Sharing a Valley. The changing relations between agriculturalists and pastoralists in the Niger Valley of Benin

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Conflicts and institutions

Linkages between the agriculturalists and pastoralists changed and the complementary nature of both modes of existence faded, as was described in the previous chapter. Fields were extended but the pastoralists’ space requirements did not decrease. The problems of encroaching fields and blocked passageways resulted in a greater risk of crop damage. Periods of peaceful co-existence were interspersed with periods of resource competition. The traditional ways in which co-existence used to be regulated did not suffice any longer. In this chapter it is shown that the institutional linkage became much more important with the forced introduction of new regulatory mechanisms by the administration. Although the new regulation mechanisms that enforced the institutional linkage appeared adequate on paper, in practice they did not prevent the situation from deteriorating. This resulted in bloodshed in November 1984 when relationships between agriculturalists and pastoralists hit an all-time low. Time and again people refer to the events of 1984, rather like Europeans would refer to events happening 'before' or 'after' the Second World War.

Considerable changes in the political setting were brought about by the revolution that took place at the beginning of the 1970s. Therefore prior to analyzing the development of the institutional linkage, the political and organizational setting in which it developed is described.

Changes in political and social organization after the 1972 revolution

In 1972 Brigadier Mathieu Kerekou seized power in a coup d'état and adopted a Marxist-Leninist ideology. In this light, he aimed to rid Benin of all traces of colonial and neo-colonial domination and to create an egalitarian society (Bamidele Ayo 1984). To accomplish this, he introduced reforms of local-level power in 1974, by which the
traditional leaders were replaced with locally elected politicians or assemblies. In addition, a new administrative structure was put in place in 1978.

The basic administrative unit became the commune, existing of a few villages and headed by a maire who replaced the chef d'arrondissement. The maire had to speak French and in many cases the population were limited in their choice as often only young men could speak French as they were the ones to have attended school. To assist the maire in maintaining law and order, miliciers were appointed in every community. These villagers were unpaid but received a uniform and training in a military camp in Kandi.

Within the commune at the village level, the ancient Dendi chief, the kuarakoué, was replaced by a délégué with 25 conseillers who could be of any ethnic origin. The ruggas were not replaced and their official function was abolished.¹ The délégué was supposed to defend the interests of the entire village population, including the Fulbe. A délégué could not be chosen from the same ethnic group as the traditional chief. This new regulation mainly affected families who had first settled in the region and were therefore those who distributed any available land.

In 1978 Kerekou decided to more than double the number of districts "to bring the government closer to the masses" (Decaló 1987: 19). As a result, Karimama became an independent district with 5 communes (Birmilafia, Karimama, Kompa, Bogobogo and Monsey) and was entitled to have a state police force (Force de Sécurité Publique) and a chef de district. Furthermore, new administrative structures, the so-called revolutionary assemblies, were set up nationwide at all administrative levels. These remained operational until 1990 when the democratization process took off. At the district level the revolutionary assembly was called the Conseil Révolutionnaire du District (CRD), which met only twice a year and was presided over by the chef de district. At the commune level (five), Conseils Communaux de Révolution (CCR) were established that were under the control of the maire. Finally at village level, délégués² presided over Conseils Révolutionnaires Locaux (CRL). The meetings of the CCR and CRL were more frequent and differed from one community and village to another.

One representative from every Conseil Révolutionnaire Local was chosen to participate in the most important administrative body in the district, the Comité Révolutionnaire d'Administration du District (CRAD) that met every week. The chef de district presided over the CRAD; and the head of the state police and the head of the extension service (CARDER) were first and second vice presidents respectively (Carder/Borgou rapport annuel 1984; Decaló 1987: 19).

There were four tangible consequences of these changes for the linkages between the Fulbe and the Dendi/Gourmantché. Firstly, Karimama became a district, which meant that it had its own police force and chef de district. People did not have to go all the way to Malanville (a day’s walk) to settle their administrative and legal matters and

¹ However, although the ruggas did not have an official function, their authority within the Fulbe group itself remained.

