.

The system of engaging Fulani herdsmen was flexible and simple. If you had one or a few cattle, you could come together to form a bigger herd that would require the services of a herdsman. Under this system, women could own cattle. The Mamprusi family structure was such that women did not have control over the family labor, and so could not keep their own cattle. Now, with the Fulani herdsmen taking care of the cattle, they could buy cattle and leave them under the care of the Fulani herdsmen. Though it was not every child of school-going age who was in school, children were freed from herding family cattle.

Then, the Fulani herdsmen took control over the herding business: The declining fortunes of cattle

Tonah (2005) notes in his studies of Fulani in Ghana that the herdsmen were engaged under simple conditions. The majority of them were not on salary or regular wages. They are allowed to milk and use the milk for household consumption and sell the

surplus for income. They also cultivate crops around their settlements and keep small ruminants and poultry such as goats, sheep, fowls, genuine fowls, and darks. Additional occupations of the Fulani people include various crafts, such as the art of rope making and the skill of calabash carving. Their nomadic lifestyle accounts for their lack of complex material culture, as they believe that large and weighty belongings require a fixed abode (Olaniran, 2024).

Mba Issah notes that:

> During the period leading to the early 1990s, the Fulani herdsmen were not too materialistic and led a simple life. They were genuine and honest. Whenever strayed cattle joined them, they declared them immediately to the head of the kraal. So, cattle theft and cattle rustling were not known in our society. From the 1990s onwards, we started hearing increasing reports of missing cattle, cattle theft, and cattle dying. In some instances, Fulani herdsmen were involved in stealing the cattle under their care. Sometimes, they would sell the cows to cattle dealers. When they are sure that the stolen cows are gone, then they report to the cattle owners. Sometimes, they took part in the search for the missing cattle in the bushes, knowing very well that they had sold the cattle.

Most of our respondents shared Mba Issah's views during the FGDs. It was observed that this period coincided with the construction of the Bolgatanga -Tamale highway, and there were improved means of transportation, which facilitated the faster transportation of cattle to different parts of Ghana for sale. This period also marked the growth and expansion of urban towns such as Walewale, Bolgatanga, and Tamale, where restaurants, chop bars,' hotels, and butchering shops demanded more meat to serve their clients. Electricity was extended to the north in the early 1990s, and businesses and households bought refrigerators that could store large quantities of meat and other perishable foodstuff. The above-mentioned created the necessary and fertile environment for stolen cattle to be disposed of with ease.

In all our FGDs, participants indicated that most households used to have cattle. Cattle rearing was not only lucrative but also a strong source of economic security and prestige. It was everyone's dream to have cattle. In his earlier studies, Tonah (2005:190) observed that 'Although the Mamprusi is largely an agricultural population, every individual aspires to acquire a head of livestock during his or her lifetime.' This underscores the importance of livestock in the Mamprusi society.

Mba Issah further remarked that "when we were using ourselves to take care of our cattle, there was significant growth in the numbers of the cattle. Though there were

poor veterinary services, there were minimal cattle deaths and theft. Then the Fulani herdsmen came with their pastoral culture, and that marked the end of our cattle ."

Our informants and participants at the FGDs widely shared these views. One of the participants in an FGD at Zangu-Yakura remarked: "…Let us be realistic. Just us, our people run to Europe, America, Canada, and the rest, seeking greener pastures; the Fulani herdsmen also come here to develop themselves". This expression was similar to the finding of Tonah (2005), about 19 years ago, when his respondents said, "Wungu is like the USA of the Fulani. Any Fulani who comes to the area will get rich in no time" (Tonah, 2005:202). Similar concerns about how the Fulani are richer than the indigenes were expressed in another FGD at Wungu. A prominent participant remarked:

> "…If you want to know that the Fulani are richer than the indigenes, you examine the motorbikes they are using. Until the past 10 years or so, when politicians started sending some indigenes to Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj, all the four Alhajis in Wungu were Fulani. If they were not rich, how could they have embarked on this journey?" he asked.

