

Ngekete'mboloh: Land-use Row in Upper Western Menchum River Valley (Cameroon), 1990s – 2019

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ABSTRACT

This article examines explosively emergent agriculturist/pastoralist brawl in the ecologically endowed uppermost western Menchum River Valley of North West Cameroon. The area is watered by River Menchum and tributaries including Meteh and Mughom. The Kom/Wum Forest Reserve makes it rich in biodiversity. Alluvial deposits along the river valley support intensive farming. Lumbering, hunting and fishing are common activities in the area. The Menchum River valley is a major bread basket of Menchum Division. Since the last decade of the 20th century, several hitherto unknown developments have led to cattle occupation of farmlands and destruction of crops, row between agriculturists and pastoralists otherwise known among the people as Ngekete'mboloh. Besides, out-dated grazing practices, deforestation, climate change, manipulative self-seeking elite, transhumance have led to women popular outcry, manoeuvres, youth mobilisation, attack on herders and cattle, seizure and claims for payment of crops destroyed. Primary documents from the Kuiifuai regulatory society in Bu were gleaned and interrogated, oral interviews conducted and observations made concerning this row. The work concludes that this emergent row between farmers and herders in this region of Cameroon has led to cattle destruction of crops, seizure of cattle for compensation, love-hate relationship between competing elite and the local population among others. Long-term solutions are needed to stem the tide and build trust among agriculturists and pastoralists some of whom are non-Fulani.

INTRODUCTION

Skirmishes are common between farmers and graziers over land occupation and use in several parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Several reasons account for this including changes in climate due to reckless and unsustainable human exploitation of the environment.¹ Crop cultivation around water catchment areas, competition for public lands like in North Cameroon,² deforestation, unsustainable farming practices, ecological and socio-economic crises like in the Vina Division of Adamawa Region of Cameroon³ among others have distorted the ecological balance, thus conflict over land occupation and use by competing agriculturists and pastoralists. The destruction of water catchment areas through farming and grazing has led to conflicts across West, Central and East Africa. The spade of recurrent conflict between farmers and graziers over scarce land and its resources in Nigeria *exempli gratia*, resulted in serious socio-political consequences for the country like political tension between the North and South.⁴

In the North West Region which is essentially savanna grassland with patches of forests here and there, agriculturist/pastoralist conflicts over land use are ubiquitous. Fulani influx into the region in the first

¹ Azong, Mathilda, Clare J. Kelso and Kammila Naidoo (2018). "Vulnerability and Resilience of Female Farmers in Oku, Cameroon, to Climate Change," *African Sociological Review* 22, 1: 31-53.

² Moritz, Mark (2006). "The Politics of Permanent Conflict: Farmer-Herder Conflicts in Northern Cameroon," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 40, 1: 101-126.

³ Bouba, Ahmadu, Amougou Amougou Francois, Henrietta Ngangyung and Sale Abou (2012). "Tenure Management, Degradation of Farmlands, Pasturelands and Household/Livestock Water Resources in the Vina Division Adamawa-Cameroon," *Journal of Environmental Ecology* 3, 1: 217-245.

⁴ Fasona, Mayowa, Eniola Fabusoro, Comfort Sodiya, Vide Adedayo, Felix Olorunfemi, Peter Umu Elias, John Oyedepo and Grace Oloukoi (2016). "Some Dimensions of Farmers'-Pastoralists' Conflicts in the Nigerian Savanna," *Journal of Global Initiatives: Policy, Pedagogy, Perspective* 10, 2: 87-108; Uhembe, Ahar Clement (2015). "The State and the Management of Conflict between Nomadic Herdsmen and Crop Farmers in North-Central Nigeria: Implications for Sustainable Development," *International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Science* 3, 7: 20-28.

quarter of the 20th century triggered conflict. Unsustainable farming and grazing practices, cattle encroachment and destruction of the natural environment and changes in climate have exacerbated farmer-herder problems like in Kedjom, Nso, Bali and Wum. This has severally led to military intervention notably in Wum in the 1980s and early 2000s.⁵ Extensive pastoralism, traditional production system and availability of very few ranches exacerbated problems.⁶ Menchum Division for example, has a very high grazing community with over 62,920 cattle.⁷ It also has a farming community that supply food to big towns and cities of Cameroon notably Bamenda, Bafoussam, Limbe, Douala and Yaounde. This has contributed to the herder/farmer conflicts in the division.

Competition for space in the North West Region is therefore virulent and has thus led to conflicts between farmers and graziers and between farmers and indigenous cattle herders many of whom are businessmen with local political influence.⁸ In spite of this, crop cultivation and livestock rearing were separated from each other in places like Bambui in Tubah subdivision from the onset. This limited conflicts between farmers and herders.⁹ The Wum municipality that include this study area is located between latitude 6°N and 7°N and longitude 9°E and 10°E.¹⁰ The nomadic Fulani first settled in Wum in the 1920s¹¹ and their number has increased tremendously since then.

The strategy that was used in this study was carry out research over a period of time from 2018 to 2020 and the methodology employed was essentially on gleaning and interrogating speeches, welcome addresses, resolutions and letters from the archives of the *Kuiifuai* regulatory society in Bu and conducting interviews as well as eyewitness accounts. These speeches, welcome addresses, resolutions and letters were from the chief, village notables and traditional council. The sampling technique for interviews was purposive as we purposefully targeted members of the *Kuiifuai* regulatory society who are charged with maintaining the peace in the community, ordinary men and women who were directly affected by the agriculturists and pastoralists skirmish in the upper western Menchum River Valley. Some elites were also interviewed and the eyewitness account was also a methodology used to ascertain the degree of the skirmishes that have taken place in this rich fertile valley of the Menchum Division of Cameroon. The total number of people interviewed which was representative of several stakeholders was thirteen. In the analytical technique we were able to break down a whole into component parts in order to answer questions about the spike in

⁵ Amadou, Jabiru Muhammadou (2017). “The Mbororo Problem in North West Cameroon a Historical Investigation,” *American Scientific Research Journal for Engineering, Technology and Sciences* 33, 1: 37-48; Fogwe, Zephania Nji (2014). “Agrarian Community Wetland Resources as Triggers of Intermittent Interaction Conflicts in the Bali Nyonga Basin of the Western Highlands of Cameroon,” *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences* 3, 9: 14-25; Fonchingong, Charles C. and Pius T. Tanga (2007). “Crossing Rural-Urban Spaces: The Takumbeng and Activism in Cameroon’s Democratic Crusade,” *Cahiers d’études africaines* 185: 2-19; Ngwoh, Venantius Kum (2017). “Cameroon: Endemic Agro-Pastoral Conflicts in Menchum,” *Conflict Studies Quarterly* 19: 23-42; Pelican, Michaela (2006). “Getting along in the Grassfields: Interethnic Relations and Identity Politics in Northwest Cameroon,” PhD Thesis, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg; Pelican, Michaela (2011). *Integration and Conflict in the Cameroon Grassfields*, Osaka University Global COE Programme, The 65th Seminar; Sone, Patience Munge (2017). “Conflict over Landownership: The Case of Farmers and Cattle Graziers in the Northwest Region of Cameroon,” *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 12, 1, 83-101.