² The CRL consists of the délégué and seven conseillers responsible for 'organisation', 'production', 'education', 'security', 'social affairs', 'health' and 'financial affairs'. At the community and the district level these same responsibilities were given to the different members.
they had easy access to the state police to complain in cases of unlawful acts. In this way the administration became an important actor in the adjudication of conflicts.

Secondly the revolution abolished the function of the rugga, the spokesman of the Fulbe. Although the traditional functions of the Dendi/Gourmantché were replaced by new positions, the Fulbe felt that they did not have representative bodies of their own. Therefore they tried to find new ways of gaining access to the administration, often by bribery (see also Bierschenk 1997). The Fulbe believed that "one had to invest to consolidate the truth" as one of the Fulbe put it. Under the motto 'let us first rely on our own strength', the newly created function of maires, which had replaced the less numerous chefs d'arrondissement and miliciers, were not remunerated so bribing the administration was an obvious solution for the Fulbe.

Thirdly, the village of Mamassy Peulh started to play a key role in the Niger Valley because it had, as an independent Fulbe village near Karimama, its own maire, unlike the other Fulbe communities that were attached to Dendi and Gourmantché villages. The village provided the people who were responsible for the grazing tax, an important source of revenue for the district. It also had a key role vis-à-vis the Fulbe who wanted to settle in the valley. They first had to present themselves to the chiefs of Mamassy Peulh and were 'signed up' there by paying civil tax. By developing alliances with the administration, the chiefs of Mamassy Peulh tried to safeguard their people's as well as their personal interests.

Finally, the revolution with the 'anti-feudal fight' had a strong impact on the villages by putting emphasis on the participation and representation of young men to avoid "the exploitation of youth by the elders" (Bamidele Ayo 1984). These young men were less inclined to comply with traditions as they used to be less powerful than the elders. Therefore they were more receptive to newly introduced laws.

In recent years new forms of organization have emerged in the region such as Imatunukakay, the region's development committee and association villageoises, introduced by the CARDER and described in Chapter 5. Furthermore, following a governmental order to develop the culture, so-called souscommissions linguistique had to be established. The aim of these commissions was to promote literacy in the different native languages. In Karimama District, the Souscommission Linguistique Dendiphone was created in 1982. At a national level, a Souscommission Linguistique Fulfulde was established and popularly called the Comité Fulfulde. For the Fulbe this presented the opportunity to organize themselves after years of negotiations with the government during which they had not been permitted to organize themselves as an ethnic group. They took this opportunity seriously and established an organizational structure that had representatives at all administrative levels.³

In 1984, the Préfet, the head of Atlantique Province who was of Fulbe origin, arrived in Karimama to set up the Comité Fulfulde at district level. In each of the district's five communities, ten representatives were appointed. Each community

³ In Niger and Nigeria for example the Fulbe were only allowed to organize themselves as 'stock raisers', which automatically includes the other ethnic groups. Initially, in Benin, they were not allowed to organize themselves as an ethnic group.
delegated one representative at district level and together with five representatives from Mamassy Peulh it formed the Comité Fulfulde at district level.

While the Souscommission Linguistique Dendiphone dealt with the Dendi culture and language only, the Comité Fulfulde became a much more influential representative body for the Fulbe. Even the administration used the committee to address the Fulbe as a group and internally the committee was used as a tribunal. The prime objective of the committee, achieving literacy in the Fulfulde language, was, in Karimama at least, largely neglected. For an extensive discussion on the emergence of the organization see Bierschenk, 1989, 1992 and 1993 and Guichard, 1990.

New regulatory mechanisms

Resource competition increased and the causes of confrontation subsequently multiplied (see Chapter 6). Besides individual measures such as sleeping in the fields and better supervision of animals to prevent damage to crops, the situation dictated that collective measures also be taken to deal with the problems at hand. The new political setting provided the basis for the establishment of new regulatory measures to prevent crop damage by creating passageways, pasture zones and fixing the date of entry into the fields by cattle and a mechanism to solve cases of crop damage.