In no particular order of importance, the following is a summary of some of the claims participants adduced to the declining fortunes of cattle rearing in the area: our cows no longer give birth to twins. According to them, this is not really the case. They believed that their cows do deliver twins, but the herdsmen usually hide them and present only one. Over-milking of cows leads to the death of the calves, frequently reported missing cattle, sometimes in large numbers, frequent destruction of crops, and payment of compensation and poor attention for the cattle.

Interviews with former local herdboys revealed that the task of herding was a difficult task, but it was still better because their cattle were growing better than now. 'Although there were poor veterinary services and technology, the cattle were not dying and missing at the rate we experienced under the Fulani herdsmen, a participant remarked. Another participant, Mr. Tia, observes:

> In our section, there were six kraals, and the smallest one had 15 cows, while the largest kraal, Nba Zangran's house, had about 137 cattle. Now, it is only Mba Zangrana's family who has cattle, and I don't believe they have up to 50 cattle. Most of these families have no cow as of now. To the best of my memory, there had never been any outbreak of cattle disease that claimed their lives. About 50 years down the lane, if the cattle were not multiplying, at least, they should have remained the same. As we talk now, we don't have a single cow

> in our family. Where have all these cattle gone? Dead or stolen! only a few that we used ourselves.

The above account by Mr. Tia was corroborated by other former local herdsboys. When asked what happened to the cattle, they explained that they kept getting reports from the herdsmen about their missing or death. They claimed that in some cases, the Fulani herder would bring them the horns of a dead cow and show them as evidence of its death. They further alleged that sometimes, a herdsman would send the cow owner to a place where a certain cow died, decayed, or decomposed and told you it was your cow. 'In that decomposed state, it would be difficult to tell whether that was your cow or not. They added. "It is possible that they may show that same decomposed body to two or more cattle owners in order to prepare their minds for their missing cows," he added. 'To assure the cow owner that the cow is actually missing, the herdsman would join in searching for the missing cow after they have sold and spent the money'. They alleged.

When asked why they did not retrieve the remaining cattle and rear them, they unanimously said they could no longer take care of them. They claimed that all their children of cattle herding age are in school, and the mature ones cannot follow the cattle. They seem to place a higher premium on crop farming than on rearing cattle. The following sections present three interrelated but different case studies of the cattle crisis.

The stolen Kraal at Zangu-Yakura

In January 2011, Mba Yidana at Zangu-Yakura went to visit his cattle, which were under the care of a Fulani herdsman, called Musah, whose hute was located on the outskirts of the village, about half a kilometer from Mba Yidana's house. To his dismay, the hute was empty. The Fulani herdsman, Musah, and his wife and three children were nowhere to be found. The kraal, which was attached to the hute was empty. There was no single cow. As related by Mba Yidana:

> I stood there for about one hour trying to figure out what could have been the case. The Fulani normally did not send the cattle early for grazing in the mornings. Where could he have been? I wondered. I dashed into one of their hutes, and it was empty; they had taken all their belongings. I came out and dashed into the adjacent hut and found nothing inside! Those days, neither I nor the herdsman had a phone. I came out and walked to the next Fulani settlement, which was about half a kilometer away. That was the settlement of Idrisa, another Fulani herdsman who had been living in the village for about 10 years. Fortunately, Idrisa was present. In a shaky voice, I asked

