

A Historical Analysis of the Migration, Penetration and Diffusion of the Fulani into the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria

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Abstract: *This paper provides a socio-historical analysis of the migration of the Fulani into the Middle Belt region of Nigeria and their relationship with the indigenous people. The Fulani are an important population group found mainly in the Northern and Middle Belt regions of Nigeria. They are also, with or without justification, identified with rearing of cattle in these regions. This paper thus discussed their migration, penetration and diffusion into the Middle Belt region. It is also a contribution to the current problem of population movements not only in the region, but the entire country. Secondary method of data collection was adopted in this study. Findings reviewed that the geographical location of the region in the transition point between the North and South coupled with its natural endowments makes it a haven for many Nigerian migratory groups in times past as well as presently. Also, its ethno-cultural heterogeneity in addition to its structural economic backwardness makes the region an explosive conflict zones. In sum, the daily increase in migration should be taken into cognisance and the agrarian region should be improved in order to avoid conflicts mostly between farmers and pastoralists in Benue State and the entire Middle Belt region.*

Keywords: *conflicts, diffusion, Fulani, Middle Belt, migration, penetration*

I. Introduction

The Middle Belt (North Central) region of Nigeria is an area where the indigenous people are predominantly farmers while the settlers (mainly Fulani) are known for their cattle breeding and pastoral activities. This is an area of diffusion resulting from a spontaneous, heavily scattered propagation of nomadic or semi sedentary, full time cattle breeders without adequately fixed legal ownership or usufruct rights to the land they use. In essence, this constitutes a transition to a penetration area in various partial areas of the Jos Plateau, since the peaceful penetration of the settlement areas of other people has developed into an undisputed possession of grazing areas.

The appearance of the Fulani in towns where they assumed certain occupational roles such as warriors, courtiers and artisans proved to be more of interference than the peaceful intrusion of the independent cattle breeders. It was little wonder that, the competing native Hausa upper class destroyed the educated, versatile but foreign upper class, together with the remaining Fulani or periodically drove them from the country (Solken, 1937:157 cited in Fricke, 1993). The Fulani in the 18th century represented a sizeable minority in the Hausa states, as well as in the empires of Borno and Jukun. Apart from the herders, there were Mohamedian scholars and artisans among these people who remained in an underprivileged position within the existing social order, into which they were not integrated by adaptation, but rather, retained their special status at courts and in the towns by preserving their Mohamedian beliefs. This pariah situation was further emphasised by the activation of Islam in the 18th century. In 1804 when forced to flee from the king of Gobir, Osman dan Fodio, a preacher from an urban Fulani clan of Torobe (in the Sokoto Province) proclaimed a religious war (jihad). Within a few years, the Hausa states were conquered. Building on the existing territorial and aristocratic order, Osman created a theoretical state of which he himself as Sultan of Sokoto-Gwandu was the ruler of the believers and political overlord at the same time (Fricke, 1993:56). Fricke stated that by 1831, about 15 (fifteen) Mohamedian emirates, under the lordship of Sokoto, controlled an area of about 280,000sq km, about 5 (five) million inhabitants. They were aided by the well-developed administrative organisation of the Hausa states, which they had earlier on taken over.

This change affected not only the top authorities of the Hausa states, but also the subordinate administrative centres. In the rural areas, the Fulani were the ruling class. This has remained effective as regards the social structure of western and central northern Nigeria and the Middle Belt region up to the present day. As a reward for war services, Fulani from the towns and even Fulani herders were given villages. These were obliged to pay tribute to them and provide land on which slaves settlements were established. The political and organisational progress of Fulani rule was accompanied by the forced organisation of one section of the labour force in the form of slaves, and the interruption of the development in the areas, which had remained

independent by compulsory conversion and procurement of labour. However, since slaves were liberated after their conversion to Islam, they gave rise to a broad class whose social status was in most cases guaranteed as clientele of an important man and a further dependency resulted from the right of the upper class to control the land.

It is in response to the above that this paper attempted a historical analysis of the nexus between migrations, penetration and diffusion in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. Identifying the Middle Belt region as a migratory corridor for most ethnic nationalities in pre-colonial Nigeria, the paper argued that the prevalence of migrations in the area results from a plethora of often inter-related reasons, which are also multi-dimensional in form, nature and character. Besides, a region of great human migrations dating back to the pre-colonial epoch, the Middle Belt region has had its own fair share of these contradictions at enormous human and material costs. It is against this backdrop that this paper examined the various movement and integration of the Fulani into the Middle Belt region. Our analysis also highlighted changes in relationships between the Fulani and the indigenous people (farmers) of the Middle Belt, and how this has affected development and peace in the region mostly as regards pastoralists/farmers relations.