Prevention: The establishment of passageways and pasture zones

In 1984 the Chef de District in Karimama ordered the local authorities to trace passageways for cattle to enable them to reach watering places without damaging crops and to reserve pasture zones where cattle could remain during the cropping season. To establish the limits of the passageways and pasture areas, a delegation was formed consisting of the Maire of the Commune of Karimama, two policemen, five Fulbe conceillers of Mamassy Peulh and the Chef de District. The corridors that already existed and were known to both the agriculturalists and pastoralists became official as did the rainy-season camps such as Tchabidjé in Tondikuaria and Kara near Kompanti. However, the establishment of the limits provoked strong opposition from the Dendi and the Gourmantché. In a note de service of the chef de district, the Monseey flood plain was divided between the Fulbe and the agriculturalists. The local authorities were ordered to set passageways and reserve a pasture zone in the valley itself (District Rural de Karimama 1984).

In Malanville District, the establishment of passageways and pasture zones was subject to a by-law (Arrêté no.58/005/CRAD, 26/12/83) and the areas were legally specified in a report by the commission that carried out the delimitation.⁴ Areas with a total of 13,990 hectares of cultivable lands (about 17%) were reserved for herding cattle (Bio Bigou 1987: 562). Opposition was fierce, especially in the village of Kotchi where a heavily armed Dendi population occupied the designated area and shouted insults at

⁴ Rapport de la commission chargée de la delimitation des zones de paturage et du contrôle des couloirs de passage des animaux, Arrêté no.58/005/CRAD du 26/12/83, District rural de Malanville.
commission members. However, it did not prevent them from doing their work (District Rural de Malanville 1983: 7). The hostile attitude in Kotchi was caused by the problems the population of the village had experienced with crop damage (which they attributed to transhuming Fulbe). The event appeared to be the precursor of the wider conflicts in 1984 described below.

Although the establishment of the passageways and pasture zones was official, sanctions were not enforced in cases of infringement because the measures taken by the administration were not endorsed by the local authorities. In 1993 in Malanville only one area of 160 hectares was still respected as pastureland. In Karimama the zones were grudgingly respected until about 1990 when the Chef de District was transferred to another region.

Prevention: Setting the date of entry to fields
A second preventive measure expected to decrease the tension between the Fulbe and the Dendi/Gourmantché was to let the agriculturalists know until what date they would be allowed to harvest in peace. After that date the herds would be allowed near the cultivated zones to profit from crop residues.

In the 1970s the herds waited until the very end of the harvest period before entering the valley for the crop residues. They used to gather near Mamassy Peuhl and from there fan out towards Kargui or in the direction of Kompa. However, in the 1980s the crop residues became vital for the nourishment of animals and the herders were eager to enter any harvested field even if the surrounding fields had not yet been harvested. On top of that the total number of herds had increased due to the temporary influx of the transhumant herds from Niger. To regulate the situation, the Chef de District together with the Comité Révolutionnair d'Administration du District (CRAD) set a maximum delay for the harvest. If Fulbe herds entered the fields before the set date, they were to be fined. As soon as the date had passed, allegations of crop damage would no longer be considered except for cotton.5

Several factors complicated the effectiveness of this measure. In the first place the set date was not the same throughout the region. In the north-west of the valley the date could be a month later depending on early or late rain. Also, because the date sets out a maximum delay for the harvest, it could be that all crops would already be harvested long before the set date. In that case the Fulbe could negotiate with the chef de village or maire for an earlier arrival. According to the Dendi/Gourmantché, the Fulbe sometimes even offered the authorities an animal in return for permission to enter the fields earlier than the set date.

A second complicating factor was that the (Dendi/Gourmantché) village herds, by staying near the villages the whole year round, had priority access to sorghum residues. It was difficult to convince the Fulbe to stay on higher grounds when they could see the village herd on the flood plain already eating the crop residues.