him whether he knew the whereabouts of Musah, and he said no. He added that for some days now, he had not seen him. I came back to the place of Musah with Idrisa. We walked around the yard and entered their empty hutes again, just to confirm my previous observation. By this time, a few other people from the village joined us. One of them remarked that for about three days now, he had been passing by Musha's hutes and there was no sign of their presence. I went back to the village and reported the case to the chief and some elders. Immediately, three search parties were formed. They took their guns, machetes, bows, and arrows and headed into the bushes in different directions in search of the cattle and the herdsman. Some other young men were sent to the neighboring towns and villages, as far as Bolgatanga, Bawku, Zebila, Navrongo Paga, and Sandema in the Upper East Region. Another team went to the east as far as Gambaga, Langbensi, and Nalerigu and their environs. The third team headed southward to Tamale, Savelugu Diari, Karaga, and their environs. Part of their duties was to search in the markets, butchers' shops, and other places they suspected. All these search parties returned home three to one week later with no information about the cattle and the herdsman. I set off together with some family friends and went further into the bush, towns, and villages, as far as Kpasenkpe, Kunkwa, Yagaba, Kubori in the Mamprugu Muagduri district in search of the Fulani herdsman and the cattle. We dispatched two young men, including my son, who knew the cattle further down south to important market centers such as Buipe (220km), Kintampo (311.5km), Techiman(384.8km), and Kumasi (523.1 km). While the search was going on, we resorted to divination, mallams, pacifying our gods and ancestors, and went to juju men with the hope of getting spiritual help to find the cattle. As we went around, we were asking the local people and other Fulani herdsmen we met for clues and information. It was all in vain. We came back with nothing.

It was difficult to come to terms with what happened. The whole kraal of 138 cows missing! It was difficult to comprehend. My wives and children were crying, and the whole village was thrown into mourning. We continued the search and followed some hints and intelligence for nearly three months and eventually gave up. We all had to come to the painful realization that the cattle were gone. The

> cattle that were the embodiment of everything in life, the cattle that were inherited from our ancestors, were all gone just like that.

The above account by Mba Yidana, represents one of the few cases of cattle rustling in the area. He added that the stealing of his cattle has impoverished his family, that he has never bought a cow ever since, and that he has no intention of buying cows now and in the future. Their lifelong savings, including those that were handed down to him by his father through his grandfather, were gone just like that. He says it was so traumatizing and devastating to contain that. He added that he used to experience cattle theft every year. Sometimes between three to five cows in a year, but not in large numbers like this.

The circumstances under which Musah, the herdsman, was engaged show that Mba Yidana did not do due diligence. The background of Musah was not clear. His records and his place of origin were not known to Mba Yidana. When we asked Mba Yidana how he got that Fulani herdsman, he said:

> Hmm, the Fulani, Yakobu, who was herding my cattle, left after I had problems with him regarding how he was handling the cattle. He was not taking good care of the cattle, and I used to lose cows every year. He was overmilking the cows, and the calves were dying. After he left, a friend of mine recommended Musah to me. He met him at Walewale market and said we needed a Fulani herdsman to take care of cattle. Idrisa accepted the invitation and came to take over the cattle. He claimed he was from Zebila in the Upper East Region. Our checks showed that he only sojourned there temporarily and left. We heard he was from Burkina Faso, but the exact village or place of his origin was not known. Even the Fulani who were here claimed they did not know his place of origin.

Mba Yidana added that Musah has been heading his cattle for the past five years. He says that after the missing cattle, he went to Zebila and its environs and asked his fellow Fulanis, and nobody seemed to know him.

Most of the cattle losses in the area end without being found. Though they could be missing in small numbers from different kraals, they are not found, so they continue to contribute to greater frustrations and dissolution on the part of the cattle owners.

Illegal sale of Cattle to Multiple people: The case of Amadu

In December 2013, a Fulani herdsman at Wungu, called Amadu, who had been herding cattle belonging to different people, allegedly sold most of the cattle to different people. Some of them were taken away while others were still under his care. Amadu

took over the herding responsibility from his late father, Braimah, who had been in Wungu since 1974. Some of the people who bought the cattle from Amadu, such as cattle traders and butchers, took them away from the blind side of their real owners. But Amadu frequently claimed that such cattle were either missing in the bush, died, or stolen by unknown assailants. When the news eventually broke out about two people arguing over the ownership of some cows under Amadu's care, all those who had cattle in the kraal gathered there, and there was chaos and pandemonium. In the process, Amadu sneaked and ran away and never returned. The case was reported to the chief and the police, and all efforts to locate him proved futile. Amadu was still at large at the time we were conducting this research. Afa Alhassa, one of my informants and a victim, narrates this:

> Amadu allegedly sold some of the breeder cows to different people who left them under his care. For a long time, some particular cows he sold to multiple people at their blind side. We did not know because we visited the cattle at different times. For instance, when Mr A comes to check his cattle in the kraal, Amadu the herdsman, would show cows X, Y, and Z to him as Mr A's cattle. Another time, Mr. B would come to check on his cattle, and he would show the same cows X, Y, and Z to Mr B and so on. One day, luck eluded him when two of the cattle owners came at the same time to visit their cattle. One of them came early and Amadu took him to see his cattle. Amadu showed him some cattle belonging to the firstcomer. While they were still at the kraal, the second man arrived. He also demanded to see his cattle. Amadu showed him some of the cattle he just presented to the first man. In the process, the two men realized that some of the cattle the herdsman showed to them belonged to both of them at the same time. The two men started arguing and demanded that the Fulani must clarify the ownership. In the process, the herdsman told them that some of the cattle went to the bush and did not return and that they should come back the following day. Word quickly spread around, and by the following day, all those who had cattle in that kraal gathered there only to realize that Amadu had run away the previous night.
>
> Multiple people made claims and counterclaims over ownership of the same cattle. Tensions were high as people began to pull daggers at each other. The matter was reported to the chief of Wungu, Na Zori Sulemana Saaka, and the police. They ordered that we all cease claiming ownership until he resolves the case.

> Some of the aggrieved owners could still not agree and issued all manner of threats. The case was eventually moved to a higher authority, the Nayiri, Naa Bohagu Abdulai Mahami Sheriga, the overlord of the Mamprusi Traditional area. The Nayiri summoned all the disputants at Nalerigu and listened to their claims and counterclaims. In the end, he asked us to go back to the police to resolve the case. He warned that we must accept the outcome of the resolution.
>
> When we came back, the police called all of us to their office at Walewale and interrogated each of us to explain how we acquired the cattle and the number of cattle each of us had. A date was appointed, and Walewale Police, Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), Mr Simon Peter Akabati, and his men came and countered all the remaining cattle. The police ruled that all those who bought their cows from the local people should come with them as witnesses. But whoever bought a cow from the bolted Fulani has no cow. Some aggrieved persons, including Mr Fuseini Bawa, did not take this ruling kindly. I used to have 19 cattle, but I was given 7 in the end. The next was Mr Mushie, who was given 6 cows, and then Mr Bugrow got 5 cows in that order.

Our interview with the chief revealed that he intervened and ordered everybody to cease claiming for any cow until he resolved that case. However, some of these people did not take this kindly and insisted that they must claim their cattle in full. One such person was Mr Fuseini Bawa from Walewale, who claimed that he had 26 of the cattle that belonged to him. Five other people claimed that some of the 26 cattle Mr Fuseini claimed also belonged to them. When Mr. Fuseini was asked about the source of his cattle, he said he bought them from the runaway Fulani. As a result, Mr. Fuseini was not given anything.

Our interviews with Mr. Fuseini Bawa revealed that he had 26 cattle with the Fulani. He said he had not bought them in bulk but piecemeal for over 8 years. He claimed some of the younger ones were delivered by the older cows. He said he bought them from the runaway Fulani, who was a friend, too. 'In the end, I was denied all my cattle because they claimed I did not have a witness'.

Another important person who played a critical role in resolving the conflict was the Assemblyman for Nayiri Fong Electoral Area, Hon. Nashiru Alhassan. In an interview with him, he said: 'When the news broke out, I went there after Amadu, the herder at the center of the controversy, had escaped. We realized that in the absence of Amadu to resolve the puzzle, some dubious people wanted to take advantage of the situation to make claims.'

He corroborated Afa Alhassan's narration presented above and added that tensions were so high that they had to report the matter to Nayiri and the police. This was necessary because some of those who alleged to have cattle there were not ready to compromise their stance.

