



Mobile pastoralists in Central and West Africa: between conflict, mobile telephony and (im)mobility

M. de Bruijn, A. Amadou, Elie Lewa Doksala, B. Sangaré

► To cite this version:

M. de Bruijn, A. Amadou, Elie Lewa Doksala, B. Sangaré. Mobile pastoralists in Central and West Africa: between conflict, mobile telephony and (im)mobility. *Revue Scientifique et Technique- Office International des Epizooties*, 2016, The future of pastoralism, 35 (2), pp.649-657. 10.20506/rst.35.2.2546 . hal-03924299

HAL Id: hal-03924299

<https://hal.science/hal-03924299>

Submitted on 5 Jan 2023

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Mobile pastoralists in Central and West Africa: between conflict, mobile telephony and (im)mobility

M. de Bruijn ^{(1)*}, A. Amadou ⁽²⁾, E. Lewa Doksala ⁽³⁾ & B. Sangaré ⁽¹⁾

(1) History Institute, Leiden University/African Studies Centre Leiden, the Netherlands

(2) History Institute, Leiden University, the Netherlands

(3) Anthropology Department, University of Chad

*Corresponding author: m.e.de.bruijn@hum.leidenuniv.nl

Summary

The livelihoods of the Fulani mobile pastoralists in the Sahel, West and Central Africa are characterised by mobility (related to the needs of their animals), extensive social networks, and a focus on social ties as the basis of status and influence ('wealth in people'). The Sahel environment in which many Fulani nomads live has become embroiled in jihadism, conflict, and violence; at the same time, this region has experienced an increase in opportunities to connect through the wireless mobile communication system. This paper analyses the triangle of mobility, communication, and insecurity in order to understand the present-day situation of the nomadic and semi-nomadic Fulani pastoralists and their identity dynamics. The Fulani find themselves caught in between these conflicts, which end their mobility and often lead to the loss of their herds. Will they be able to keep their mobile lifestyle and identity? This article is based on qualitative case studies and the biographical narratives of nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralists who have lived through conflict and violence in Cameroon, Chad and Mali. These case studies show that, despite the fact that mobile pastoralism has become difficult as a consequence of the conflicts and loss of cattle, the 'mobile' identity is very present and reinforced with the help of mobile telephony, through which social networks and 'wealth in people' are sustained.

Keywords

Africa – Conflict – Fulani – Fulbe – Mobile telephony – Mobility – Pastoralism.

Introduction

The end of mobile pastoralism (varying from nomadism to semi-sedentarism) has been predicted for some time (1). In studies such as Azarya *et al.* (1), the focus has mainly been on mobile pastoralism as a livelihood, rather than on being mobile as an identity. Research into mobility and nomadism as concepts which inform identity sees mobile pastoralism as much more than just a livelihood and is a study of mentalities and ontology: *das Sein* ('being'). In recent decades, there have been many changes in the lives of mobile pastoralists and this paper examines how this has affected their sense of identity. The most important changes

are changes in the space available to pastoralists: today, the space they need to herd their cattle in a sustainable way is lacking, due to demographic, ecological, political, and security factors. Thus, mobile pastoralists increasingly experience geographical immobility. Furthermore, numerous mobile pastoralists have been sedentarised and have adopted lifestyles that are not nomadic – at least, not in a way which meets the needs of their animals. In these cases, then, what determines a mobile pastoralist identity? Is it the pastoralism or the 'mobility'? Given that mobility has been part of their identity for so long, does an ontology of mobility persist even when geographic mobility is no longer possible?