⁶ Manu, I.N., Andu, W.N., Tarla, D.N., Agharih W.N. (2014). “Socio-Economic Effect of Cattle Theft on the Pastoralists of the North West Region of Cameroon,” *Scholarly Journal of Agricultural Science* 4, 6: 299-305.

⁷ Ibid.; Ngalim, Aloysius Nyuymengka (2015). “Cattle Rearing Systems in the North West Region of Cameroon: Historical Trends on Changing Techniques and Strategies,” *Journal of Educational Policy and Entrepreneurial Research* 2, 5, 175-189.

⁸ Pelican, “Getting along in the Grassfields,” 231.

⁹ Amungwa, Fonteh Anthanasius (2011). “The Evolution of Conflicts Related to National Resource Management in Cameroon,” *J. Hum Ecol.* 35, 1: 53-60.

¹⁰ Wum Council Development Plan, May 2011.

¹¹ Angwafo, Peter Tse (2014). “Contesting Land and Identity: The Case of Women Cultivators and Fulani Cattle Herders in Wum, Northwest Region of Cameroon,” M.A. Thesis, ASC Leiden.

skirmishes between farmers and cattle graziers from the last decade of the 20th century to the first two decades of the 21st century. The analyse was also particular on validating the hypothesis that there is an explosively emergent agriculturist/pastoralist conflict in the period under study.

In this article I argue that an explosively emergent agriculturist/pastoralist conflict in the upper western Menchum River Valley since the last decade of the 20th century has led to devastating consequences on communities inhabiting the area. To address this problem, the article is structured into components parts connected to each other. After introducing the article, the theoretical framework is presented to situate the article within a larger body of knowledge dealing with conflicts related to land use. This is followed by the history of the problem for a better situation of the study within the context of increasing conflicts in an area that was hitherto relatively calm and became a hotbed of conflict from the last decade of the 20th century. There is then discussion about the rich ecology and economy of the area under study and then an examination of drivers of the skirmishes between agriculturalists and pastoralists. The ramifications of these land use conflicts on the communities are then examined. The conclusion of the article is a summation of the issues discussed including findings and policy recommendations.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

This study on an explosively emerging skirmishes between agriculturists and pastoralists is partly hinged on social conflict theory which states that social life is a competition and that resources and power are not evenly endowed by nature. The theory discusses the struggle for power and control in society which inevitably lead to conflict. Conflict is a result of social interactions because each party tries to exert social power over the other to attain scarce or incompatible goals. Proponents of the theory agree that people with diverse needs and interests in a society with limited resources led to inequality which generates social conflict and social change.¹² This theory has a bearing on this study in the sense that it is due to limitation of fertile land in the Menchum River Valley that led to conflict between agriculturists and pastoralists and resulting changes in the area. The increasing inequality between pastoralists and agriculturists in terms of material wealth and money led to destruction of crops as grazing zone. The communities affected also mobilised including youths, men and women to ward off the invading pastoralists whose cattle destroyed crops and made life more miserable for the farming population.

Another theory that captures the phenomenon described in the upper western Menchum River Valley of the North West Region of Cameroon is the conflict theory. According to conflict theorists, conflict generally escalates following a sequence of interactions. These interactions are in four developmental stages. The first stage is when there is no conflict because there are no incompatible goals. In the second stage there is an incipient conflict which is a recognition of the existence of incompatible goals. The third stage is latent conflict which is when parties recognise goal incompatibility and stage four is manifest conflict which is when parties engage in conflict behaviour to achieve their goals.¹³ In the upper western Menchum River Valley, there was a time where conflict did not exist between pastoralists and agriculturists because cattle did not move into the area. As cattle movement into the area started, both parties began to recognise the existence of incompatible goals and before long they came to the realisation that conflict was inevitable and from the last decade of the 20th century, they found themselves in skirmishes which increased from the turn of the 21st century onwards. Even if the people are still to get into full running battles, if some policies are not enacted to address the situation, then in the very near future people will die in their numbers because of the escalation of conflict.

¹² Egbuta, Ugwumba (2018). "Understanding the Herder-Farmer Conflict in Nigeria," *Conflict Trends* 3: 40-48.

¹³ Moritz, Mark (2010). "Understanding Herder-Farmer Conflicts in West Africa: Outline of a Processual approach," *Human Organisation* 69, 2: 138-148.

HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

Prior to and after British official administration of Southern Cameroons from 1922 as a Mandate of the League of Nations, Fulani and cattle movement into the Western Grassfields of Cameroon was on a steady increase.¹⁴ By 1952, the British official policy hinged on support for Fulani construction of permanent settlements in the Bamenda Province (present-day North-West Region) which was hitherto not the case. The indigenous population of Bamenda Province contested this policy. Farming communities claimed that they were first comers and the Fulani were troublesome latecomers and strangers. They also accused local chiefs and administrators for partiality in the disputes those arose between them and herders. By mid-1950s, women farmers marched against cattle crop destruction.¹⁵ In Wum for example, they violently took to the streets against graziers and cattle crop destruction in 1973, 1981 and 2003 with calamitous consequences.¹⁶

Administrators like the Assistant District Officer of Wum Division did not support British policy of permanent settlements for the Fulani. He intimated that they were still very unstable oscillating between several settlements. Resistance to Fulani permanent settlements in the Bamenda Province snowballed into anti-Fulani violence and damage to their settlements, cattle mass killings and public demonstrations in 1958.¹⁷ The *Anlu* women group of Kom and *Fuembwen* women of Kedjom Keku went on rampage protesting against cattle destruction of farms, some of the cattle owned by local elite and most of them by nomadic Fulani. They had been granted the right of seasonal pasturage for their herds.