The Assemblyman added that, though most of the disputants were not satisfied with the decision and the sharing formula, it was still better than losing everything. At the time we were conducting this research, the Walewale Police Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), Mr Simon Peter Akabati, was transferred to Accra and was not available for interviews. However, our checks with the police records revealed that the disputed cattle were 249, and those who claimed ownership were 37 in number.

Cattle stolen in the West Mamprusi and found near Manigri in the Republic of Benin

In May 2016, cattle numbering 432 under Alhaji Hamidu's care were stolen in the bush near Mishio, a farming community in the West Mamprusi Municipality, on the fringes of the White Volta, where the cattle were sent for grazing. Alhaji Hamidu's kraal was located at Wungu, but the cattle were sent there as they usually do during the dry season. This was the place where the cattle could get enough pasture and water from the White Volta. The cattle were stolen over there, and three months later, they found only 28 of them in Benin. The following is the full account by Alhaji Hamidu, who is himself a Fulani herdsman:

> One evening, at about 5:30 p.m., three of the herdboys were grazing the cattle near the White Volta when a violent rainstorm came. The herdboys sent the cattle to their camp and took shelter in their camp. After the rain, when they came out, they did not see the cattle. By this time, it was dark. The following morning, they woke up to search for the cattle, and they could not even trace their footprints because of the heavy downpour. They called and informed us. We joined them and searched and found some, but 58 cattle were missing. We extended the search several kilometers radios and even across the White Volta to no avail.
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> Some criminals trailing them took advantage of the rainstorm and sent the cattle away. We started calling people we knew, including other Fulani herdsmen. Three days later, we got a hint that someone spotted cattle like that near Pigu in the Savelugu Municipality. We rushed there but did not get them. Then we heard again that farmers at Kpatinga near Gushiegu saw two herdsmen following cattle in the bush. We again went there. From there, the next place was Tatale, and then across to the Republic of Togo. We traced up there. We got

> further hints that they were driven across to Benin. Eventually, on 27th July 2016, we got some of them in the bushes near Manigri in the Republic of Benin. The criminals, upon sensing our presence, abandoned the remaining cattle and disappeared. We found only 28 of them. The rest of the 30 were missing. It was not clear whether these cattle were missing along the way or sold out by the criminals. Those we found were emaciated and completely lost weight after having walked for hundreds of kilometers.

Alhaji Hamidu believed that the criminals might have been experienced cattle herders. He added that the suffering they endured in searching for the cattle was immeasurable.

Changing patterns of herding: Herdsmen views on cattle rearing

The Fulani herdsmen frequently repel the claims that they are responsible for the declining growth of cattle in the area. In a FGD with the Fulani at Wungu, participants discounted the claims that the deaths, missing, and stealing of cattle are attributed to them. They say it is a source of worry for them (the herdsmen). They also lose their cattle to thieves. They agreed that they benefitted from the cattle more frequently than their owners through the use of milk and cow dung to fertilize their farmland. These are part of their condition of service as they are not earning salaries or wages for taking care of the animals. Alhaji Hamidu, who was part of this discussion, indicated that he lost 5 cows in the stolen cattle that were traced to Benin. Additionally, they spent their resources, energy, and time searching for these animals for three months. 'Because of herding, we have not had the opportunity to educate our children'. They bemoaned.

Mallam Bashiru, one of the participants in the herder group, put it succinctly. 'He who feels it knows it better. We are herding the cattle, and we know how difficult it is nowadays to herd cattle.' He went further to add that cattle rearing is increasingly unattractive because the suffering now outweighs the benefits.

Pastoralism has been hardest hit by climate change. The herders indicated that they now face longer dry spells, shortages of pasture and water, dwindling land cover for grazing due to expansion in crop farming, frequent farmer-herder conflicts, frequent compensation payments, and little support from cattle owners.

Another dangerous development in pastoralism, according to the Fulani, was the infiltration of armed cattle rustlers into the country. These people, they claimed, have vast experience in cattle rearing. They are believed to be displaced by ISIS, Boko Haram, and other terrorist attacks in Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Guanine. The herdsmen suspected that they were those believed to have been carrying away their cattle to far-away palaces. They claim that such people always carry powerful weapons such as AK47s, Rifles, and G3s.