This article starts by looking at the present-day situation of the Fulani mobile pastoralists in Central and West Africa and tries to understand how new forms of mobility develop that are not related to pastoralism *per se*, but which keep the mobility spirit alive. The authors argue that modern Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), particularly the mobile phone, play an important role in this regard. Over the past decade, wireless technology has become an indispensable element of the communication landscape in Africa, including in the marginal regions where pastoralism is most common. This technology seems to fit well into the mobile culture of the Fulani, who are known as *Fulbe* in their own language and *Peul* in French. Mobility, together with a shared language, is the common denominator of the Fulani pastoralists, who live in many different countries across West and Central Africa. They are divided into many clans and lineages and they live in both urban and rural areas. The Fulani groups highlighted by the case studies are mobile pastoralists that have all been confronted with the recent upheavals caused by severe violence in the Sahel, including terrorist attacks from Boko Haram and other jihadist groups, and violent opposition in the Central African Republic (CAR). At the same time, these regions have also seen the advancement of ICTs. In this article, the triangular relationship between connectivity/ICTs, conflict/insecurity and mobility/nomadism (both geographical and ontological) is examined in relation to the Fulani mobile pastoralists living in Mali, Cameroon and Chad. How does the interplay between these three vectors of change inform their conception of themselves?

The research for this article is part of a larger research project, based at Leiden University in the Netherlands, that investigates the relationship between conflict, ICTs and social change in Central and West Africa. Mirjam de Bruijn is team leader of this programme and she has been researching Fulani culture since 1990. The three co-authors of this article have done research among Fulani groups as part of their MA and PhD research that is part of the Leiden programme. The article is also the result of interaction and discussion between the research team.

Communication in the life of mobile pastoralists

The Fulani are primarily described as mobile pastoralists, some of whom are truly nomadic and others of whom lead an agro-pastoral semi-sedentary lifestyle. Some studies have highlighted the more psychological elements of these mobile lifestyles. For instance, Riesman highlighted their 'freedom' (2) and de Bruijn & van Dijk found that having wealth in the form of cattle was at the core of Fulani identity. People and social relations are also a form of wealth ('wealth in

people') (3) and, consequently, given the mobile lifestyle of the Fulani and their geographical dispersion, it is very important that they work to keep social relations intact; in this respect they face challenges that are different from pastoralists in a sedentary situation, where a neighbour is always present (4). Fulani nomads are strongly endogamic, which is a way of both maintaining relationships and keeping their wealth in cattle together. In Bonfiglioli's (1988) seminal study of family and cattle lineages, the main conclusion was that wealth in cattle and people are intertwined (5). Wealth is both economic and social, and hence a core of identity dynamics. An impoverished Fulani will become dependent on the aid system *nanga nai*, consisting of a gift of cattle from a close family relation to the poor family, to rebuild his/her herd. Some do not want to be reliant on their relations and decide to leave. Being poor, meaning being without cattle, is considered shameful. Interestingly, these 'lost' Fulani continue a life of wandering, keeping up their history of mobility, as they search for new linkages in new environments (6).

'Wealth in people' as one of the main elements in Fulani social life turns long-distance communication into one of the core 'techniques' for keeping society going. Such techniques include getting together for ceremonial occasions, such as marriages, and gathering for the rituals held during the rainy season, the most famous of which is the Gerewol dance. This annual event, during which young men in traditional dress put on a dance display for the young women of the community in order to attract a bride, is an opportunity for people and cattle to share the same territory, to meet and be together and to confirm their shared identity. In addition to these community gatherings, individuals may travel from camp to camp throughout the year, either for social reasons or as special messengers, thus maintaining contact with relatives and the wider community; markets are also important communication hubs. The attention devoted to clothes and hairstyles, which has been a source of amazement for researchers, is also a form of communication, as it is a means of expressing identity and demonstrating solidarity with other Fulani. Ruptures in communication as a consequence of displacement over long distances and for long periods may lead to a loss of contact, but, as the history of different Fulani groups shows, their culture of mobility leads to easy integration into new Fulani groups (7).

If indeed communication is such an important part of the mobile Fulani identity, the recent increase in opportunities to communicate by wireless technology is likely to make a difference, especially as the regions where most mobile pastoralists make a living are not equipped with extensive 'modern' communication infrastructure, such as roads or fixed telephone lines. Non-governmental organisations have introduced the technology to disseminate information that supports the mobile livelihoods of pastoralists,

e.g. demographic information and information about pasture areas. So far, studies on how this new 'tool' is integrated into the social life and identity dynamics of the mobile pastoralists are scarce. Mobile telephony is hailed for its 'connecting capacity' and hence it is expected to play an important role in connectivity in the lives of mobile pastoralists and to enable continuity in 'wealth in people' even when war and conflict break up their communities.