The paper is divided into four main sections. Section one examined the theoretical and conceptual issues associated with migration, penetration and diffusion. Section two discussed the origin and dominance of the Fulani and their manifestations on group contact and interactions in the middle belt region of Nigeria. Section three is the heart of our analysis in this study and it examined the implications of these movements and relations among the communities in the Middle Belt region of the country. Section four summarized the main arguments of the paper in what is essentially the conclusion.

II. Objectives Of The Study

- To analyse the migration, penetration and diffusion processes of the Fulani into the Middle Belt region of Nigeria.
- To examine the structural characteristics of pastoralists and farmers' interaction in the region.
- To evaluate the implications of this movement in the Middle Belt region.

III. Methodology

The study adopted the analytic cum historical research design. Data were collected through secondary sources. The source included published books, journals and internet materials among others.

IV. Significance Of The Study

This study focused on how the Fulani as well as other tribes from different parts of the country migrated into the Middle Belt region. Thus, the significance of the study include among others, the following:

- It will contribute to the total stock of knowledge in the area
- The outcome of this study would therefore be of great intellectual and practical value to a generation of stakeholders, academia, scholars, agriculturists and policy makers amongst others.

V. Conceptual Clarification

As a matter of fact, concepts, theoretical considerations and the methods and techniques of inquiry are intricately interwoven with each other. This is base on the fact that they determine the selection and arrangement of facts and our evaluation of them. More so, they determine what a researcher either observes or fails to observe during the process of gathering and interpreting data. It is due to these reasons that this section shall attempt to identify and explain briefly at least, a conceptual and theoretical issue underpinning the subject matter of this paper which is migration.

5.1. Migration

The subject matter of migration is important in the history of a people. This perhaps explains the reason why in an attempt to understand the history of a people, their source of origin, how they left their original homes and the reasons for leaving are unavoidable questions to which answers must be provided. Migration means the movement of people from one place to another (Okpeh, 2008:22). Such movement is often underpinned by the inter-play of socio-economic and political variables operating in the source and destination of the movement. In essence, inter-group migrations are responses to the process of development, making it really difficult to arrive at empirically meaningful generalizations regarding the process. Stern concurred with the above when he noted that:

On occasion, we lose sight of the fact that human migrations, like all social phenomena, are social processes, which are historically conditioned. Thus, we can expect variations in migration flows across time and space, not only in so far as their characteristics are concerned, but also in their closest determinants and the meaning attributable to them. We also forget at times that migrations are parts of larger social processes. It is

essentially their adequate location within the context of the latter which allows us to understand them, predict them up to a certain point and also connect them to other processes including 'public policy' (Stern, 1988:29).

According to Okpeh (2008:23) there are two main typologies of migration. These include: (i) internal and (ii) external or international migration. The first involves the movement of people from one community or settlement area to another, provided this is within the territorial limits of a polity such as a country. Osoba (1974) identified at least three patterns of such movements in Nigeria which should be briefly noted. These consist of the movements of people from rural areas of less economic activity to those of greater economic activity within the regions that formerly constituted the units of the federation of Nigeria; the movement of migrant peasant farmers across regional frontiers, whether on a seasonal or permanent basis; and the drift of population from the rural areas and the lesser towns to the new urban centres of commerce and administration under colonial rule.

The second broad type of migration involves the movement of people inter-territorially, for instance, when migrants move between two or more countries, for example, Nigeria and Cameroon or Benin Republic and Togo. Another vital trend in this type of migration is the temporary movement of young ambitious Africans to Europe, North and South America and other parts of the world in search of 'greener pastures' (Toure and Fadayomi, 1992; Adepoju, 1997). Majority of those involved in this movement are highly skilled and have emigrated from the continent on the account of the search for personal advancement away from the continent.

Analysts have pointed out challenges arising from the dynamic nature of the phenomenon of modern migrations (Amir, 1983). One of these relates to the need to draw a distinction between the old and modern patterns of population movements. This would require an understanding of their causes and contrasting characteristics and their implications on the demography of the societies involved. For instance, while pre-colonial migrations were by and large, the migrations of ethnic groups, modern migrations appear to be largely the migrations of labour. Secondly, pre-colonial migrations were much more 'permanent' than modern migrations which are essentially 'temporary'. In sum, there is the need to understand the relationship between internal and external or international migrations. If we accept, as we have already pointed out, that migration is a historically conditioned social process, then it is possible to argue that there is a relationship between the intensity of internal and external migrations (Thomas, 1954 cited in Morrison, 1983). All these are necessary for the understanding of migration as a fact of human life.