Destruction caused by cattle in Bamenda was linked to the very presence of the British Administration of Southern Cameroons. Colonial administrators in the region expanded grazing areas to the disadvantage of settled agriculturists. Even when in some cases agriculturists were compensated, for example Nso women, this was to say the least grossly inadequate.¹⁸ The tenuous relations between indigenous groups in Bamenda Province and the Fulani continued after reunification in 1961.¹⁹ Skirmishes were in all seven divisions of the North West Region some of which were and still is the handiwork of administrators. They mediated in favour of pastoralists because of bribe received from them.²⁰ In Togi village in Momo Division for example, men constructed fences to secure women crops from cattle destruction as agriculturist/pastoralist conflicts continued to escalate.²¹ This state of affairs in the North West Region is generally so because the Mbororo (as the Fulani are also locally called) now claim regional status unlike before. They have challenged the local autochthonous discourse that excludes them from citizenship.²²

¹⁴ Kaberry, Phyllis M. (1950). "Land Tenure among the Nsaw of the British Cameroons," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 20, 4: 307-323.

¹⁵ Diduk, Susan (2004). "The Civility of Incivility: Grassroots Political Activism, Female Farmers and the Cameroon State," *African Studies Review* 47, 2: 27-54.

¹⁶ Dafinger, Andreas and Michaela Pelican (2006). "Sharing and Dividing the Land? Land Rights and Farmer-Herder Relations in Burkina Faso and North West Cameroon," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 40, 1: 127-151.

¹⁷ The Anglophone conflict in Cameroon since 2016 has re-ignited rivalry between indigenous groups and the Fulani. This is very glaring in Menchum Division.

¹⁸ Diduk, Susan (1989). "Women's Agricultural Production and Political Action in the Cameroon Grassfields," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 59, 3: 338-355.

¹⁹ Bourn, David. Highlights of the Nigerian Livestock Resources Report.

²⁰ Fonjong, Lotsmart, Irene Sama-Lang and Fombe Lawrence Fon (2010). "An Assessment of the Evolution of Land Tenure System in Cameroon and its Effects on Women's Land Rights and Food Security," *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 9: 154-169; Ngwoh, Venantius Kum (N.d). "The Bamenda Grassfields Lexicon of Farmer-Grazier Conflicts, 1909-2006."

²¹ Ndong Doris and Mbinkai Tazuh (2010). Report on the Participation of Women in Livestock-Crop Production in the Gutah Hills, North West Region of Cameroon: An Exploratory Case Study of Togi Village and Tuochup Quarter, www.akwimemorial.org, retrieved on 14 September 2020.

²² Pelican, Michaela (2008). "Mbororo Claims to Regional Citizenship and Minority Status (North West Cameroon)," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 78, 4: 540-560.

Skirmishes between the local farming population and pastoralists notwithstanding, efforts were made towards peaceful co-existence. Following the 2005 farmers uprising in Wum and demands for graziers to leave the town, the Cameroon government was literally coerced into setting up a commission whose terms of reference was to reallocate specific rural areas to agriculture and grazing.²³ The Netherlands Development Agency (SNV) also set up a Farmer-Grazier Dialogue Platform Promotion Committee (FGPPC) in 2007 as a result of climate change. Changes in climate depleted soil fertility and compelled farmers and pastoralists to intensify shifting cultivation and nomadism respectively in Wum Central sub division. To show how severe the problem was, over 1750 farmer-grazier conflicts were registered during the 2004/2005 crop season in Menchum Division as a whole.

Efforts to promote peaceful co-existence have been hampered by the lack of concern and/or greed. Local administrative officials remain passive and non-responsive to the people's problem. This has further fuelled tension between agriculturists and pastoralists. Although the Fulani have since the 1950s upon settlement developed transhumance settlement patterns whereby households have permanently settled and only cattle seasonally move accompanied by herdsmen. In spite of this, grazing like crop production is still essentially extensive with little or no use of modern inputs.²⁴ The farmer-herder problem is also due to mistrust and disillusionment between farmers and herders, chiefs, administration and court officials in Wum.²⁵ This is the source of unceasing agriculturist/pastoralist conflicts which have extended to the upper western Menchum River Valley which initially did not experience this phenomenon.

Many years after independence and reunification in 1961, the upper western part of Menchum River Valley which is also fed by other rivers like Meteh and Mughom witness farmers carry out their activities unperturbed. Graziers were largely confined to hill-slopes and exploited smaller patches of forest around these slopes during the dry season to feed their cattle. Until very recently, the entire upper Menchum River Valley was not considered to be of any important agro-pastoral use because only a few Fulani moved into or across it with their cattle.²⁶ This is no longer the case as it has come to occupy a very important place in the skirmishes between herders and farmers. Some of them who settled in Aghem land ran into problems with their host.²⁷ In the 1973 farmers uprising in Wum, Bu village was not and has never been part of Aghem grazing land.²⁸ It was calm with pastoralists and agriculturists going about their routine activities peacefully but that is not the case today.

The first cattle graziers arrived Bu (one of the areas under study) in the 1940s. The people and graziers lived in peace from then till the turn of the century when things started changing for the worse. On arrival, pastoralists were freely settled on a defined piece of land by Chief Chu Mbonghekang. In return, the Fulani from time to time sent a cow for the palace upkeep. They were trusted and protected by the local population.²⁹ Chief Chu of Bu tactfully refused to demarcate a boundary between grazing and farmland so that pastoralists would not one day claim permanent land ownership. This was also to ensure that children yet unborn would get land to build and carry out other activities. Grazing land was communal land and the

²³ Fon, Robert Nso and Musa Ndamba. 2008. Mboscuda's Access to Justice and Promotion of Land Rights for the Mbororos of the North West of Cameroon.

²⁴ Nji, M.B; Manu, I.N., Tarla D.N., and Metoh N.J. (2016). "Assessment of the Farmer-Grazier Dialogue Platform Promotion Committees in Wum Central Subdivision, Menchum Division, North West Region of Cameroon," *Agriculture and Soil Sciences* 3, 2: 9-17.

²⁵ Angwafo, "Contesting Land and Identity," 64.

²⁶ Nebasina, Emmanuel Ngwa (1990). "Land Use Dynamics and Restructuring on Some Sectors of the Grassfields Plateau (Cameroon)," *GeoJournal* 20, 3: 203-208.

²⁷ Letter from Chief Chu of Bu to the Governor North West Province, 21 March 1973.

²⁸ Letter from Chief Chu of Bu to the Divisional Officer Wum Sub-Division Menchum, 26 December 1975.