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5 To avoid the risk of obtaining second quality cotton by harvesting too early, the date did not apply to cotton.
Resolution: Establishment of the Comité de Constat

Incidences of crop damage were more frequent but damage also happened in the cotton fields. The CARDER provided seeds, insecticide and artificial fertilizer on credit so when damage to cotton occurred, the Denid/Gourmantché were indebted to the CARDER. This was the main reason why the CARDER started to become involved in crop-damage regulation in the 1980s. It established a committee of officials, the Comité de Constat, that could estimate the costs of the damage.  

The committees officially consisted of the following persons:
- a specialist in the field of farming (Agent de Vulgarisation Agricole);
- a specialist in the field of cattle keeping (Chef Poste d'Elevage);
- the victim;
- the offender; and
- a person from the village concerned (délegué/maire).

In practice, the committee could have a different composition of officials but the Agent de Vulgarisation Agricole (AVA) always had a position on the committee. Its first objective was to reconcile the parties and to reach an agreement on the value of the damage done. If the people concerned refused the proposed compensation payment, the incident would be officially reported to the state police who would summon the pastoralist to pay. If the pastoralist still did not comply with the payment, the case was brought before the court in Kandi.

Regulation of cases of crop damage in practice

On paper everything was taken care of: passageways were established so the animals could reach watering places without damaging crops and pasture areas were delimited so the herds could remain undisturbed in the rainy-season camps until the date when the animals were allowed to enter the fields arrived. And finally, if damage occurred, there was a committee to establish the amount of money to be paid by the pastoralist and the problem would be solved as soon as he had paid. However, in reality the situation was more complicated and crop damage could now be handled in various ways. To illustrate this, recorded cases of 1990/1991 are taken as an example. More than a third of the Dendi/Gourmantché research population (N=154) were confronted with damage in their fields. In 39 per cent of these cases the agriculturalists did not know who had caused the damage and the culprit remained unknown. Table 7.1 shows the ways in which the crop damage was handled when the culprit was known.

In 21 per cent of the cases of crop damage, the way it was handled did not differ from the situation in the past: they settled the matter amongst themselves. There was no correlation with existing friendship relations and interviews showed that it was a pragmatic decision. Especially in less severe cases the hassle of calling in officials would not be in proportion to the damage done.

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6 In other countries this phenomenon also occurred (Bayer & Waters-Bayer 1991; Moorehead 1992).
A quarter of the cases were brought before the délégué or the maire. They were called in as a witness to the damage inflicted and together with the victim the value the culprit had to pay was agreed upon.

Only in 7 per cent of cases was the comité de constat brought in. These were cases in which large sums were at stake. If this committee was involved, the plaintif was supposed to pay the travel costs of the members of the committee. For example in a case reported in Kompanti, the head of police and the vet both received 3,000 FCFA to cover their travel expenses and the delegate and his advisors got 2,000 FCFA. An official report of the offence was made which included the date, the names of the people involved and the value of the damages to be paid. In the cases resolved in 1990/1991, the average value of the damage to be paid by the owner of the herd was 16,200 FCFA ranging from a minimum of 5,000 to a maximum of 22,000 FCFA. The latter is the value of about half a hectare of sorghum, implying that the damage was very severe taking into account that the average annual income of the Dendi/Gourmantché is less than 50,000 FCFA. For an example of a report of the comité de constat see Box 7.1.

### Box 7.1

**An example of a report of the Comité de Constat**

**Subject:** Report of crop damage

**To:**
Those responsible for Rural Development in Karimama

In the year nineteen hundred and eighty nine, the first of January, a case of crop damage is recorded by cattle in a collective field of cotton in Tondikuarla with an area of 10 hectares in which the farmers had to make the second tour of harvest by the Peulh: S.A., herder in Tondikuarla.