VI. The Middle Belt Region Of Nigeria As A Socio-Economic And Political Entity

Geographically, the Middle Belt region is located in the centre of the country (Nigeria). The region is situated between latitudes 7°30' North and 11°15' North and longitude 4° and 12° East of Prime Meridian. In terms of landmass, it covers an area of approximately 342,390 km² or 37 percent of the total land area of Nigeria. The region is bounded in the East and West by the republics of Cameroon and Benin respectively and in the North and South by the Northern and Southern states of Nigeria (Dawan, 2002; Udo, 1970 cited in Okpeh, 2008). It is made up of at least six states which include Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. This region is an area with certain climatic coherence, stretching over two distinct ecological zones namely; the Savanna zone and the Rain Forest zone. It is also a region of very striking broken terrain with the complex relief of the Jos Plateau and has many ranges of hills mostly along its Eastern escarpment (Okpeh, 2008:29).

Furthermore, available geographical facts review that the Middle Belt region is generally endowed with both human and natural resources and that in the past, it attracted people from both the Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria as well as from outside (Sober, 1964; Rubin, 1973; Tillea, 1981 all cited in Okpeh, 2008:29). Forde (2002) stated that its many waterways (mostly the Niger and Benue and their tributaries) facilitated the easy movement of different ethnic groups into and out of the region, just as their banks served as the foci of settlement for many groups during their formative stages in the remote past. This explains according to Forde (2002) why the area has been aptly described as a great cultural watershed. According to the 2006 general census figures, the region has a population of slightly twenty million of the population of Nigeria. The table below gives additional information on the distribution of the population of this region by state.

State	Land area (Square Km)	Total population	Density person/km
Benue	32,910	4,219,244	84
Kogi	32,440	3,278,487	66
Kwara	37,700	2,371,089	41
Nasarawa	28,240	1,863,275	27
Niger	73,930	3,950,249	33
Plateau	29,790	3,178,712	30
FCT	8,000	1,404,201	51
Total	298,830	20,265,263	47

Table 1: Population distribution by state in Middle Belt, Nigeria

Source: 2006 census figures.

The average density of the population could therefore be put at about forty seven person/km². From all indications, this is quite low for a region that is obviously endowed. A combination of historical, environmental and socio-economic factors is responsible for the low density of the region. Historically, the region has been the theatre of inter-group migrations and conflicts during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This is apart from the fact that slave raiders from both the far North and the South were constantly attacking the area. Environmentally, it has been argued that the low density of the region population was due to the prevalence of pests and diseases (Dawan, 2002:3-18). Ologe (1978) however asserted that the hot humid tropical climate of the region and the related vegetation cover of forests and savanna is conducive for the growth of pests and diseases such as sleeping sickness and river blindness. Economically, the region is among the least developed in Nigeria despite its natural endowment.

The Middle Belt region is also a plural polity that is defined by socio-cultural and institutional diversity between (largely minority) ethnic nationalities of various populations. Many renowned researchers and scholars have confirmed this important feature of the region. For instance, Logam (1985) described it as having the highest socio-political and religious plurality of any of the regional units of the Nigerian federation. More so, according to a survey conducted by British colonial authorities in 1926, Nigeria comprises about four hundred and sixteen ethnic groups. Of this number, two hundred and nineteen, representing seventy per cent, were found in the Middle Belt region. Of the remainder, seventy five ethnic groups, representing eighteen per cent, were found exclusively in the South while forty four, representing nine per cent of the total were found only in the far (or Islamic) North (Blitz, 1965 cited in Okpoh, 2008:31). This implies that the region plays host to the largest chunk of ethnic minorities in Nigeria. This is apart from being the most intensive rendezvous for Islam, Christianity and the African Traditional Religions. It is important that the contestation for converts and adherents as well as influence and significance between the first two are partly responsible for some of the most violent religious conflicts we have experienced in the region and other parts of the country.

It is clear from the above analysis that taken as a socio-economic and political entity, the region is inherently conflict prone. As part of the wider Nigerian nation, the Middle Belt region has had its own fair share of inter-group migrations, penetration, colonization and conflicts, all of which have had far reaching impacts on its peoples and their relationships with each other. In analyzing the manifestations of these social processes in the region from the earliest times therefore, it is necessary we note the following: (i) that the geographical location of the region in the transition point between the North and South coupled with its natural endowments makes it a haven for many Nigerian migratory groups in times past as well as presently; (ii) that its ethno-cultural heterogeneity in addition to its structural economic backwardness makes the region an explosive conflict zones.