²⁹ Angwafo, "Contesting Land and Identity," 54.

boundaries were determined from time to time by the needs of the community.³⁰ Besides, in upper western Menchum River Valley, farmers cultivated crops and to reduce their potential damage, transhumance tracks and areas were identified and demarcated. On an annual basis, the administration set dates for herd movement which was announced over the radio.³¹

Due to recurrent farmer/grazier problems between neighbouring Aghem and graziers, Bu, Mbengkas and Aguli villages started feeling the heat. In 2004 Bu people expressed disenchantment with expansionist policy of the Aghem who used their farmer grazier problem to stretch their tentacles into Bu territory. The chief of Bu admonished the District Officer during a meet the people tour on 6 January 2004 "... to look into the problem and see that a lasting solution be found."³² The seriousness of this matter made him to re-iterate it in a welcome address to the Senior Divisional Officer Menchum on 31 December 2004. He argued that Aghem people like Hon. Kecha and Aghem Christopher moved into Bu land with their cattle without consulting anyone. They made matters worse by dragging Bu people to court for chasing their cattle out of their land. The Bu people were in intermittent row with the Fulani because they are essentially crop cultivators and the Fulani pastoralists.³³ They also quarrelled with rural capitalists like the two Aghem people mentioned above.

The rising problem between farmers and graziers in upper western Menchum River Valley is due to rapid population increase, a land grabbing elite, unsustainable grazing and farming activities and continuous influx of cattle from neighbouring Mezam Division through transhumance during the dry season. Menchum River Valley has witnessed intensive agricultural activities and an increase in number of cattle from the hill-slopes and neighbouring division to graze during the dry season. At one time however, the President of the Wum Dialogue Platform to settle agro-pastoral problems, Alhadji Useini Adamu announced that the platform had succeeded to convince Bu people to allow cattle into their valley during transhumance. This was successfully negotiated after ten years of resistance by farmers.³⁴ This was not true because the action led to serious conflict between farmers and graziers. Some graziers corrupted local administrative officials to allow them relocate and destroy farmers' crops with impunity.

In this article we have examined the rich ecological endowments of the upper western part of Menchum River Valley showing that because of this, land use has become a seriously contested issue. As a result, parties in conflict have suffered considerably. Besides, peaceful co-existence and or integration of the communities exploiting resources of the area have been jeopardised. We have also discussed factors responsible for agriculturist/pastoralist skirmishes in this fertile plain including ramifications for present and future generations. The article ends with a conclusion which provides a synthesis of the article and point to a way forward for a conflict free zone where land-use should rather be for collective good and not to benefit a few powerful individuals to the detriment of the suffering masses.

RICH ECOLOGY/ECONOMY OF UPPER WESTERN MENCHUM RIVER VALLEY

The upper western Menchum River Valley is ecologically very rich in flora and fauna. Within this area is the Kom/Wum Forest Reserve, surveyed in 1932 by the British and created in 1951. Although the Reserve

³⁰ A Welcome Address Presented by the Bu Community to the Senior Divisional Officer for Menchum Division on his Maiden Meet-the-People Tour to Bu on Saturday 26 March 1994; Letter on "Management of Lands in Wum Central Sub Division and Creation of Layouts" by Joshua Che Towa, Chairman Bu Traditional Council to the Prefect, Menchum Division, 11 August 2000.

³¹ Traditional Council. Management of Farmland in Bu Village, June 25 2001.

³² Speech Presented by Fon Bongezee II of Bu on the Official Meet the People Tour of the Divisional Officer for Wum Central Sub Division, 6 January 2004.

³³ Angwafo, "Contesting Land and Identity," 2-3.

³⁴ Transforming Conflicts Over Agro Pastoral Resources into Mutually Beneficial Alliances. Breakthrough: A Publication of MBOSCUA North West Vol. II, November 2015.

is today recklessly exploited by illegal lumber men from across the eastern part and Bamenda as well as the local population who destroy trees to construct houses and create maize, banana and cocoa farms, it remains an important ecological area for different species of animals like chimpanzees, gorillas, monkeys, deer, pangolins, porcupines, grass cutters among others. There are also diverse bird species in the Reserve, attracting researchers from higher institutions to carry out research on plant and animal life and other disciplines. Close to the Reserve are secondary forests, a result of bush fallowing as an agricultural system. These forests are located in several smaller valleys due to the undulating nature of the terrain.

Upper western Menchum River Valley is also watered by several tributaries into the Menchum River which include Rivers Mughom, Tschuuh Akoghe, Mepheh and Ahndreh. These rivers are fed by smaller streams. The hydrology is therefore suitable for a variety of economic activities including lumbering, hunting, fishing, carving, farming, trading, animal husbandry and cattle grazing. Bu village for example, is the breadbasket of Wum subdivision. The rich and fertile Meteh and Menchum River Valleys including the natural forest are a source of a variety of foodstuff like rice, maize, cassava, beans, cocoyams and plantains among others. The cultivation of vegetables takes place without application of artificial fertiliser. This is due to fertility of the valley following deposition of debris from flooded River Menchum during the rainy months of July to September.³⁵

Apart from rich forestland in upper western Menchum River Valley, there is a plain that supports intensive agriculture. The villages that exploit natural resources here include Akuli, Bu, Mbengkas, Mughom and other neighbouring groups like Ndung, Mbakong and Obang located in eastern upper Menchum River Valley. Among its different economic activities, the river valley has a long history of rice cultivation³⁶ an important income earner. It contributed to transform traditional housing types, promoted education and improved on the people's health. Many children have pursued formal education from elementary to tertiary level from rice proceeds. Women eventually dominated rice because it is an income earner.³⁷ This rice specie has a ready internal market although there is need for a vast commercial rice production which will provide more jobs, transform lives and curb rural poverty.

When rice was introduced into the area in 1953 from Abakaliki in Nigeria, it was a cash crop largely controlled by men but with the advent of the economic quagmire of the 1980s, women became important stakeholders in the rice economy.³⁸ They now dominate this economy from production to commercialisation in upper western Menchum River Valley. Thanks to this economic crop, the Bu/Mbengkas Rice Cooperative Society was constructed and another one in Mbengkas in later years. Although the cooperative society was for many years poorly managed, it still helped many farmers solve problems with advanced payment of money during the planting season. The rice was made available to the cooperative after harvest.

Maize cultivation which is a staple and also income earner is extensively cultivated in the upper western Menchum River Valley and largely by women, many of whom now clear and cultivate their farms unlike before. In the past men assisted in clearing these farms and transported the crop home. Today, many of them no longer do so. They engage in other gainful activities like fishing to support the family. Women and

³⁵ Resolutions of Home Branch Executive of BUCADA, 24 June 2001; A Welcome Address Presented by BUCADA to the Sub Divisional Officer for Wum Sub Division, Menchum Division on his Meet-the-People Tour to Bu Village in Wum Central Subdivision Tuesday 13 January 2009.

