Trade and Traders. The Making of the Cattle Market in Benin
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Preface and Acknowledgements

Back in February 1993 I visited my first West African cattle market in Pouytenga, Burkina Faso. Numerous visits to equally dusty and always noisy arenas crowded with bulls, cows and people have followed since then, to the point where they have become a familiar ritual during my stays in West Africa. Whenever or wherever a cattle market came in sight or was within a day's travel, curiosity would take me there. Curiosity for one of the most well-established types of trade in West Africa, performed by specialised traders who have traditionally brought their herds from the arid zones of the interior to the densely populated coastal towns. Curiosity for the careers and strategies of these traders, many of whom have stories to tell from all over West Africa. Curiosity that probably reached unprecedented heights in June 1998 when, on a holiday in Mali, I found myself on the outskirts of Djenné, discussing with an 'accidentally' encountered cattle trader the ins and outs of the Ibadan cattle market in Nigeria and the opportunities for selling cattle in Conakry (Guinea) since the Freetown market in Sierra Leone had become inaccessible. The same curiosity ultimately resulted in the present book which deals with the cattle trade and the cattle traders of the Republic of Benin.

I started reading about the cattle trade in West Africa in 1992. For several years, a number of alarming reports had been appearing about the 'dumping' of European Union beef and its alleged detrimental impact on West African cattle and meat marketing channels. Apart from the practical concern of NGOs and West African governments, a scientific debate was going on about the incentives for regional food trade in West Africa. At the Human Geography Department of the University of Amsterdam where I was studying, this debate was being closely followed by Leo de Haan and he suggested that I carry out 'thesis fieldwork' on the cattle trade in Burkina Faso and the export of animals to Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire in particular.

So in 1993, together with Willemijn van Helden and Ouindinda Nikiema, I undertook a study among the cattle traders at the Pouytenga market in Burkina Faso. Our collaborative effort to inquire into cattle exports and the strategies of cattle traders was something I very much enjoyed, not only because of the interesting subject but also because of the friendships that grew out of it. The research project turned out to be well-timed in the sense that we could provide valuable field data to governmental and non-governmental organisations that were relevant to the 'cattle and meat issue' at that time. This ultimately resulted in a request from a Dutch NGO to study the impact of beef imports on consumption patterns in Accra and Abidjan.

Both studies contributed much to my fascination for and insight into the topic. Thus, when I was offered the opportunity to carry out a doctoral study on the cattle trade and cattle traders in Benin, I did not hesitate. Doing a PhD presented the challenge of combining human geography, economics and anthropology into the study of one particular theme. The significance of such an interdisciplinary approach for the study of the cattle trade was something I wanted to prove. A very important source of inspiration to me was the volume on West African traders edited by Emmanuel Grégoire and Pascal Labazée, published in 1993.
The research activities for the present study were financed by two institutions. First, I would like to mention the Faculty of Environmental Sciences of the University of Amsterdam, and in particular the Amsterdam Research Institute for Global Issues and Development Studies (AGIDS) which is part of the Centre for Resource Studies for Development (CERES). AGIDS is especially acknowledged for its generous financial support in the publication of this book. Second, research funds were provided by the European Union in the framework of its STD 3 research programme Gestion des Terroirs, Sécurité Alimentaire et Migrations au Sahel (Land Management, Food Security and Migration in the Sahel), co-ordinated by Prof. Katherine Homewood of University College London. I participated in this research project together with Leo de Haan and Fred Zaal (both at AGIDS) and with colleagues from the Université Nationale du Bénin, University College London, the Institut du Développement Rural (IDR, Burkina Faso) and the Institut de Recherche Biologie et Ecologie Tropicale (IRBET/INERA, Burkina Faso). Thanks to the project workshops I was able to present and receive comments and criticism on my research plan and later on research results from inspiring and enthusiastic colleagues.