VII. Discussion

7.1 The Origin Of The Fulani And Their Dominance

The Fulani are an important population group found mainly in the Northern part of the country, Nigeria, as well as the Middle Belt region. They are also with or without justification, identified with rearing of cattle in these areas. More so, the variety of names given to them in different countries indicates the extent of their living areas. For instance, they call themselves Fulbe. In the Chad region and to the east of it, they are known as Fellata; among the Mande in the far west, they are known as Fula (Barth, 1957:33 quoted in Fricke, 1993). However, in the course of a widespread migration, the Fulani spread in the Sudan zone from west to east, from Senegal to the Upper Nile region. According to Tauxier (1937:7 quoted in Fricke, 1993), only the area of their origin in the Fouta Djallon is historically proven, and they have continued to spread from this area since the eight century. They however penetrated into the Hausa States in a peaceful manner in the 13th century (Palmer, 1936; Hogben, 1930:59; Westermann 1952:136 all quoted in Fricke, 1993). According to Fricke (1993), Fulani tribes were recorded as been in Baguirmi in the central Sudan in the 15th century. He stated further that, large numbers of them were forced out of Baguirmi into Cameroon highlands. In the 16th and 17th centuries, fresh immigrants from the west consolidated the Fulani population there (Duhring, 1926:125; Palmer, 1936:258 and Kirkgreen, 1958:22 all quoted in Fricke, 1993; East, 1994:21) resulting in the establishment of Fulani dominance at the beginning of the 19th century.

7.2. Fulani Migration, Penetration And Diffusion In The Middle Belt Region Of Nigeria

The Middle Belt region of Nigeria is regarded to be the area, which since 1967 belongs to various states which earlier belonged to the provinces of Plateau, Benue, Niger, Kwara States as well as the Southern part of Zaria. These are areas where the Fulani are predominant as regards cattle breeding. These are also areas of diffusion resulting from a spontaneous heavily scattered propagation of nomadic or semi sedentary full time cattle breeders without adequately fixed legal ownership or usufruct rights to the land they use. In essence, this constitutes a transition to a penetration area in various partial areas of the Jos Plateau, since the peaceful

penetration of the settlement areas of other people has developed into an undisputed possession of grazing areas. This has been legitimated by the administration at least, since they have been formed into Ardorates according to Fricke (1993:203) as regards the Fulani population. In other words, these are not demarcated grazing areas as on the Mambila Plateau with the result that uncertainty still exists between the cattle breeders and the field cultivators as regards legal title to the land. How the Fulani spread across different states in this region are hereby discussed.

7.2.1. The spread of the Fulani in Jos-Plateau since 1900

The Jos-Plateau has been a typical penetration area for the Fulani since 1900. Before it was conquered by the British, it was a 'refuge area' used predominantly by palaeonigrific population groups and inaccessible for the Fulani (Fricke, 1993:203). At the dawn of the 20th century, cattle breeding Fulani moved up through Bauchi during the dry season, and advanced as far as the foot of the North East edge of the Plateau at Lere. After some years, they changed their dry-season location to a rainy season location and located the new dry season camp near Gindiri, 20km South West in the Lere valley which cuts back into the Plateau edge at this point (Stenning 1957:63). Fricke (1993) noted that almost every year, cattle stealing leads to bloody dispute with the hill peoples living there, the Fulani apparently being victorious. When the British gained control of the Plateau by means of punitive expeditions over the period 1904 to 1908, the Fulani assisted by acting as scouts well acquainted with the area. They also supplied milk, butter, meat and sorghum to the troops. According to Fricke (1993:203), they were the only people growing this grain in this area at the time in question. It is therefore not surprising that the Fulani penetrated the Plateau with their herds following pacification. Here, they found tsetse free pastures and good watering facilities as well as a short dry season. Initially, only a small proportion of the cattle breeders remained on the Plateau during the dry season and as such, no sales outlets for milk, butter or meat. Only with the increase in the rapidly developing tin mining industry (Raphael, 1913 quoted in Fricke, 1993:203) did a sales' outlet become available for the animal products.

However, the rapidly increasing number of Fulani made it necessary for the British District Officers to appoint community leaders, but apparently with the sole aim of regulating the affairs of the settling Fulani, the original inhabitants of the Plateau remaining in their inaccessible hill settlements on the slopes of which they had intensively cultivated permanent fields. Three independent settlement strata were therefore established below the hill dwellers which include the open cast mines on the high table lands, the houses of the Europeans and Levantines and the camps of the workers recruited particularly from the north (Fricke, 1993:203). The stratum also includes the newly formed administration and trading locations in which the Hausa and Southern Nigerians formed a higher proportion. On the other hand, the third stratum consist the cattle breeding Fulani, some in semi permanent camps while others in compounds.