In the following section of this article the authors analyse the role of this new form of communication in the enhancement of the core value, 'wealth in people', in the life of immobile Fulani pastoralists, i.e. those who are trapped in refugee situations, or who can no longer move with their cattle due to political insecurity.

A note on methodology

The case studies presented below are of different groups of mobile pastoralists:

- *Mbororo*: nomadic pastoralists who fled the CAR after violence and who now live in refugee situations in eastern Cameroon
- *Wodaabe*: nomadic pastoralists who also fled the CAR and live in Chad
- *Jallube*: semi-nomadic Fulani who lived through conflicts in Central Mali.

The present-day life of these pastoralists is dominated by the memory and actuality of violence and the fracturing of their communities. Nevertheless, life goes on and people make a living and have stories to tell. These stories of war and separation are not easily gathered; one needs patience, understanding and the ability to build relationships with people who have recently gone through enormous losses and terrible violence. The researchers who have contributed to this article adopted a methodology inspired by phenomenology (8), which allows for an understanding of emotions, and stories of experiences. It is not only through interviewing that one gets information: in crisis situations, observing, participating in life, and simply being there are better approaches to gathering data. Ethical questions arose, given that the Fulani position in these violent conflicts is not always very clear. The authors came across cases in which the Fulani were violent actors too. This knowledge does not make the life of a researcher in the field easier and raises ethical dilemmas. Although all the authors were very sympathetic with the Fulani plight in these conflict areas, they did not close their eyes and ears to the other side of the story.

Case studies

Refugees from the Central African Republic in Cameroon and Chad

In 2013, long-standing tensions in the CAR led to an outburst of violence and a coup d'état, followed by a period of extreme violence in which ethnic and religious oppositions became the vehicles for political conflict. We can only guess what happened based on the testimonies gathered in the refugee camps in Cameroon and among the repatriates in Chad. The violence broke out for political rather than religious reasons, but the opposing sides were roughly divided along religious and geographical lines, and as the conflict progressed, opposition between Muslims from the north and Christians from the south became a reality, with harsh effects on the ground. The Mbororo and Wodaabe – mostly Muslims, but supporters of the old regime of the ousted President Bozizé (a Christian) – became caught in between the various groups. Some of their youth joined Seleka groups, who were mostly Muslims from the north, others did not align themselves with these groups, but in the confrontations with the anti-Balaka (Christian militias) they were, nevertheless, victims of killings and attacks on their villages and camps. A large number of the mobile pastoralists lost their cattle and moved to Cameroon and Chad, where they joined those who had fled in previous years, either because their animals had been stolen or they had suffered atrocities, such as the kidnapping of their children. With the escalating conflicts and violence the crisis became international and the Mbororo and Wodaabe were labelled 'refugees', a status that they felt uncomfortable with, given their history of being a mobile people (9).

Cameroon: Mbororo in refugee situations

In fact, although they were considered refugees, the Mbororo who fled the CAR and entered Cameroon were going 'home'. For them, the border had always been an alien concept. Many Mbororo from the CAR have family in Cameroon, and some of the refugees had regularly moved their cattle to and from Cameroon as part of their seasonal transhumance. The refugee status turned them into strangers among their own people. Furthermore, in eastern Cameroon, they did not live in camps, but rather in villages next to villages of their 'fellow' Mbororo. However, the differences between the groups were huge. The refugees had no cattle left, they had experienced a traumatic journey, and they had to settle and take up agriculture. They not only became immobile, but they also changed their livelihoods. Over the years, they became increasingly separate from the 'Cameroonian' Mbororo. One can imagine that this was a difficult experience and one which is likely to have had an impact on their sense of identity.