Although PhD work would finally start in December 1994, I made an exploratory trip to Benin in August 1994. It assured me of the importance and feasibility of studying the cattle trade there and, moreover, indicated that working in Benin would be enjoyable and rewarding as well. This turned out to be more than true. Many people made my stay in Benin a pleasant and fruitful one whether in the field of my research or in more personal encounters. I would mention the following people who contributed in one way or another to the completion of this book.

First of all, I must thank all the cattle traders who so patiently and repeatedly responded to my questions and shared their experiences with me. Of course, without their co-operation and that of numerous others throughout northern Benin and at the cattle markets of Cotonou, Lomé and Ibadan, my venture would not have been possible at all. In particular, I would like to mention El Hadj Bouréima, El Hadj Ouassou and El Hadj Abdulaye, whom I met so many times. I admire them and learned a lot from them. In Kandi, where I had my research base, I met Zanussi Medagui with whom I discussed many things about the trade in cattle, often on a Sunday afternoon 'sous les neems'. I owe a lot to Zanussi and his wife for their friendship and generosity. Unfortunately, two cattle traders will never see the results of my work. In August 1996, on my way back from Banikoara to Kandi I was accompanied by Bani Kouringa and El Hadj Pate Maroua who were going to Ibadan that day. Several days earlier, their cattle herd had left together with their herders. We parted in Kandi having agreed to continue our conversation upon their return from Nigeria. This would never happen. Kouringa and Pate Maroua both died in a car accident near Parakou on their return journey. This book is dedicated to them.

Ever since my first trip to Benin, Houinsou Dedehouanou and Théophile Djedjebi (both from the Université Nationale du Bénin) have been my 'brothers in research' as well as a source of constant support. This collaboration has been very important to me. With Théophile I shared many hours in the field and our trip to northern Burkina Faso to visit our project colleagues was memorable. With Dede, I shared the ups and downs of PhD research. During my stays in Benin and during his stays in Amsterdam we spent long hours discussing a variety of issues. These discussions inspired me and I learned a lot from him. Together we wrote an article which searches for the interface between our PhD studies. Apart from the article itself, it gave us great satisfaction to discuss so many aspects of our respective studies.
Sur le terrain, I was assisted by Bio W. Orou-Kérou and Amadou Mama 'Rikou'. Together, we soon became known as l'équipe Université d'Amsterdam not in the least because of our frequently worn University of Amsterdam T-shirts which protected us surprisingly well from the dust and heat of the cattle markets. Amadou and Bio, ... I owe you much for all your hard work, thought-provoking remarks, enthusiasm and sacrifices, your willingness to put up with my whims and, most of all, your friendship. Among my best memories are the trips we made together throughout Benin and in Togo and Nigeria, following our traders and visiting new markets. The hospitality with which I was received in your villages and in your homes, on numerous stays, was heart warming. Alima and Baké, thanks for all your generosity.

In Benin, the institutional environment of my work consisted of the Faculty of Agronomic Sciences of the Université Nationale du Bénin and the Department of Animal Husbandry of the Ministry of Rural Development. I am grateful to the Faculty Dean, C. Adandedjan and his staff who facilitated my stay and provided me with useful comments and feedback. At the Animal Husbandry Department, I thank the Director, Dr Latifou Sidi, for supplying contacts with veterinary officers in the field, Dr George Nassara and Dr Yolande Bigot for providing relevant data and releasing useful documents, and Dr Malete Yombo, the director of the Cotonou slaughterhouse, for the insights he offered.

At the University of Amsterdam, I would first of all like to express my gratitude to my promotor Prof. Ad de Bruijne and my co-promotor Dr Leo de Haan who will be a professor at the Third World Centre of the University of Nijmegen when this book is published. I very much appreciated their very positive attitude, doing their supervision of this PhD project. I am also indebted to Prof. Ton Dietz for his initial role in this research project and for his support. A special word of appreciation goes to Leo de Haan, who drew my attention to the cattle and meat business in West Africa in the first place. His continuous interest for this research and his confidence in what I was doing were of great value. We also had the opportunity to do several other things together such as giving a course on fieldwork methodology, supervising students and having drinks in a Cotonou bar. All these are treasured memories.