³⁶ Bime, M.J., Fouda T.M., and Mai Bong J.K. (2014). "Analysis of the Profitability and Marketing Channels of Rice: A Case Study of Menchum River Valley, North West Region, Cameroon," *Asian Journal of Agriculture and Rural Development* 4, 6: 352-360.

³⁷ Kah, Henry Kam (2013). "Masculinity and Female Resistance in the Rice Economy in Meteh/Menchum Valley Bu, North West Cameroon, 1953-2005," *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 15, 7: 115-134.

³⁸ Ibid.

children cultivate maize, transportation and sell it.³⁹ As the people's staple, corn fufu and beer are prepared from maize. Women sell some corn in the local and neighbouring markets including Wum, Befang and Bamenda, regional capital of the North West Region of Cameroon. Status among the people is partly measured on the quantity of maize produced by a family. Initiation into indigenous institutions like *Kuiifuai* and *Kefaa* male and female regulatory societies respectively involves basins of corn fufu and corn beer. During funeral celebrations, women contribute corn or the flour to support each other.⁴⁰ The maize cultivated is therefore used for socio-cultural, economic and political purposes among the people of the Menchum River Valley.

Besides, many young boys are engaged in fishing with hooks and nets in the rivers of upper western Menchum River Valley. They fish for tilapia, mud fish, crabs and tadpoles very common in the area.⁴¹ Fishing is carried out by professional fishermen all year round. The peak period is the dry season beginning from mid-October to mid-April. Some men trap fish during the rainy season as they check their hooks early in the morning and in the evenings before night fall. Fishing like hunting is a *rite de passage* from childhood to adulthood. Children are gradually initiated into the art by their peers. It is done in combination with teaching them how to swim. When they have become proficient in the art, they are now fish on their own for the home and market. During funeral celebrations in the dry season, fish is in very high demand and fishermen make brisk business. Numerous rivers and streams facilitate fishing for many young people. While boys and men fish tilapia and mudfish, girls and women fish crabs and tadpoles. These are local delicacies held in very high esteem by the people. In Nearby Baisso village was organised in fishing tadpoles as a community which was sold far and wide but this has declined due to out-migration and other activities.

Another important economic crop which was cultivated on the hills but today in swampy areas close to the Menchum River Valley is groundnuts. Several years ago, the crop was cultivated mostly for local consumption and funeral related activities but today, it pays a lot to cultivate it because it is in high demand in the market. Men and women borrow money from spent thrift or *njangi* groups to invest in groundnuts cultivation. They pay labour to clear their farms and cultivate them. Young couples invest time and resources in this activity so that they can raise money to build a house, pay bride-wealth and educate children. The upper western Menchum River Valley therefore offers opportunities for farmers who are busy all year round cultivating one crop after the other. Apart from groundnuts, Okro, beans and cassava are also cultivated for home use and the market.⁴²

One economically rewarding crop, initially cultivated only in the coastal region of Cameroon but now heavily cultivated in upper western Menchum River Valley is cocoa. Changes in climate and research have made it possible for the crop to be cultivated in this area and other parts of the North West Region. Large cocoa farms have been opened with an increase in the competition for land. Even within farming communities of Aguli and Bu there is competition and skirmishes over land for cocoa plantations.⁴³ This crop has come to add to rice as an important cash crop for the people. Forest has been destroyed to plant cocoa. This is affecting climate because streams flowing through these forested areas dry up especially in the dry season.

³⁹ Kah, Henry Kam (2011). "The Cutlass my Husband, the Hoe my Wife:" Women and Economic Development among the Laimbwe of North West Cameroon in Contemporary Times," *KALIAO: Revue pluridisciplinaire de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure de Maroua (Cameroun)* 3, 5: 9-22.

⁴⁰ Wei, Vida; Ndzjuh, Grace. Bu, Personal Communication, 24 December 2020.

⁴¹ Ndong, Eric Kubuh, Muh, Griffith Kang. Bu, Personal Communication, 24 December 2020.

⁴² Kule, Ibi; Sih, Evangelai. Bu, Personal Communication, 24 December 2020.

⁴³ Kom, Ferdinand Kam. Nduneei, Personal Communication, 24 December 2020.

Many traders from across the eastern part of Menchum River Valley have found the western upper part of the valley to do business. They cross the river using canoes in the rainy season and on foot in the dry season to buy maize, groundnuts, beans, cocoyams, bananas among others which they in turn sell to passengers plying the Wum Bamenda highway. Some also transport it to sell in Bamenda town. Among the popular rural markets along the Wum Bamenda highway are Tingoh, Mbakong, Obang, Nduung and Befang.⁴⁴ Some of these crops are paid for when they are still to get ready in the farms. Canoe riders benefit from transporting goods across the river to waiting buyers on the Bamenda-Wum highway. The area therefore provides opportunities for several people involved in the marketing chain of agricultural products.

DRIVERS OF AGRICULTURALIST/PASTORALIST SKIRMISHES

The agriculturist/pastoralist brawls in the upper western Menchum River Valley are a current spectacle because before the 1990s, such did not really exist. Several factors account for frequent tension between communities in this area and cattle Fulani or the Akus as they are locally known in Menchum Division. One main reason is the fluctuating climatic conditions due to farming and bush burning. Patches of forest in undulating slopes in Bu and Aguli villages have been burnt thereby affecting the ecological balance.⁴⁵ Cultivation of maize, which is the people’s staple food crop has resulted in destruction of forested areas that serve as catchment areas for streams that empty their waters into the rivers on the plain. Table 1 below summarises the drivers of agriculturist/pastoralist skirmishes in the upper western Menchum River Valley.

Table 1: Drivers of Agriculturist/Pastoralist Skirmishes in Upper Western Menchum River Valley

Driver	Cause
Fluctuating climate	Uncontrolled farming and bush burning
Unreliable water spots	Effect of dry season and deforestation
Unsustainable grazing practices of pastoralists	Lack of innovation
elite collaboration	Greed
Thin soil in the hills	Torrential rains and leaching
Overgrazing	Cattle concentration

Source: Compiled by Author from Field Research, 2018-2020

During the dry season therefore, cattle do not have secure or reliable water spots. This has often compelled pastoralists to move their cattle through transhumance into the plain yearly where there is enough water and pasture for them. In most instances, this is during the drier months of January to March. Dotted trees in the savanna grassland zone are cut down for fuel wood or charcoal. This is highly demanded by bread baking companies in Wum and Bamenda. This activity has systematically destroyed the savanna ecosystem forcing cattle breeders to move their cattle into the upper western Menchum River Valley at the dawn of every dry season. Lumber men also cut trees to produce timber in smaller valleys within hill-slopes. These activities over the years have led to changes in the environment detrimental to cattle grazing on the hills.