Adamou Amadou did extensive fieldwork among these refugees in and around Bertoua and Garoua Boulaye in Cameroon (10). In what follows, the authors present some of the findings of this study. The Mbororo in his study did feel immobilised and cut off from their former life, but during the years of the refugee influx, the region was progressively populated by mobile telephony masts and this development had a huge impact on the well-being of the nomads. As one of the informants of Adamou explained:

‘Before his return to the CAR, my son gave me this small amulet (*laayarou*) that allowed me to stay in contact with him until the recent happenings. At present, I have no news from him, but I use the phone as a car (*moot*) to visit my friends and my family. So when I think about my missing son this phone is of no use, but on the other hand it is still serving me’. (Interview conducted by Adamou Amadou in 2014 with A. Moussa Djimet, former mayor of Amagadassa [a town in the CAR], now a refugee in Mandjou, close to Bertoua.)

For this informant, the telephone is a magical thing and it has helped him to maintain contact with people far away. It can be seen as providing a form of mobility to this immobile nomad (who has no cattle left). The phone has also become his memory: a way of remembering his missing son.

The Mbororo use their phones not only as a communication tool, but also as a radio, and as a means of sending videos. In and around the camp-villages that Adamou frequented, mobile telephones were big business and provided a source of income for some of the refugees. There were numerous places for selling videos or phone cards, manned by refugees. A closer look at the content of all the messages sent in the phones revealed an interesting link to the violence that these people had lived through. Many videos were about violence. The images showed violence perpetrated by both Seleka and anti-Balaka groups. It is a constant reminder of what people have been through. Hence, the mobile phone is also a tool for remembering the recent past.

Chad: Wodaabe repatriates

Dourbali, a small town not far from Lake Chad and 100 km north of Ndjamena, the capital city of Chad, is the ‘home’ area of the Wodaabe, whose mobility trajectory was between Chad and the CAR. Many Wodaabe families had lived in the CAR for several years, and some of those returning to Dourbali had not been back in a decade. They had originally moved to the CAR for reasons of security (Chad has known several civil wars) and lack of good pasture areas. But the violence and conflict that subsequently broke out in the CAR brought them back to Dourbali, often with only a few head of cattle, or none at all, and with stories of deaths in the family, of fear and of loss. Some of the men told Elie Doksa (who did his Master’s thesis research among the

Wodaabe in 2015–2016 [11]) that they had joined Seleka; for most of them this was a reaction to the atrocities and humiliations they had lived through. Wodaabe repatriates acquired land in the outskirts of Dourbali where they built their houses and prepared for a sedentary life. Before their decision to settle in town they experienced life in refugee camps, but they were unable to adapt.

The extreme violence that the Wodaabe have experienced has led to the disruption of their way of life. During the summer of 2015 the authors had planned to visit the Wodaabe near Dourbali, who, at that time, would usually be in the middle of the preparations for the Gerewol dance. When the authors discovered that this event would not be held that year the severity of the crisis became clear. As one of Elie’s informants explained:

‘We, we dance when we are happy. I lost my wife, my son, my grandchildren. There are many people who have disappeared during this war; we do not have any sign of them, if they are dead or alive, we have no proof of them being killed or still being alive (...). Our wives and our daughters have been raped. All these things have never happened before in the life of a Bodaajo [the singular of Wodaabe]. So it is confusing, and do you think I can dance in this situation, or be filmed by you with your camera?’ (Interview conducted by Elie Doksa, 2015, Youtari in Dourbali.)

Urbanisation seems to be a process that cannot be reversed: the severity of the loss of cattle makes the Wodaabe doubt that they will be able to reconstruct their herds, so they build houses and settle. The old system of *nanga nai*, in which a young animal was given to families who lost their cattle, is no longer practised among the Wodaabe. The only way to rebuild their cattle herds is by earning money. It might be a very long process for the group of Wodaabe in this study to return to their life as mobile pastoralists. Will this disruption in their lives mean that the Wodaabe will lose their identity as a mobile people? The fact that cattle, transhumance and the Gerewol dance are no longer part of their lives might cause them to drift away from their core values, but in adapting to an urban lifestyle they will also gradually adopt new ways of living (12, 13).