The production damage has been estimated at about 435 kg

95 FCFA x 435 kg = 41,325 FCFA

**Those present:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vet</th>
<th>AVA</th>
<th>Delegate</th>
<th>President</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature</td>
<td>(signature)</td>
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</table>
Often the Fulbe try to prevent having to pay the agreed compensation. They start ‘negotiating’ with the authorities via the mediators in Mamassy Peulh. At least that is the story a Dendi told about the Fulbe: "If they cause damage and it is established according to the rules with a report and all, the Peulh declares before everybody present that he is willing to pay and that he has to go home to find money. However, he gives the money to M. (a Fulbe intermediary) who distributes it between the authorities. This is the end of the matter... and the farmer whose field has been destroyed does not receive anything."

It was not possible to confirm these allegations. However, it should be noted that in some cases, Fulbe claimed that they actually paid the amount of money to an intermediary in Mamassy Peulh, while the Dendi/Gourmantché stated that they had not received any compensation. Somewhere along the way the money had disappeared. In other cases only a small amount of the agreed sum was given to the crop-damage victim.

The role of the intermediary in Mamassy Peulh is particularly important in cases in which herders from abroad are involved. They often do not speak the local languages and are not able to communicate neither with the committee nor with policemen.

As was already mentioned, in 39 per cent of the cases the offender was unknown. In such cases the Dendi/Gourmantché were inclined to attribute the damage inflicted to foreign transhumants. In cases of crop damage, the foreign transhumants generally flee as soon as they realize that their animals have caused problems. According to one of the Fulbe chiefs, the problem with foreign transhumants is that the traces from the place where damage was done often lead to the autochthonous camps. These camps are the stepping stones via which the foreign offenders flee back to Niger. The result is that the local Fulbe (reluctantly) have to foot the bill.

Cases have also been reported where the Fulbe evaded negotiation with the victim or any other party because the damage was very serious. In such cases the police are bribed by Mamassy Peulh intermediaries not to pursue the matter further. For the Dendi/Gourmantché it is more difficult to grease the palms of the authorities because during the growing season they only have a limited amount of cash at their disposal.7

Often the value of the damages is estimated too high (see for south Borgou, Bierschenk 1987: 110) and the Fulbe are exploited by both the Dendi/Gourmantché and officials. In Kompanti, one of the Gourmantché interviewed expressed his sympathy with the Fulbe foreigners who resided on the fringe of ParcW and whom the authorities forced to pay six years' cattle tax plus civic tax retroactively.

Polarization in 1984

Instead of improving the situation with the new regulatory measures issued by the Chef de District, it appeared that these measures were in fact the cause of increasing tension between the Fulbe and the Dendi/Gourmantché. Combined with a few other developments that took place in the early 1980s the situation escalated in 1984.

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7 See also Bassett (1988: 466) who describes the same phenomenon for agriculturalists in Ivory Coast.
In the early 1980s the Dendi/Gourmantché were dissatisfied with the situation in the district for several reasons.

Firstly, the early 1980s were years with below-average rainfall and the cropping season of 1984 was preceded by four dry years (see Chapter 5, Figure 5.1). The season itself had also been bad, marked by a sudden halt in the rains in August. According to the annual report of the Chef de District, 40 per cent of the millet, 89 per cent of maize and 30 per cent of the groundnuts were scorched (District Rural de Karimama rapport annuel 1984/85). Therefore the Dendi/Gourmantché were keen to defend their surviving crops against invasion by cattle.

Secondly, in the years prior to 1984 the Dendi/Gourmantché had frequently been the victims of crop destruction without receiving any compensation. This was partly due to the fact that the damage was done during the night by an unknown offender. They attributed the damage to the many foreigners who invaded their lands while they alleged that the local Fulbe were covering up for them.

Thirdly, during 1980-1983 the Fulbe were thriving. The number of cattle per head was increasing and cattle prices were at their highest due to the demand for meat from Nigeria's booming economy. The high prices lasted until 1984 when the demand for meat declined because the Nigerian borders were closed (Codo 1986: 11). In Table 7.2 price developments between 1979 and 1985 are presented for a two-year-old bull. The decline in price in 1985 was a result of distress sales by pastoralists from the north.