DISCUSSION

The local Mamprusi seem to be alleging a grand conspiracy on the part of the Fulani herdsmen to deplete their cattle. They seem to be oblivious to the ecological, environmental, and climate change factors that pose serious challenges to cattle rearing. Their failure to take back the herding responsibilities shows how they do not take cattle rearing seriously.

Analysis of the local Mamprusi's submissions shows that they do not prioritize cattle rearing and do not thoroughly investigate the kind of herders they engage. They also do not pay salaries or wages to the herdsmen (Abubakari and Longi, 2014) and rarely visit to check on their cattle. Therefore, the alleged misappropriation of their cattle under the Fulani herdsmen's care could be attributed to poor interest and poor monitoring and evaluation on the part of the local Mamprusi. If the accusations they leveled against the Fulani herds were true, then the Fulani might have taken advantage of their lack of interest and plundered the cattle. Analysis of the first case study shows that due diligence was not done before engaging the herdsman who ran away with the cattle. Neither the herdsman's identity, origin, nor relative could be traced. In the second case study, the herdsman messed up with the cattle and swindled them. The cattle were not sold at one time. The herdsman might have studied their lack of concern about their cattle and started selling them to different people.

The last case where the cattle were traced in Benin is very worrying. It is possible that in the first case study, the cattle might have been sent across Ghana to the neighboring countries. The perpetrators believed to have been skillful in cattle matters could have been renegades, members of terrorist groups, or those displaced by their activities. This is a national security issue that should be handled by the government. Those found to be wielding powerful weapons, such as AK47s, Rifles, and G3s, must be rounded up by national security. These weapons are not supposed to be handled by private individuals.

CONCLUSIONS

The study examined the circumstances leading to the declining growth of cattle in the Wungu traditional area of the West Mamprusi Municipality. The study used three case studies of cattle crisis as well as key informant interviews. The study found that nearly 77 years after the first Fulani herdsman was introduced to herd their cattle, the local people have lost interest in herding cattle themselves, although they have cattle. The young ones are not trained in herding because they are in school. Fulani herdsmen have taken over the responsibility of heading over the past three generations. The Mamprusi do not trust the current crop of Fulani herders and blame the declining growth of their cattle on them. The herdsmen, on their part, cited environmental, ecological, and climate change issues as being responsible for the declining growth of

the cattle. They indicated that population growth and the expansion of farm sizes due to improved farming technology exerted a lot of pressure on the demand for land for both crops and animals. This makes rearing difficult as they frequently run into conflicts with farmers. In the past decade, the activities of Boko Haram, ISIS, and other terrorist groups in the neighboring countries have pushed some renegades and displaced some pastoralists into Ghana. Some of these people have experience in herding and possess weapons. Walking about without jobs in Ghana, they may engage in cattle rustling. Perhaps, the large-scale cattle rustling could be attributed to such people.

Recommendations

- The local cattle owners should reconsider their attitude to keeping cattle. They should treat cattle rearing as business and take a keen interest in their cattle. Either they rear the cattle themselves or properly scrutinize the background of the herdsmen they engage. They should take weekly or monthly inventory of their cattle and pay unannounced visits to them. They should keep proper records of their cattle and develop robust monitoring and evaluation systems. Above all, they should pay the herdsmen salary or wages or agree on other forms of remuneration.
- Cattle owners should invest in technology, such as using GPS and tracking devices on some of the cattle if they want to continue the free-range system of grazing the cattle.
- The government should provide drone technology to assist in tracking missing cattle.
- Criminals with herding skills infiltrating the country must be treated as a national security threat. Suspects should be rounded up and screened.
- In the long term, cattle should be given unique identification numbers at birth. When sold for breeding to another person or for slaughtering, they must be accompanied by their identification and the seller's contact details. Any cow being transported to another place for sale without these details must be detained for further investigation.

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