Interestingly, Elie’s study shows a contrary dynamic: it seems that the urban environment of Dourbali is rather in a process of Wodaabeisation, meaning that the markets are full of ‘typical’ Wodaabe products and, for instance, mobile telephone companies focus their marketing on these Wodaabe groups, who are in dire need of mobile communication. The Wodaabe name for the telephone, *boloyel*, means something that speaks, hence giving the mobile phone a human character. For the Wodaabe, direct contact with people is important and visiting to keep

social relations going is still very important. However, the mobile phone has brought people closer and thanks to the telephone the Wodaabe can now 'meet' with people who live many miles away. As one interviewee explained:

'[With the phone] I can now travel from Nanguéré to Ousmane and cover tens of kilometres in five minutes. I can visit the Wodaabe of Dourbali in person in one day, so why spend credit on calling them? I make the most of [the telephone] if I use my calls for the Wodaabe who live far away from me.' (Interview conducted by Elie Doksalá, 2015, Barry Mana in Dourbali.)

'The telephone is like ears. Can a man who has no ears hear? We consider people without a phone as being deaf.' (Interview conducted by Elie Doksalá, 2015, Yougoula in Dourbali.)

And he continues:

'If a cow gives birth, with our brothers in the bush who still have some heads of cattle, we are informed just a few minutes later, thanks to the telephone.' (Interview conducted by Elie Doksalá, 2015, Yougoula in Dourbali.)

The telephones of Elie's informants are full of photos and short films about their time in the CAR when life was still good. They include photos of their large cattle herds, videos of the Gerewol dances and the songs that they used to sing, and pictures of people whom they consider to be beautiful (the Wodaabe are famously unashamedly vain people and beauty is highly prized). They watch these videos regularly, so as not to forget.

Mali: Fulani nomads unite

The mobile pastoralists referred to here, who are of the Jallube lineage, did not flee Mali when conflict broke out in 2012 and their region was occupied, first by the Tamacheq liberation front (MNLA) and later, after the defeat of the MNLA, by the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA). What follows are the findings from the research of Boukary Sangaré, who has worked in the region since 2012 (14). (For a description of the situation in 2012, and its consequences, the reader is referred to Lecoq *et al.* [15] and Sangaré [14, 16]). Here, the authors describe the role of mobile telephony in this conflict and how it 'worked' for the mobile pastoralists. Starting in 2007, mobile telephony technology progressively became available in Central Mali. Initially, only certain towns were connected and the camps of the Jallube rarely had access, but, in 2012, the mobile telephone network was extended, enabling pastoralists across large parts of northern Mali to access the technology (17, 18). The conflict did not hamper mobile communication; furthermore, it seems that during the

conflict the desire to communicate grew stronger and that the use of this new tool increased. The authors observed that the Jallube's awareness of their position as a marginal group defending their rights to mobility heightened during this period, and here they consider the role that mobile telephones played in this development (19, 20, 21).

Unlike the other groups discussed in this article, which cover long distances with their herds, these mobile pastoralists are part of a Fulani chiefdom that moves its cattle across a relatively small area of protected pastureland. The elites of the chiefdom protect the area against use by other pastoralist groups, such as the Tamacheq. Under colonial rule, and later in an independent Mali, these elites became intermediaries between the mobile pastoralists and the state. During the conflict this relationship changed. The nomads became conscious of the fact that the state did not do much for them and that their elites were not the caretakers that they had presumed them to be. They also felt that they were the group most victimised by the crisis in the area. They felt marginalised. Consequently, in October 2014, a group of Jallube joined together to claim their rights. They formed the 'Deewral Pulaaku' (the Union of Fulani People) as a form of revolt and organised a meeting of Jallube from across the region.

What was the role of mobile communication in this process? Since 2012, the number of Jallube with mobile phones has been increasing. In fact, due to the crisis, they felt the need for the technology more than ever before. When the MNLA occupied the region, all the state services left. The population was left without healthcare or schools or any other public service, and insecurity characterised the area. When the MUJWA replaced the MNLA, they offered the population a certain amount of security by giving out their phone numbers and letting the people know that they could call them in case of problems. People informed each other by phone about problems in their environment. Calling became a major tool for security. Moreover, the phones became tools for obtaining information about the organisation. For instance, the sermons by MUJWA *mallams* and videos of the MUJWA conquering the region circulated via the nomads' phones. Furthermore, the nomads started to send their sons to MUJWA camps to learn how to handle weapons. They felt the need to protect themselves. One of the later leaders of the Jallube organisation was one of those who went to these camps. Ideas about marginal nomads and the state as the enemy became part of the exchanges between the nomads. They were visiting each other and exchanging phone numbers. The leaders were also in contact with people in Bamako, the capital city of Mali, and in other regions, so they became aware of the situation in those areas as well. The phone was also used to mobilise pastoralists to attend the first big Deewral Pulaaka meeting in October 2014.