Table 7.2
Price development of a two-year-old bull at Karimama market 1979-1985 in FCFA (average)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>35,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>55,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>57,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>37,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Personal communications; verified by three cattle traders.

Fourthly the agriculturalists observed several signals that convinced them that the Fulbe were taking over. The reservation of large areas of pastureland enforced by the Comité Revolutionnair d'Administration du District, combined with the frustration about uncompensated crop damage, created the impression that the administration was pro-Fulbe. Furthermore, the Fulbe were empowered by the installation of the Comité Fulfulde. Although the committee had not yet been installed at the district level at the time of the conflict in 1984, the news that it existed in the rest of the country preceded its actual installation. The Dendi/Gourmantché interviewed about the conflict stated that the Fulbe were behaving more confidently than before. Another factor that played a role
was that at the beginning of the 1980s one of the préfets of Benin was of Fulbe origin, connected through marriage with Mamassy Peulh. The provincial préfet had ministerial status as a member of the cabinet of Benin and in this function he was head of the state police (Decal 1987: 21,180). According to the Dendi/Gourmantché, the Fulbe became bolder during his administration because they thought that they would be able to get away with whatever they did.

Fifthly the Chef de District, who ruled from 1982 to 1990, left his mark on the situation. According to all the groups, his motto was 'divide and rule' although the Fulbe were more positive about him because he had reserved passageways and pasture zones for them. The Dendi/Gourmantché on the other hand hated him and stood up to him in May 1990 when the democratization process started in the whole of Benin and they literally chased him away.

Finally the use of stimulants may have played a role as well in the development of increasing tension. Amphetamines imported from Nigeria were used by herdsmen (mostly young men) to stay awake during the night in order to prevent crop damage. Many Fulbe youngsters sold cattle to buy drugs. Dendi youngsters also used drugs but did so occasionally and spent less money on drugs in a year. The drugs are known by English or Haussa names such as Blue Five, Acid, Maiclef and Binoc. The use of amphetamines played a role in the case of the tragic incident in the village of Toda in Niger in 1992 (Courrier Afrique 1992: 10).

The conflict

In 1984, the date before which the harvest had to be finished was set as November 30 and was communicated to the population at the beginning of November. The Dendi/Gourmantché could peacefully harvest their sorghum until that date and the Fulbe had to wait until then to profit from the crop residues. Two weeks later however, it was announced by the town crier that the date of entry had been changed – apparently after discussions between the chiefs of Mamassy Peulh and the Chef de District - to November 24 instead. The agriculturalists were already nervous because more than a hundred herds could be seen on the other side of the River Niger waiting to cross. A few had even risked a fine and crossed already. The authorities’ response was ambiguous. On the one hand, the authorities spread the message that the agriculturalists should not be intimidated and cut their sorghum before maturity but on the other hand, they did not fine the herdsmen who approached the fields before the set date of entry. According to the agriculturalists, they did not take their responsibilities seriously enough and tensions rose.

In the neighbouring districts matters escalated simultaneously. On Friday November 23 a herd badly damaged a field of sorghum belonging to a Dendi farmer

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8 He was préfet of Atlantique Province from 1982 until 1988. Only in 1988 did he become préfet of the Borgou but his sheer presence gave the Fulbe confidence.

9 The group of Fulbe who only come to profit from the crop residues and then to continue through the park to the southern part of Borgou Province. They return in July/August. According to the (agriculturalist) population, "they are intruders and destroy everything during their passage; they do not recognize any authority which governs us all".
near the village of Kotchi in Malanville District. A few days later the herd returned. In a fight that took place, Fulbe severely injured four agriculturalists and killed one. The next day a new case of crop damage was reported and about a hundred people from the village of Kotchi joined together to fight the Fulbe. They injured two Fulbe and killed five (Brigade de Malanville 1985). The people from Karimama who came back from the market in Malanville spread the news: "the war with the Fulbe has begun; so prepare yourselves".