The full time cattle breeders in the Eastern part of the Central Plateau began in the mid-thirties, a new form of enterprise operation 'herd splitting'. This incorporated transhumance over four months, taking these people into the lowland. This movement was important in view of the fact that the steadily increasing number of cattle then coincided with the partly forceful downhill resettlement by the British administration of the hill peoples to the high-level plateau surface, the earlier grazing pastures of the Fulani now being used by others, for irregular rotating field cultivation. Accordingly, their fodder value for the cattle was reduced at least, for a few years, since crop cultivation without proper fertilisation calls for correspondingly long fallow periods on these leached soils. Transhumance was possible in the Benue lowlands since these very thinly populated areas were not pacified by the British until that time. On the herds being split, the family stayed at the usual place with the cows and the calves, the young animals being sent on a trek with the younger members of the family. As reported by Fricke, this resulted in permanent resettlement of the Fulani away from the Plateau, since the spreading settlement area in the lowlands had then reduced the danger of tsetse infestation during the rainy season (Fricke, 1993:204). However, Fricke did not mention in this context, the significant influence of the enforced displacement of the Fulani over the period 1946 to 1950.

7.2.2. The spread of the Fulani in the Benue Province

The Benue Province was formed from 1967 to 1976 as a single state with the Plateau Province. However, it is now an independent state. Located in the Southern Guinea Savannah Zone, part of this state is only thinly populated. Wide areas are not without risk for cattle rearing purposes, at least not during the rainy season, in view of the occurrence of *Glossina Morsitans* (species of tsetse fly) in the region.

The largest and most important population group is the Tiv ethnic group. The Tiv are steadily spreading from south to north via the Benue, and towards the east in the direction of Adamawa and Taraba States. In spite of the lack of a territorial organisation, the settlement of complete families of clans maintained superiority as regards all other population groups such as the Idoma, Iggede to mention but a few. From the economic aspect of pastoralism, this population group remains without significant, since the 'muturu' kept by the Tiv are left to them most of the year. In all, this is a diffusion area of the Fulani with nomadic full time cattle

breeding, which tendency is to stay in one location for a longer period. Development to sedentary enterprises with transhumant grazing technique is governed in the final issue by the land ownership conditions and the pressure exerted by the field cultivators on the land. In smaller areas, the establishment of a small emirate introduces land usage rights and Fulani cultivate some land. The enterprises are managed in the form of 'gandaye'. In addition to the gandu of a family, joint field cultivation work is also undertaken whereby neighbours are invited to assist, and thus, treated as guests. A person not owning any cattle will try to earn money (for instance, by trading with milk which he buys in bush) to purchase an animal and then, slowly build up a herd (Fricke, 1993:209).

The biggest herds of sedentary owners who also engage in field cultivation are estimated as 150 head. However, they seldom form a single herd since more than 50 head per herd are difficult to supervise during grazing. In such cases, 50 head are left near the compound and transhumant grazing carried out with the remainder. Bigger enterprises split their herds during the dry season and trekked into the Benue lowland in the area of Loko (up to 80 miles, 130 km distant). However, the bulk of the dry season stock the stems from Kacchia/Zaria Province, and nomadic herds from Bauchi Province, Kano and even from northern Adamawa, were also found there (Fricke, 1993:209). Quoting information from livestock superintendent in Nasarawa, Fricke stated thus:

The stock of sedentary, semi sedentary and nomadic herds in the Nasarawa Division have increased steadily since 1968 until now because of veterinary measures. No influence of the drought on the vegetation was noticed in this area (Fricke, 1993:210).

According to Fricke, about 90% of the cattle in Keffi and Nasarawa belong to the Fulani. Town dwellers also possess small herds which are placed in the care of sedentary, full time and part time cattle breeders. In the case of 10 head of cattle, one head must be handed over by way of payment each year and in addition, the costs for salt licks for the entire herd must be borne. The local population has no interest in starting mixed farming since it is now easy to have land ploughed by tractors. The influence of the Fulani on the administration of the local authority is said to be minor since the non Fulani majority is more strongly represented there.