At the Institute of Human Geography which became the Amsterdam Institute of Global Issues and Developments Studies (AGIDS), I had many colleagues with whom I shared lunches, nice 'AIO-weekends' and much more. They form a long list and I will therefore just mention: Antje van Driel who is an inspiring expert on northern Benin and whose interest in the life of its inhabitants I shared; Fred Zaal, my cattle-market partner and amateur of beef consumption; Micky Hordijk, for her detailed reading of my work and because of her admirable 'drive' and commitment to the people in her research area, and Marcel Put and Hein de Haas who were both literally 'behind me'.

There are a great number of people I would like to mention for a variety of reasons. Again, this is a risky venture because of the certainty of forgetting someone. Being aware of this, I thank Simplice Vodouè and his family (in Cotonou) for all their hospitality and friendship, Alphonse Yaro and family (in Kandi) for the pleasant stay we had at their cour, Tiburce Kouton (Banikoara) for all the laughs, and El Hadj Manger Revenir (Cotonou) for his delicious beef brochettes. In Amsterdam, I thank Andries Klaasse Bos for his sincere interest in my activities, his detailed comments on parts of this book and for the opportunity to write an article together. In Amsterdam as well as in Kandi, Peter Ton was good company, as a friend and as a northern Benin expert. In France, and occasionally at a cattle market
somewhere in West Africa, I spent much time with my friend Jean-Pierre Rolland of SOLAGRAL, who was so kind as to correct the French summary. We definitively share the curiosity I mentioned earlier, which says it all.

Finally, there is the close inner circle of supportive people who are always there. I would especially like to thank my parents for all the support and encouragement they have always given me throughout the long years of my study. This has meant a lot to me. The most constant person in all this has been Lieke, who had the courage to follow me all the way to Benin in 1996. She made our stay there such a wonderful one that we have been inspired to look for prolongation. It became Dakar, and I very much look forward to accompanying her there.

Amsterdam, June 1999
Introduction

Custrun is a Pulaar cattle reeler who was born in Pungo Kebbi, a village in the far north of the Republic of Borno, then under the rule of Niasse. Nowadays, he resides in Lagos, the capital city of Nigeria. Born about 1947, Custrun was raised by his father and mother, who had migrated to Lagos to escape the drought of the early 1970s. The drought necessitated a search for water for cattle from Kemi, Nigeria, and Custrun took the initiative to help his family manage the cattle's needs. Upon arrival in Lagos, Custrun was given a small plot of land by his father which he sold in order to buy a small cattle truck. Following this, he started to regularly purchase cattle from Pungo Kebbi keepers and sell them in nearby markets in Lagos and even across the border of Borno. Given the presence of affluent markets for cattle and his father's assistance, Custrun expanded his business. After a while, he moved to Gwoza where he worked as a cattle broker, and he had established a cattle market in search of better customers. In Gwoza, he encountered a cattle dealer who taught him the business of cattle. At that time, cattle trading was greatly improving in Gwoza, the demand for cattle was on the rise, and the price of cattle was increasing. In 1975, however, the government stopped cattle traders and members of cattle dealers, and the cattle market was closed. Custrun continued trading cattle with local farmers, and they gradually moved back to Lagos from their local market. Custrun followed them and took up the trading activities in the market, which he has been practicing ever since. Together with Custrun, he occasionally worked as a cattle dealer in other markets. However, they deliberately avoided the market due to its unstable nature. Thus, they deliberately avoided the market due to its unstable nature. In 1990, they relocated their shop to the cattle market in Lagos, which is located close to the cattle market in Lagos, and they worked closely with their families. In 1990, they relocated their shop to the cattle market in Lagos, and they worked closely with their families.