A few days later, on November 29 the delegué from a quarter of Karimama and a friend were the last to harvest and had worked through the night to finish. Then three Fulbe herds entered the fields. The Dendi ordered them to go back so that they could harvest in peace but the herders refused and, in a fight, the delegué was badly injured. Although he did not die, people started to spread the rumour that he and his friend had been killed by herders entering their almost-harvested fields.

Armed with harpoons, lances, guns and sticks, youngsters from Karimama decided to take the law into their own hands and first went to Mamassy Peulh intending to set the village on fire. According to witnesses, the elders of Karimama and the Imam personally intervened and tried to stop them. Five policemen were also involved in restraining the crowd. Thus, killings were prevented even though tensions increased alarmingly. In total, thirteen people were injured, five seriously, and a great deal of damage was done, such as the destruction of Fulbe huts and damage to the car of one of the Fulbe chiefs of Mamassy Peulh. Military enforcement was requested in Kandi and a curfew was imposed for a week. Although no killings were reported, the event marked a period of social unrest for both the Dendi/Gourmantché and the Fulbe.

Polarization

The day after the incident, on November 30 1984, the agriculturalists of Karimama proclaimed that "no agriculturalist would render any service to the Fulbe any more". The Fulbe took countermeasures by announcing that Karimama market would be boycotted and that henceforth the cattle market would be held in Mamassy Peulh.

Boycotting is frequently used by the Fulbe because it enables them to use their economic and buying power, which is substantial in spite of their relatively small numbers, to put pressure on other groups. The news amongst the Fulbe was quickly spread via a relay of messengers with cola nuts, the traditional Fulbe way of spreading important announcements. Their social structure facilitates the quick closure of their ranks although not always voluntarily because it was said that Fulbe women were fined by their chiefs when they were seen at the Karimama market.

Traders from Cotonou, Lagos and Ibadan were informed by the Fulbe of Malanville that the cattle market would be held in Mamassy Peulh. The second week that a parallel market took place in Mamassy Peulh, the Chef de District issued a note de service that the market should return to Karimama. The Fulbe did not comply with his request and within a month the cattle market in Mamassy Peulh functioned as though it

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10 The market of Kantoro, a village near Guene (see Map 4.1), was boycotted in the same way after the killing of a pastoralist in Kantoro. Initially the boycott was to last until the Dendi apologized but by then the market had already disappeared in favour of the Guene market.
had always been there. This was a blow for Karimama as the town lost part of its economic and social function. Just before the event, serious plans were being made to enlarge the market by removing some of the buildings near the market place. These plans were never carried out. Seur (1987: 66) quoted one of the inhabitants of Karimama, who made it clear that the Dendi were aware of the importance of the Fulbe for their market: "Without the Fulbe there would not have been a market in Karimama and without a market there would not have been a Karimama at all." Joint visits to the mosque by Fulbe and Dendi/Gourmantché became history.

In the first week of December 1984, the Chef de District invited both parties to a reconciliation meeting. However, only the representatives of the Dendi/Gourmantché arrived. According to some witnesses, the Dendi delegate cynically stated that "those you can command have come, but those you cannot command did not come". This confirmed the view of the Dendi/Gourmantché that the authorities had been bribed to favour the Fulbe, an opinion also expressed by them during the investigation by the Tribunal in Kandi, which came to a verdict in 1985 (no. 67/85). It was established that thirteen persons were injured and 'incapable of working from 5 to 90 days'. Fifteen agriculturalists were sentenced to imprisonment for three to six months and each had to pay a fine of 15,000 FCFA. The inhabitants of Karimama had to pay 1,600,000 FCFA collectively, part of which went to the victims to compensate for material damage and part went to the tribunal.