In the Benue Province, very few head of cattle are usually taxed each year. Fricke went on to state that, one third of the taxed cattle belong to Awe (located between lowland Division and Benue). A further one third to Obi, east of Lafia, one sixth to Assaiko (adjacent to the Jos Plateau in the north) and one sixth to Keana (south of Obi). The town of Lafia has more than 1000 head in the tax list; some of these belong to the Borno people who established the town and who have not given up their preference for cattle. A further proportion of the cattle are kept in herds of a new type on fenced-in farms belonging to members of the new elite.

To the south up to the northern bank of the Benue, 'Wodabe' from Bauchi Province are said to be encountered, mostly during the dry season. They do not have good relations with the Tiv farmers who claim that the grazing cattle simply trample the soil, thus, making it compact and cause grazing damage. It was said that the Fulani started spreading to the south of the Benue only in the fifties as the Tiv having repeatedly expelled the herdsmen in earlier times. The main centre is in the area of Katsina-Ala, a further centre is located in Wukari, Taraba State. Those who came from Pankshin (Jos Plateau) were described as sedentary, who with the help of paid labour, cultivate rice and yams. The total stock including non-sedentary herds and cattle belonging to dealers is said to reach 40,000 head during the rainy season and 80,000 during the dry season.

In the Idoma Division of the state, force was last used against Fulani herdsmen and their herds in the late 1970s in Otukpo. For reasons connected with traditions, no interest is displayed in milk products. Only in the Adoka District which has an open-minded District Head, invited the Fulani to his domain to stay. Only limited numbers of mixed farmers were found in the areas in which the Tiv live. The reason for this was stated as being the dense stands of field trees, mainly the shear butter tree (*Parkia Butyrospermum Parkii*). It should be noted here that the organisation of the heavy field work according to age groups, the division of crop tending work and harvesting between the various family members and the garden like intensity of cultivation have to date, not allowed any desire to grow for the employment of an ox drawn plough.

7.2.3. The Niger Province and the Southern part of the Zaria Province

From 1967 to the 1976, the Niger Province belonged to the North-West State, but it is presently a state of its own. The Southern Zaria Province with the two areas of the Jema'a federation and Kacchia will also be discussed here, since they differ considerably from the Fulani-Hausa social area of the Northern Zaria Province, however, not only as regards cattle rearing. These areas are parts of the Fulani Diaspora in the Middle Belt which also constitute the starting points for sedentary cattle rearing in the Niger Province. In the Kontagora Division of the Niger Province, Fulani own a great proportion of sedentary cattle herds. However, measures against the population of the Districts, the proportion of Fulani is very low. In contrast, their proportion in the individual settlements can increase to one-third and is then again, concentrated on individual quarters or hamlets in the area surrounding the village. The cattle are kept mainly in mixed and subsidiary enterprises. Field

cultivation and often administration offices, too, form the bulk of their work. The spreading field land and the distribution of the tsetse fly govern the cattle rearing technique. During the rainy season, the herd must be kept within the area of the settlement on fallow fields. In the larger centres like Kontagora, supplementary fodder in the form of millet, cut grass and leaf fodder became established in increasing degree. During the dry season, the herd is split. The younger members of the family or paid herdsman wander with the young cattle and the major proportion of the herd on the natural pastures of the wider vicinity; whereas, the milch cows are penned in the compound and in the bigger villages also outside the compound, or are kept with friends on the outskirts of the village. They also receive supplementary fodder in addition to the daily pasturage.

The main proportion of the herds belong to semi sedentary Fulani. For decades, these have lived with herds of 40 to 50 head in the same district during the rainy season, employing paid workers to carry out some cultivation on the fields manured by their herds, to cover part of their needs. During the dry season, they do not move far away from this location, possibly leaving some older members of the family and children behind with some milch cows. On the other hand, the remaining head in the Kontagora Division (during the rainy season) belongs to the nomadic, full time breeders with an average of 50 head per household (Fricke, 1993:211). However, their rainy season location is not fixed and they roam during the dry season up to the Niger in the west and south. Fricke stated further that, the sedentary cattle breeders taxed their cattle 100%, the semi sedentary breeders 50% and the nomads 25% to 30%.

Fricke also noted in his study that, the semi nomadic herds which are found in the same location at that, time year after year account for 60% of the stock during the rainy season. The remaining cattle belong mainly to the nomadic herdsman who have no definite radius of action. Mixed farming is not included here. The progressive farmers are recent innovations who are non Fulani owners of one to three cows who buy their animals from the cattle breeders and tether them in front of their compounds or at the side of the road and keep them in an excellent condition with the aid of supplementary fodder. In the same way as in many other parts of Northern Nigeria, the members of the upper class also have their own herds which they keep in pens on their land. They are placed under the care of Fulani herdsman who in turn receives food and clothing on important feast days. Even though the stocking density is heavily increased during the dry season, the grazing conditions for the herds remaining here are also satisfactory.