For people on the outside of this society, such as the police or military, the fact that some Fulani nomads have links with the MUJWA throws suspicion on all Fulani pastoralists; consequently, they are often arrested if police find texts or pictures relating to Jihadi movements on their phones, as this is taken as proof of them being Jihadi.

In summary, as a result of having access to mobile phones, the Jallube could connect easily, exchange information, and relate to other groups. They were no longer dependent on their own elite for contacts and, consequently, the idea to unite emerged. It is clear that, initially, they tried to link with the state, asking for protection and services so that they could live a normal life, but when no such protection was forthcoming, the Jallube turned to the MUJWA. Even today, there is still no security in the region and the nomads feel abandoned, so their quest for alternative support is ongoing.

Conclusion

In this article, the authors have analysed the relationship between new communication technology, mobile phones, insecurity/crisis, and mobility. The three case studies were of mobile pastoralists who lived through violence and crisis situations that made them move long distances out of fear and to escape poverty. The Mbororo and Wodaabe lost their cattle and had to flee, and the Jallube in Mali were immobilised due to the occupation of their territory and the insecurity in the region. They have all become less mobile, even sedentary, because of the crises.

The three case studies show that mobile pastoralists have adapted well to using mobile phones. Their mobile lifestyle, the long distances that often exist between groups, and the need for information about the accessibility of pastureland are some of the reasons for the central place of communication in their daily lives. Mobile communication is fast and easy and, in all three cases, it has become more important than communication through messengers or through travelling to meet in person. They keep track of

their people and of their circumstances. Communication by phone is also an important information channel for sharing opinions and new theories, especially in Mali, where the information that travels through the phones has literally changed the development of ideas and has led to a new discourse among mobile pastoralists. The phone is also a tool for remembering the good days. And it has become a tool that contains identity markers, such as photos, videos and audio files. For the nomads, the mobile telephone is indeed a living thing, an extension of themselves, and something that reinforces their identity. We can also say that the use of mobile phones also creates a form of mobility. This is probably most evident in the study of the Wodaabe, who describe 'travelling' with their phone. Connecting to people by phone replaces the traditional form of mobility. Connecting to people is wealth and one of the cores of the mobile pastoralists' culture, so the mobile phone has become essential for their way of life.

Acknowledgements

The authors of this article are part of the research programme 'Connecting in times of duress' (www.connecting-in-times-of-duress.nl), which is funded by the Science for Global Development division of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO-Wotro) – Project Number W01.70.600.01 (2012–2018). The article is also based on the 'Mobile Africa Revisited' research programme (mobileafricarevisited.wordpress.com), which is also funded by NWO-Wotro – Project Number W01 70 600 001 (2008–2013).



Les pasteurs nomades en Afrique centrale et de l'Ouest : entre conflits, téléphonie mobile et (im)mobilité