Gradually tensions diminished but it took more than a year before the situation normalized somewhat. One of the first recommendations when the regional organization Imatunukakay was founded in 1986 was to reconcile the populations of the villages of Karimama and Mamassi Peulh. From 1986 onwards the Fulbe passed through Karimama again instead of making a long detour to the Malanville road. From 1989 onwards, the Fulbe returned to the market in Karimama. However, the cattle market and the Karimama market remained separate.

The 1984 conflict and the subsequent split of the markets may be regarded as the starting point of an ethnic interpretation of events afterwards. From then on the agriculturalists tended to group all the Fulbe (foreigners and autochthinous) together and ignore any shared mutual past. They considered all the Fulbe who did not originate from the primary group of Fulbe who settled in Mamassi Peulh, Kompanti or Pekinga about a hundred years ago as foreigners without any (land) rights. One of the arguments the Dendi/Gourmantché used was that the pastoralists could leave the area whenever they liked and withdraw to other regions when they had caused damage or conflict. Formal arguments did not count, such as the fact that Beninese law stipulates that people who have lived in Benin for more than five years, even if their parents are foreigners, can become Beninese citizens (Ministère de la Justice 1965).

In 1992 a new conflict situation occurred. Agriculturalists adopted a scorched earth policy by setting crop residues and straw on fire to prevent the transhumants from using them after one of their herds had broken into a field. In 1994 a campaign to raise awareness and promote reconciliation was started by the Comité Fulfulde to educate the Fulbe about preventing crop damage at all costs, under the motto 'the Dendi does not have cattle to fall back on, his field is all that he has got'.


Conclusion

The immediate cause of the violent conflict in Karimama District was the minimal control by the authorities of the Fulbe herds that entered harvested fields before the set date of entry. However, the event was in fact an expression of the agriculturalists' feelings about the course of events preceding the 1984 conflict.

When Karimama became a district in 1978, the government institutions such as the police force and the chef de district were brought closer to the population. At the same time the Fulbe lost their original representative and responded to the new situation by creating new individual links with the administration through French-speaking Fulbe intermediaries. They expected money to be paid to strengthen their position.

In the preceding years many cases of crop damage had not been solved. The agriculturalists thought that in some cases the government did not take its responsibility seriously enough when persecuting the Fulbe because they were open to bribery. In other cases crop damage was not compensated for because the suspected offender was never found. The Dendi/Gourmantché ascribed these unsolved cases to the foreign transhumant Fulbe who they thought were protected by the local Fulbe who covered for them. In addition, the Dendi/Gourmantché felt overwhelmed by the large numbers of foreign Fulbe entering the Niger Valley every year.

Since tensions between the agriculturalists and pastoralists were rising due to the increasing resource competition, the administration took several measures to regulate co-existence, which also made the institutional dimension of the relations between both existence groups more important. However, the measures were taken top-down and caused a lot of distrust between the government and the agriculturalists because they thought that their rights of origin were being eroded. Also, 1984 had been a year with an unfavourable distribution of rain and yields were low. The agriculturalists were eager to protect the fruits of their labour and when the Fulbe herds arrived, they were ready for confrontation in this situation of increasing insecurity.

Although primordial sentiments were part of the Dendi/Gourmantché's and Fulbe's cultural repertoires, cultural antagonism was mobilized and reinforced due to resource competition. The agriculturalists considered the Fulbe as one group instead of remembering their shared past with the autochthonous group of Fulbe. However, on the day of the conflict itself, the elders of both Fulbe and Dendi groups joined forces to pacify the raging crowd of young people. Afterwards the Fulbe mobilized their own ethnic group by boycotting the cattle market in Karimama and the Dendi mobilized their camp by proclaiming that "no service would be rendered to the Fulbe any more". The events of 1984 formed a dramatic low in relations between the Fulbe and the Dendi/Gourmantché. Only at the beginning of the 1990s did the situation ease somewhat when the Comité Fulfulde started to raise awareness about preventing crop damage.