Besides, the Aku unsustainable grazing practices in this area have contributed to the movement of cattle into valley areas only to run into problems with agriculturists. Cattle graziers in upper western Menchum River Valley like elsewhere in Menchum rely on natural grass to feed their cattle. Some of them have only recently provided paddock for cattle grazing and farming. In spite of that, many of them still rely on cattle grazing. In neighbouring Donga Mantung Division, the people of Dumbo, known for heavy cattle grazing activities have developed a sustainable farming and grazing practice which has drastically reduced conflicts between agriculturists and pastoralists. Many pastoralists are also farmers. They make very good use of

⁴⁴ Nyenghe, Christopher. Nduneei, Personal Communication, 24 December 2020.

⁴⁵ Itung, Jonathan. Bu, Personal Communication, 17 January 2018; Zoh, Joseph Ndang, Chu, Henry Ngam; Kpwa, Vincent; Aba, Tasuh. Bu, Personal Communication, 17 January 2018.

cow dung in cultivating their crops which is enriched by bush fallowing. In doing so, there is enough food from the farms to feed cattle and enough meat with which to provide sauce for food.

In upper western Menchum River Valley too are selfish elite activities and gullible collaborators. In Bu for example, some elite and traditional council members collect money from graziers so that their cattle can move into the valley every dry season where there is pasture and water. In 2018 for instance, some gullible local collaborators obtained money from one Aku cattle grazier posing as representatives of the Fon to allow him pitch permanent tent in the valley for his cattle until the dry season was over. Others collected money from cattle graziers in distant Bamenda and directed them to occupy upper western Menchum River Valley. They met with other cattle graziers from the hills surrounding this area and also from Wum, the divisional headquarters of Menchum and destruction of crops was total. Farmers paid the prize for dubious elite activities together with their collaborators in the village. They eventually rallied and seized cattle and their owners paid money before getting them back.⁴⁶

Along the slopes of upper western Menchum River Valley extending from Aguli to Bu like elsewhere in Menchum are thin soils highly leached during torrential rainfall. Herders are particularly affected and often descend to the valley occupied by farmers to graze their cattle. The result has been destruction of cereals including cassava, corn, cocoyams and potatoes. Greater ramifications have been economic friction between these pastoralists and agriculturists⁴⁷ with greater socio-economic consequences on the population. It has created a love-hate relationship between pastoralists on one hand and the local population and agriculturists on the other.

Skirmishes have escalated between agriculturists and pastoralists because of double standards of administrative officials in Wum. They have used this brawl between these two groups to reap where they did not plant. Cases of crop destruction on farmlands have been timely reported to the administration, but more often it either pays a deaf ear or favour pastoralists against agriculturists. Many pastoralists corrupt administrative officials into accepting money to remain silent or warn protesting farmers. Even when herders are called upon to pay for crop damage, they will not pay and these officials will do nothing because their hands have been soiled. Local farmers, most of them women, become helpless in the face of injustice. Some graziers stubbornly live on land given to them and will not leave when asked to do so.⁴⁸

In several parts of Menchum Division including upper western Menchum River Valley, there is overgrazing. This is compounded by seasonal variation in precipitation and reluctance by graziers to cultivate improved pasture. They are thus forced into transhumance between November and March every year which is a source of conflict with farmers. As they move in search of greener pasture for their cattle, young boys tending the cattle lead them to farms where they destroy crops. They disregard transhumance tracts which lead to water points and dry season grazing areas. As a result, cattle often stray into farms, eating everything they find and destroying crops⁴⁹ and making farmers angry with these intruders.

⁴⁶ Eye Witness Account, 16 January 2018.

⁴⁷ Ami-Nyoh, H. (2015). "Strategies and Pitfalls of Agro-Pastoral Conflicts Prevention in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon under British Administration," *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* 3, 4A: 825-832.

⁴⁸ A Welcome Address Presented by the Bu Community to the Senior Divisional Officer for Menchum Division on his Maiden Meet-the-People Tour to Bu on Saturday 26 March 1994.

⁴⁹ Elong, Joseph Gabriel and Michael Atanga Nji. "Farmer-Grazier Land Conflict in Wum Central Sub-Division, Menchum Division, North West Region of Cameroon," In *Regards multidisciplinaires sur les conflits fonciers et leurs impacts socio-économico-politiques au Cameroun*, Francois Nkankeu and Christopher Bryant, *Directors Laboratoire Développement durable et dynamique territoriale*, 213-221. Département de Géographie, Université de Montréal.

RAMIFICATIONS OF LAND-USE CONFLICT

Some actors are engaged in double standards which has compounded skirmishes between farmers and cattle graziers in upper western Menchum River Valley. Hungry individuals approach cattle owners for money and tell them to move cattle into upper western Menchum River Valley where crop damage takes place. This is betrayal of their people for egotistical reasons. Some elite of Bu village for example, met and negotiated with cattle graziers in Mendankwe in faraway Bamenda and those in Wum to send cattle to graze in this part of the Menchum River Valley. Cattle from Mendankwe in Mezam Division got into the area in 2018 through Obang in Bafut subdivision. This was facilitated by Bu people living in the farming settlement of Nduneei, within this river valley. They advised cattle graziers to send cattle across the Menchum River on country Sundays or traditional rest days when the people go home to return later. The reduction of grazing land due to other human activities explains the continuous movement of cattle into the uppermost western part of the Menchum River Valley.

Competition for space between cattle grazing and crop cultivation resulted in a number of related problems. Trampling of the soil hardens it and make tilling difficult after transhumance. Arguments have been raised that a fence is needed to demarcate grazing areas in the valley from farmland but this is still to materialise. This however remains a problem because the expansion of farming activities has led to expansion of the area occupied for actual farming. Women are also very bitter with men because once the protest is over and graziers come to negotiate with elders, men would exclude women from being part of the discussions. At the end, corrupt graziers bribe men and the problem remains. Women are not only excluded from negotiations with graziers but do not benefit from the money these corrupt graziers give to men. Graziers generally compete for favours from the people of Aguli and Bu and this has compounded the pastoralist/agriculturist skirmish over the years.