The conditions in the Bida Division were not greatly different from those of the Divisions already discussed. Here, too, the semi nomadic Fulani stay in one place. In some Fulani communities, the camp belongs to one family whose cattle were divided into small number of herds. Further camps of the same communities were located near this North-South aligned Ruga. They came from Dindima (East of Bauchi) some years ago, and would build permanent houses if the owner of the land would allot them a portion for this purpose. However, each year they clear a different section of fallow field overgrown with bush for them. In the following years, the owners harvest very good crops from these areas which are well manured by the herds of the Fulani. In return, the Fulani receive salt licks for their herds from the villagers and guinea corn for themselves. In addition, the full time cattle breeders have some grain cultivated by paid workers. The semi nomadic herds also remain in the same area in the Bida Division, since sufficient Fadama pasturage is available not far away during the dry season. According to Fricke, Fulani with 7000 to 10,000 gudale have remained in this region because of the temporary heavy stocking rate in the preceding years of drought in the north and their owners are attempting to secure a permanent footing. For Fricke also, the approximate 30 cattle breeders of the upper class owned the gudale cattle. The herds are looked after by herdsman against payment of a token per month for 10 head in each case; these herdsman also keep the milk. This is a high wage, but it is possible that it is not easy to graze the herds without causing damage in the intensively used areas, which during the dry season, are partly used for intensively cultivated vegetable and rice fields.

7.2.4. Pastoralism in Kwara and other states in the Western region

Due to its population and its administration structure, Kwara State is probably one of the most heterogeneous states in Nigeria. The former provinces of Ilorin and Kabba in the Northern region form it. In the Ilorin Province, the Ilorin Emirate and the Borgu Emirate stemming from the kingdom of Borgu dominate. Borgu with its sparse settlements over wide areas is the grazing area of nomadic enterprises to the extent that the occurrence of the tsetse fly and the existence of the Borgu game reserve do not limit the radius of action. These Fulani preferably breed the Bunaje cattle and have herds of Keteku. The Borgawa also hold cattle breeding in such high esteem that they are called 'Fillanin barba', meaning, Fulani of the soil (Fricke, 1993:216). Whereas, the nomads are reported as having 200 to 300 head of cattle in one family, the herds of the Borgawa are smaller. There are also, Sokoto-Fulani who got married to local Borgawa families who now engage in sedentary mixed enterprise cattle rearing.

In Ilorin and Lafiagi-Pategi, there is the traditional keeping of herds of Muturu (having mainly a social and cult significance), and their owners attach value to their children owning such animals. Sedentary Fulani are also present here. For generations, they have had blood relations with the Yoruba and own herds of Zebu. The

proportion of this group in the keeping of Zebu herds according to Fricke is estimated at 60% of which 15% are accounted for by semi sedentary Fulani who have long lived in this area and engage in field cultivation. More so, nomads enter the area (mostly Lafiagi-Pategi) and their cattle account for great size of the stock. They are located in the extensive marsh areas of the Niger during the dry season, but move to Igbomina-Ekiti in the rainy season.

Modern elites also have herds, but these are not of any great significance. Normally, their herds comprising muturu and N'dama or muturu and gudale, are placed under the care of paid Fulani herdsmen, though, without precise figures. Even though there is a considerable unsatisfied demand for N'dama cattle, and particularly for bulls, a larger scale breeding enterprise has only recently been endangered on the death of the owner, since the costs for looking after the pastureland are considered too high. The Kabba Province is mainly an area of muturu breeding. In contrast to other areas where muturu are bred, the cattle in this place have good grazing since the owners place them under the care of paid Fulani herdsmen. In other words, there is probably zebu which crosses with these in this place.

7.3. Structural Characteristics Of Pastoralists And Farmers' Interaction

The pivotal characteristics of rural dynamics in Nigeria in the twentieth century have been demographic extension and consequent expansion of cultivation. The national census conducted in the pre-colonial era as reported by Moritz (2003) suggests that, the human population for the whole Nigeria was below five million in the twentieth century. Comparison with the 2006 figure of almost one hundred and fifty million made it clear how pastoralists and farmers could have co-existed in the earlier period, and why the situation is so fraught in recent times. The results of human population increase underlie other vital dynamics in rural Nigeria, especially relatives between pastoralists and arable farmers. Moritz (2003:3) attributed four main themes to this, which are:

- a. Increase competition of pastoralists for a dwindling 'stock' of grazing land as agriculture has expanded.
- b. The collapse of the system of cattle tracks intended to separate livestock from farmers.
- c. Movement of pastoralists into new terrain, where language, religion, culture and landholding patterns are unfamiliar.
- d. Declining importance of the market for dairy products.