M. de Bruijn, A. Amadou, E. Lewa Doksala & B. Sangaré

Résumé

Au Sahel et en Afrique centrale et de l'Ouest, les moyens de subsistance des pasteurs nomades peuls se définissent par la mobilité (liée aux besoins de leurs troupeaux), par des réseaux sociaux extensifs et par l'importance des liens sociaux en tant que base du prestige et de l'influence des individus (le « patrimoine relationnel » fondé sur les liens personnels). Le Sahel où vivent nombre de nomades peuls se trouve actuellement entraîné dans le djihadisme, les conflits et la violence ; en même temps, cette région offre désormais bien plus de possibilités de se connecter grâce à la technologie de la communication mobile non filaire. Les auteurs analysent les interactions entre la mobilité, la communication et l'insécurité afin de mieux comprendre la situation actuelle des pasteurs peuls nomades et semi-nomades ainsi que leur dynamique identitaire. Les Peuls se retrouvent au cœur de conflits qui mettent fin à leur mobilité et entraînent souvent la destruction de leurs troupeaux. Pourront-ils garder leur mode de vie et leur identité nomade ? L'analyse présentée dans cet article repose sur des études de cas qualitatives et des récits de vie recueillis auprès de pasteurs nomades et semi-nomades qui ont été confrontés à des conflits et à la violence, au Cameroun, au Tchad et au Mali. Il ressort de ces études que si le pastoralisme nomade devient plus difficile en raison des conflits et des pertes de bétail, l'identité « mobile » (ou nomade) reste très présente et se voit renforcée par la téléphonie mobile qui permet notamment de pérenniser les liens à la base du patrimoine relationnel ainsi que les réseaux sociaux.

Mots-clés

Afrique – Conflit – Fulbe – Mobilité – Pastoralisme – Peuls – Téléphonie mobile.



Los pastores nómadas en África Central y Occidental: entre conflicto, telefonía móvil e (in)movilidad

M. de Bruijn, A. Amadou, E. Lewa Doksala & B. Sangaré

Resumen

Los medios de sustento de los pastores nómadas Fulani (o peul, o fulbe) del Sahel, África Central y África Occidental se caracterizan por la movilidad (ligada a las necesidades de sus animales), por extensas redes de sociabilidad y por el lugar central que ocupan los vínculos sociales como fundamento del rango y la influencia de la persona («grado de riqueza en gente»). El medio saheliano en el que viven muchos nómadas fulani se ha convertido hoy en un avispero de jehadismo, conflictos y violencia. Al mismo tiempo, la región conoce ahora un auge de las posibilidades de conexión gracias a los sistemas móviles de comunicación inalámbrica. Los autores analizan el triángulo formado por la movilidad, la comunicación y la inseguridad con el fin de aprehender la situación

actual de los pastores fulani nómadas y seminómadas y su dinámica identitaria. El hecho de que los fulani se vean atrapados en esos conflictos coarta su movilidad y acarrea a menudo la pérdida de sus rebaños. ¿Serán capaces de mantener su modo de vida y su identidad, enraizados en el nomadismo? Los autores se basan aquí en estudios monográficos cualitativos y en historias biográficas recogidas entre y con pastores nómadas y seminómadas del Camerún, el Chad y Malí que han tenido que convivir con conflictos y violencia. Estos estudios monográficos evidencian que, si bien el pastoreo móvil resulta hoy una actividad difícil debido a los conflictos y a la pérdida de ganado, la identidad 'móvil' sigue estando muy presente y cobrando vigor gracias a la telefonía móvil, que permite especialmente mantener la 'riqueza' en gente y redes de sociabilidad.

Palabras clave

África – Conflicto – Fulani (peul) – Fulbe – Movilidad – Pastoreo – Telefonía móvil.