There is a glaring case of Alhadji Sunday, Osieni, Isiaku Yakubu who was contacted by elders of Bu village to contribute money for village development and take control of the valley area during the dry season months to the exclusion of other graziers. Issiaku Yakubu did not respect the terms of agreement as he sent cattle into rice fields which destroyed them. The three graziers had been warned that in case of crop damage, they would never again take cattle into the valley. This they did not respect. Oseini moved his cattle into farmland and destroyed crops. Before moving to Bu, he had run into problems with the people of Kuk village in Menchum Division. He was asked to relocate his cattle to a new piece of land to enable women to cultivate the area made fertile by cow dung. When he refused, Kuk people asked him out of their land.⁵⁰

Several other actions were an outcome of the pastoralist/agriculturist conflict in the upper western Menchum River Valley. Bu people on 14 December 2016 for example, petitioned the chairman of the farmer/grazier commission for Menchum condemning Mr Bong Emmanuel Muam for allowing cows to destroy crops in the name of authority or traditional ruler.⁵¹ Similarly, during a Mbengkas Development Committee (MBEDECO) meeting of 31 December 2017 at the Fon's palace, women expressed bitterness with their crop destruction by cows in 2016 without compensation. Their spokesperson did not mince words while addressing the population gathered. Women vowed to fight graziers if cattle were subsequently led into their valley.⁵²

Cattle influx into upper western Menchum River Valley area affected productivity and interrupted agricultural activities carried out annually. This interruption has been in the form of farmland occupation and crop destruction. Graziers also boldly move cattle up the entire valley from the entry point in Aguli

⁵⁰ Farmer/Grazier Meeting of the 26th November 1999.

⁵¹ A Letter from Bu Village to the Chairman of the Farmer-Grazier Commission Wum Sub Division on "Constant Destruction of Crops in the Bu Valley during Transhumance," 14 December 2016.

⁵² (Eye Witness Account, Mbengkas, 31 December 2017).

village. The crops so destroyed have never been fully compensated. Women felt most hurt because they cultivate most of the crops. Uncontrollably angry the people intimated that:

In the light of the above, we have vehemently vowed that no cattle shall be seen in our valley during this season. We are bent to spark problems to this effect if cows are forced to our valley given that the aforementioned person sells our farms during this season. To a Bu man that is a valley of life.⁵³

The people had been frustrated that destroyed crops were never adequately compensated for. They were sad that during the dry season their farms were temporarily not owned by them. It was a source of their livelihood and others could not be allowed to deprive them of this.

Cattle owners also negotiate with the village leadership without women when they suffer the most when cattle move into the valley during the dry season. Their discussion with the village leadership ends up money exchanging hands. This is however not a panacea for the pastoralist/agriculturist row in this river valley. Even as women lost crops from cattle destruction, the Divisional Officer of Wum Central subdivision was asked to grant transhumance permit to Messrs Meh Fung Joseph and Useni Adamou to pasture their cattle in Bu village near the Nduneei farming settlement from in January to March 2016.⁵⁴ This clearly indicated that leadership was insensitive to the plight of women and by extension the entire community.

Several cow owners negotiated deals for their cattle to graze in the valley at the heart of the dry season but never respected them. Alhadji Shede Yah for instance, entered an agreement with the *Ngumba* (male regulatory society) of Bu village to have his cattle pasture in upper western Menchum River Valley on 3 January 2010. The cows were to stay in the valley in the dry season months of January to March 2010 and should not trespass into people's farms, failing which he would pay for it. The said gentleman did not respect the terms of agreement and cows destroyed women crops causing untold suffering.⁵⁵

Similarly, Fon Bonghezee II authorised transhumance for Shede Doki at the Meteh Valley stretching from River Meveh towards the Bu-Mbengkas road in the 2012 dry season on conditions. Cows were not to enter farms with crops and if there was crop destruction compensation would be paid immediately. Cows would not move through Bu village and herders would not lead cows to any area that was not assigned to them.⁵⁶ In spite of efforts to promote co-existence in several parts of Menchum Division including Aguli, Bu and Mbengkas located in the upper western and eastern Menchum River Valley, there have been accusations that the Fulani purposely allow their animals to destroy crops. They also block useful water points and encroach into land which is not theirs and has not been assigned them.⁵⁷

The increase in cultivation of bush farms by migrant farmers, has led to an increase in the risk of cattle destruction of crops. During the farming season, graziers meander through farms to reach pasture land and cattle cannot avoid trampling on farmers crops. The long-term effect is that the Fulani are increasingly having issues with effective transhumance and are expected to go as far as Obang and Bafut valley on the eastern part of the upper Menchum River Valley. This entails heavy expenditure through negotiations with chiefs where cattle are exchanged to guarantee grazing in the valley. Land scarcity here is linked to the

⁵³ A Letter from Bu Village to the Chairman of the Farmer-Grazier Commission Wum," 14 December 2016.

⁵⁴ Letter from the Fon of Bu to the Divisional Officer Wum Central Sub Division on "Application to Grant Transhumance Permit to Messrs- Meh Fung Joseph – Useni Adamou," 31 December 2015.

⁵⁵ An Agreement between the Ngumba of Bu Village and Alhadji Shede Yah, 3 January 2010.

⁵⁶ Fon Bonghezee Authorisation of Fon Bonghezee II, 29 December 2011.

⁵⁷ Ngalim, Aloysius Nyuymengka (2015). "Cultural Boundary Dynamics: The Aghem and Fulani of Menchum, North West Region of Cameroon 1950-2013," *International Journal of Information Research and Review* 2, 5: 701-710.

colonial period when colonial officials and local chiefs were more concerned with the jangali tax and gave the Fulani only grazing permits and not land rights.⁵⁸ The Fulani also grapple with farmers who have become graziers and using their money to acquire large pieces of land. The rich non-Fulani economic and political elite are taking up all the hills for their cattle through land certificates and the poor Mbororo have no other option than to negotiate their way into the valley for the survival of their cattle.⁵⁹ The table below presents conflicts and petitions for a selected number of years.