VIII. Implications Of These Movements And Interactions/ Relations In The Middle Belt Region Of Nigeria

From the above analysis, it is possible to draw out some implications of these movements and interactions within the Middle Belt region of Nigeria which have had serious effects on the relationship amongst the people and the frequency of conflicts as being experience in the region. First and foremost is the inspiration by the desire to colonize arable land both for farming and grazing of cattle. This dimension of migration into and within the region is regarded as the oldest and most prolonged. Supported by a combination of inter-related variables such as population explosion, pressure on available land and the desire by migrants to expand into sparsely populated areas, this aspect of migration is responsible for some of the conflicts that have occurred in the region. This is basically true of the Benue valley experience, where groups like the Tiv, Jukun, Chamba-Kuteb, the Idoma and Alago as well as the pastoralists-Fulani have clashed over land and related resources (Best and Idyorough, 2003). The bitter struggles between these groups over valued but limited land resources have been the major source of inter group conflicts in the region.

Another related visible aspect of migration into and within the Middle Belt region is the explosion of economic migrants from other parts of the country, mostly the North and South. Nevertheless, this trend was noticeable during the colonial period; it was accomplished in the post-colonial epoch. Economic migrants like the Yoruba, Hausa and the Igbo have a history of extensively relating with the peoples of this region dating back to the pre-colonial period. Perhaps, because of their early contacts with the Europeans at the coasts, these groups had a head start in the process of integrating into the colonial socio-economic milieu and were thus, the first to consolidate their hold on the dynamics of both the formal and informal sectors of the economy. Compared with their Middle Belt neighbours therefore, they were better off. The stranglehold of these migrants on the economy of the region is an important source of conflict between them and their hosts. According to Okpeh (2008:54-55) available evidences have shown that even where the conflicts originally did not start with the migrants, they are often the major victims of the violence that is usually the basic feature of such conflicts. They suffer physical attacks, they are harassed and their properties are either destroyed or looted. Instances of this trend can be found in the major inter ethnic and pastoralists versus farmers conflicts that have occurred in states like Plateau, Benue, Kogi to mention but a few.

Trans-humans migrations involving the herdsmen and their cattle in search of pastures could be regarded as having great implications for conflicts in the middle belt region of the country. According to a research report, the marked expansion of the riverine and valley bottom (fadama) cultivation in Nigeria since the

1980s has meant that pastoralists and farmers now compete very directly for access to wetland areas with the consequent increase in conflict (Depres, 1994; Osaghae, 1994). Although there is significant variability in social, economic and ecological parameters from one area to another, conflict is usually greatest where population is most dense and competition for fadama land highest.

Although the distribution of fadama cultivation within the Middle Belt region is very unequal, the banks of the river Benue and its major tributaries has been the focal point of the movement of fishing and pastoral communities as well as migrant farmers and hunters. As farmers take up more and more of the fertile river bank for farms, they come into direct conflict with other users, mostly the herders and fisher folks. Much of the conflict between the people of the Middle Belt region who are predominantly farmers and their Fulani neighbours stems from this situation. Usually because of the prolonged nature of such conflicts, they affect the demography of the affected areas, hitherto existing patterns of inter-group relations and the peoples' relationship with their environment. Another variant of conflict that has great impacts on contemporary migration in some parts of the Middle Belt region is chieftaincy tussle. Given the political character of this type of conflict, it has generated very violent conflagration among some of the people in this region. The instance of the manifestation of this crisis could be gleaned from Idoma land where chieftaincy disputes and crisis have been the major cause of political instability amongst the people (Okpeh, 2008:61).

IX. Conclusion

In this paper, we have discussed the historical analysis of the migration, penetration and diffusion of the Fulani into the Middle Belt region of Nigeria. In underlining the importance of migrations as a fact of human existence, the paper argued that the Middle Belt region was and still is a migratory corridor for most Nigeria ethnic nationalities. Nevertheless, arising from the protracted and fluid nature of these migrations, penetration and diffusion and the implications of these on the changing nature and character of inter group contacts and interactions, the paper observed that conflicts remain a major feature of the region. It is within this premise that the paper identified and analyzed the phenomena of migrations, penetration and diffusion in this region and the implications of these on the socio-economic and political relationship between groups in this region.

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