References

1. Azarya V., Dijk J.W.M., Breedveld A. & de Bruijn M. (1999). – Pastoralists under pressure: Fulbe societies confronting change in West Africa. Brill, Leiden.
2. Riesman P. (1977). – Freedom in Fulani social life. Chicago University Press, Chicago, Illinois.
3. De Bruijn M.E. & van Dijk J.W.M. (1995). – Arid ways: cultural understandings of insecurity in Fulbe society, Central Mali. CERES, Wageningen, the Netherlands.
4. De Bruijn M. (2007). – Mobility and society in the Sahel: an exploration of mobile margins and global governance. In *Cultures of migration: African perspectives* (H.P. Hahn & G. Klute, eds). Lit Verlag, Münster, 109–129.
5. Bonfiglioli A.M. (1988). – DuDal, histoire de famille et histoire de troupeau chez un groupe de WoDaaBe du Niger. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
6. De Bruijn M. & van Dijk H. (2003). – Changing population mobility in West Africa: Fulbe pastoralists in Central and South Mali. *Afr. Affairs*, **102** (407), 285–307. doi:10.1093/afraf/adg005.
7. Diallo Y. & Schlee G. (2000). – L'ethnicité peule dans des contextes nouveaux: la dynamique des frontières. Karthala, Paris.
8. Jackson M. (2013). – Wherewithal of life: ethics, migration, and the question of well-being. University of California Press, Berkeley, California. doi:10.1525/california/9780520276703.001.0001.
9. Carayannis T. & Lombard L. (2015). – Making sense of the Central African Republic. Zed Books, London. Available at: www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/distributed/M/bo22553202.html (accessed on 5 July 2016).
10. Amadou A. (2012). – Entre la 'détresse' et l'inter-connectivité : le cas des Mbororo réfugiés sur les frontières Cameroun-Centrafricque [Between duress and interconnectivity: Mbororo refugees at the Cameroun-CAR border]. PhD research. Available at: www.connecting-in-times-of-duress.nl/research/entre-la-detresse-et-linter-connectivite/ (accessed on 29 August 2016).
11. Doksa E.L. (2016). – Crises, néo-nomadisme et l'appropriation de la Téléphonie mobile, en milieu Wodaabe. MA Thesis, University of Ndjamena, Chad.
12. Loftsdottir K. (2008). – The bush is sweet. Identity, power and development among WoDaaBe Fulani in Niger. Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden.
13. Boesen E., Marfaing L. & de Bruijn M.E. (2014). – Nomadism and mobility in the Sahara-Sahel: introduction. *Can. J. Afr. Stud.*, **48** (1), 1–12. Available at: www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00083968.2014.935101.
14. Sangaré B. (2016). – Les Peuls du nord Mali face aux crises « Sahéliennes » : entre protectionnisme, conflictualités internes et radicalisation. PhD research. Available at: www.connecting-in-times-of-duress.nl/boukary-sangare/.
15. Lecocq B., Mann G., Whitehouse B., Badi D., Pelckmans L., Belalimat N., Hall B. & Lacher W. (2013). – One hippopotamus and eight blind analysts: a multivocal analysis of the 2012 political crisis in the divided Republic of Mali. *Rev. Afr. Polit. Econ.*, **40** (137), 343–357. doi:10.1080/03056244.2013.799063.

16. Sangaré B. (2013). – Conflit au Nord du Mali et dynamiques sociales chez les peuls du Hayré. Master's Thesis. Université Cheikh Anta Dop, Dakar. Available at: www.connecting-in-times-of-duress.nl/wp-content/uploads/m%C3%A9moire-Master-2-sociologie-UCAD-Boukary-SANGARE-080314.pdf (accessed on 29 August 2016).
 17. Sangaré B. (2010). – Peuls et mobilité dans le cercle de Douentza : l'espace social et la téléphonie mobile en question. Master's Thesis. Université de Bamako, Bamako, Mali. Available at: www.connecting-in-times-of-duress.nl/wp-content/uploads/memoire-sangarc3a9-boukary1.pdf
 18. Keita N., Magassa S., Sangaré B. & AgRhissa Y. (2015). – Téléphonie et mobilité au Mali. Langaa, Buea, Cameroon.
 19. De Bruijn M. (2015). – Counter Voices in Africa [Blog]. Ahmadou: a nomad leader in Mali. Available at: <http://mirjamdebruijn.wordpress.com/2015/05/04/ahmadou-a-nomad-leader-in-mali/> (accessed on 5 July 2016).
 20. De Bruijn M. (2015). – Counter Voices in Africa [Blog]. Quest for citizenship of the Fulbe (semi)nomads in Central Mali. Available at: <http://mirjamdebruijn.wordpress.com/2015/10/12/quest-for-citizenship-of-the-fulbe-seminomads-in-central-mali/> (accessed on 5 July 2016).
 21. De Bruijn M. (2015). – Counter Voices in Africa [Blog]. Nomads unite: a story from Northern Mali. Available at: <http://mirjamdebruijn.wordpress.com/2015/03/02/nomads-unite-a-story-from-northern-mali/> (accessed on 29 August 2016).
-