Table 2: Conflicts and Petitions in Upper Western Menchum River Valley

Year	Conflict/Petition
2010	Alhadji Shede Yah ran into conflict with Bu people for failing to respect the terms of agreement with the Bu <i>Ngumba</i> that his cattle should not stray into farms failing which he would pay compensation
2012	Conflict around the Meteh area with Shede Doki who did not control his cattle from destroying farmers crops
2016	Bu people petitioned the Chairman of the Farmer/Grazier Commission in Wum complaining about Emmanuel Bong Muam who collected money from graziers for their cattle to graze in their valley
2017	Mbengkas women gathered in the palace to protest against cattle destruction of their crops in 2016 without compensation
2018	Conflict with graziers from Mendankwe in Mezam Division who entered the area through Obang in upper eastern Menchum River Valley

Source: Compiled by Author from Field Research, 2018-2020

Limitations and Future Research

This work is not devoid of limitations which can be a subject of future research in the area of development and peace studies. The limitations were essentially based on the fact that the issues raised could be taken up for further research in the future. Among these limitations were role of the elites and chiefs, contribution of non-pastoralist cattle graziers, women farmers and mobilisation, ramifications of the expansion of grazing land by colonial administrative officials on agriculturist/pastoralist conflicts today, farming and grazing practices and the laws associated with transhumance. These limitations provide avenue for future research in the geographically strategic region of the North West Region of Cameroon.

One area for future research is the complex role of elites and chiefs in farmer/grazier conflicts. Many elites living outside the study area work in connivance with local collaborators to create problems between farmers and graziers. They approach these graziers and collect money from them and without due consideration for poor farmers order them to move their cattle to farmlands where they destroy crops. Some chiefs too instead of defending the interest of their subjects collect money from graziers so that cattle can graze and destroy farmlands. Others petition government officials about the dubious activities of some of their peers and these petitions always end up not yielding the required results because some administrative officials receive bribe from both elite and power graziers who political roots are deep. A study of the complexity in the role of these important stakeholders need to be given seriously scholarly attention.

Besides, there is a phenomenon whereby non-Fulani cattle graziers are also into the business of cattle rearing. This is a problem because the farmers now have to deal with the pastoralists and also the non-Fulani graziers. Some of this category of graziers often use their connection with influential people in the circles of power to occupy large expanses of land to the detriment not only of the Fulani graziers but their kith and kin who are farmers. It is a phenomenon that should be studied to be able to ascertain the magnitude

⁵⁸ Angwafo, "Contesting Land and Identity," 102-103.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*; 104 and 144.

of the skirmish between agriculturists/pastoralists. It will go a long way to reveal power-dynamics that negatively affect poor rural farmers as some of them no longer have enough land on which cultivate different kinds of crops all year round.

While women farmer mobilisation has been raised in studies on the Grassfields, there is still need to compare and contrast with what was done earlier. There is an increasing social engineering with women at the forefront. Their mobilisation is proof of the fact that women have taken upon themselves the right to be on the table whenever issues of well-being are concerned. They will always act as a check and balance to the dubious activities of men who want to benefit from different parties to a conflict.

The expansion of grazing land by British administrative officials and the fact that farming and grazing practices have not fundamentally undergone innovation should also be an area of future research. The attitude of colonial administrative officials and those of them after independence and reunification in 1961 need to be carefully interrogated to establish similarities and differences. Colonial officials in several instances supported graziers over farmers and this trend has continued into the post-independence period. The dynamics at play can be investigated and findings presented. Besides, farming and grazing practices have not changed much in the area of study and there will be need to understand the rationale behind this attitude and its broader impact on conflict between pastoralists and agriculturists.

Transhumance from the colonial to the post-independence period was organised with laws guiding this. Today these laws are not strictly respected. It is worth investigating to establish the link between laws and their practical implementation. It will also be important to examine the laws on transhumance in the post-independence period. A careful study of this is important as it will be able to shed light on how laws can help reduce conflicts between farmers and herders.

CONCLUSION

In this article we have shown that pastoralist/agriculturist rows are endemic in several parts of Africa including Cameroon. In the North West Region of the country, these conflicts are regular and with ramifications for both parties. Menchum Division is one of the divisions of the North West with a heavy cattle population and conflicts with farmers have risen as a result of this. Attempts at peaceful co-existence have been challenged by these continuous conflicts. These have been further compounded by the fact that rich indigenes have also taken to cattle rearing as a very rewarding economic activity. While conflicts were lethal in many parts of Menchum Division, this was not the case in the upper western part of the Menchum River Valley. The people cultivated crops in the valleys and generally avoided hill-slopes and graziers monopolised the hills and smaller valleys around these hills. Several changes including bush burning, increase in population and cattle herding among others led these graziers to take grazing cattle into the valley during the dry season. The upper western Menchum River Valley before the 1990s was conflict free as farmers cultivated crops without cattle to destroy them. Graziers from far away Bamenda and Wum moved cattle to this area and this led to competition for limited space in the valley during the dry season. This is presently a source of problem and there is compelling need for this matter to be looked into with the aim of sustaining the lives of graziers and farmers.

Several policy implications can be drawn from this case study of agriculturist/pastoralist rows in the upper western Menchum River Valley to resolve it once and for all. One of such is the need for the Cameroon government to train pastoralists of Menchum Division on the creation of permanent paddocks with high yielding grass as is done elsewhere so that cattle can move from one paddock or enclosure to another while gardening takes place in the former paddock which has been fertilised by cow dung. This will lead to effective occupation and use of land for the collective good. The services of agriculturists could be hired to cultivate crops like maize in the enclosures abandoned for a period of time. The development of water points from drilling boreholes or from nearby rivers will provide enough water for cattle and pastoralists to

drink and to water the enclosures and keep them permanently green during the dry season. If this is done, it will limit transhumance and the conflicts that have taken place in a hitherto relatively calm region of the North West Region of Cameroon will be a thing of the past.

There is also need for the government to revise transhumance rules and ensure that these are effectively implemented. Graziers will be able to move cattle into the Menchum River Valley area and graze their cattle in designated areas without allowing them to stray into farmlands and destroy crops. These designated areas could also be fenced with barb wire and provided with water so that cattle can graze and drink water without moving to far away distances. The graziers or those employed to tend cattle can be trained in seminars on how they can live with others without any animosity. This is because some of the skirmishes are as result of the foolhardiness of these boys often known as *bambes* who stubbornly direct cattle to eat up crops in farmlands. A proper education of these boys together with the cattle owners can go a long way to improve relations between agriculturists and pastoralists and rows would be averted.

Bribe taking and giving once established could also be heavily sanctioned by law. This would deter gullible elite and politicians from making capital out of a feud between a farmer and a herder. It would also prevent corrupt administrative officials from collecting money from both parties to settle a conflict when in actual fact, they only exacerbate the problem further. In this way, government would have addressed a vexing issue that has over the years been responsible for the row between herders and farmers in the upper western Menchum River Valley of Cameroon.