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Farmer-herder conflict in Agogo, Ghana: An exploratory analysis of history, actors, and land tenure system.

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Over the past three decades, the Asante Akyem Agogo of Ghana has had limited peace and stability, which are preconditions for sustainable development due to protracted farmer-herder conflicts. This study was conducted to investigate the genesis of the farmer-herders' conflict, the actors involved as well as the land tenure system in the area. Two complementary analytical approaches are applied. The first consists of qualitative content analysis of documents on the conflict from the late 1990s-2017. The second is the collection and analysis of data through ethnographic fieldwork using a semi-structured, focus group discussion and observation from six purposively selected communities. This study highlights three main findings: 1) the rearing of cattle in Agogo in commercial quantities began after the release of lands from the chiefs of Agogo to some cattle owners; 2) the conflict is "purely" an economic conflict with many actors with competing interests, and 3) the land tenure system in Agogo makes land ownership a valuable commodity.

Keywords: Agogo, conflict, farmer-herder, actors, land tenure, history

INTRODUCTION

In Ghana, the conflicts between nomadic herdsman and sedentary farmers have been a major problem not only for the local communities but also for the government at the national level (Otu et al., 2020). Perspicuously, several studies have warned of a possible escalation of these conflicts into armed conflicts if measures are not put in place to check (Agyemang, 2019; Olaniyan, 2015). The Agogo conflict between the sedentary farmers and Fulani herdsman spans more than two decades, following the leasing of farmlands to some cattle owners by the chiefs of Agogo.

As a practice and a sign of conviviality, in the West African sub-region, host communities have been welcoming and integrating migrants such as mobile livestock keepers and agricultural settlers for ages (de Bruijn and van Dijk, 2003). In Ghana, one of such ways of integration is by allocating a portion of land to the migrants, of which Agogo is no exception.

In other words, the migrants and the indigenes of Agogo were living peacefully without any conflict. Moreover, cattle rearing existed in Agogo long time, of which some of the migrants and the indigenes were cattle owners (Agyemang, 2017). Therefore, herdsman were engaged in the practice of tendering of cattle belonging to the indigenes of Agogo.

However, with the emergence of the Fulani nomads and their cattle in Agogo and the subsequent leasing of land to them in 1997, tension started brewing, leading to the violent conflict. In this regard, the relationships between the Fulani nomads and the local people have been very hostile. Thus, armed conflict and social unrest have characterized the interactions between the Fulani nomads and the farmers since 1997 (Amankwaa, 2019; Appiah-Boateng, 2020).

For over three decades, the conflict has been ongoing, becoming protracted and intractable, with reprisal attacks rampant. However, the current scholarly works on farmer/herder conflicts on Agogo have mainly focus on the causes and effects of the conflict, the policy of expulsion (Agyemang, 2017; 2019; Kuusaana and Bukari, 2015; Opoku, 2012; Olaniyan, 2015).

Despite the rising incidences of farmer-herder conflicts in Agogo, little is known concerning the historical, land tenure, and actors involved. We, therefore, lack knowledge as existing studies have not fully addressed these issues. Consequently, there is a big gap in the literature about the conflict in Agogo. Herein lays the relevance of the study because it shall constitute a significant addition to the existing literature.

This study examines the history, land tenure, and actors that surround the conflict.

This article is structured as follows: the section, 'Farmer-Herder Conflict: Existing Theoretical Explanations' reviews the existing theoretical explanations of farmer-herder conflicts.

Attention is paid to why the "militant" posture between farmers and herders in Africa. The 'Methodology' focuses on the various methods adopted in this article.

The third section, 'History of Cattle Rearing, Nomadism and Land Agreements in Agogo' discusses the chronology of cattle rearing and nomadism. The various

ways of acquiring land are the focus of 'Land Ownership and Tenure in Agogo'. The section, 'Actors Involved in the Conflict' and their roles deliberates the various players connected to the conflict. The final section of the paper is the 'Conclusion'.

Farmer-Herder Conflict: Existing Theoretical Explanations

In the study of environment, scarcity and violence, Homer-Dixon (1999) asserts that large populations in many developing countries are highly dependent on four key environmental resources that are fundamental to their livelihood: freshwater, cropland, forests, and fish. Scarcity or shrinking of these resources as a result of misuse, over-use or degradation, population growth, climate change, and resource access lead to competition over the scarce ecological resources among groups and may under certain circumstances trigger off conflicts. In this perspective, resource scarcity is the product of insufficient supply, too much demand, or unequal distribution of a resource due to political, economic, social, and environmental factors. This forces some groups of society into conditions of deprivation, competition, and violence over the limited resources. In effect, resource scarcity raises the competitive stakes and premiums that the various societal groups place on available resources, which may engender violent conflicts among groups. Homer-Dixon (1999) stressed that resource scarcity forces groups in society into resource capture or competition, which in turn causes ecological marginalisation and violent conflicts among groups.

By applying the theory to Agogo, the conflict has been driven by the scarcity of land, and competition between the farmers and the Fulani herdsman to ensure their viability in the area. The scarcity of land is due to the degradation and shrinking ecological space, human and cattle population explosion, and resource depletion. Therefore, the farmers need the land for cultivation, while the herdsman need the land for grazing and rearing of cattle.

Tonah (2000) stressed resource scarcity in his study of Fulbe pastoralists and Kassena farmers' conflict in Ghana. According to his study, the ultimate causes of the conflict and the deterioration of relations between the two groups lie in the general degradation of resources and the increased competition for access and resource capture.

This trend is well captured by Adogi, as the population is increasing, definitely there will be as well increase in demand for land, water, forest products, and grazing land within the territories inhabited by Fulanis and farmers; these groups are forced to find new ways to cope with different types of conflict at once because of competition over marginal resources (Adogi, 2013: p.7).

As noted by Hendrickson (1997), resource-related conflicts in Africa is driven by the scarcity¹ of natural resources. Blench (1996) argued that in semi-arid sub-Saharan Africa, areas where resources are short and

¹. Scarcity refers to limited in supply as against demand.

populations live on the edge, minor deficits in rainfall, land use, or pasture generate major conflict. This coincides with the study of resource conflict by Bennett, which states that environmental degradation is playing “an increasingly important role in the conflict in the Sahel—a region where natural resources are diminishing, competition over their use is increasingly tense, and violent conflict is becoming more and more frequent” (Bennett, 1991). Writing on the farmer-herder in Africa, Turner (2004) recognised that, people in the agro-pastoral regions of the West African Sahel, describe farmer-herder conflicts as a struggle over resources and a major source of social conflict and environmental degradation in the region. The debate by the various scholars indicates clearly that, resource scarcity plays and underpins farmer-herder conflicts in Africa, of which Agogo is not an exception. Besides the competition and struggle over land, the activities of both have resulted in environmental degradation with an adverse effect on humans, social, economic, and security in Agogo.

Another theoretical explanation of the farmer-herder conflict in Agogo is the theory of eco-survivalism (Okoli, 2013). The crux of this theory is that the desperate quest of groups to protect and advance their livelihood in a competitive and resource-scarce ecological sphere is likely to precipitate violent conflict (Okoli and Atelhe, 2014). The theory draws the relationship between resource scarcity and survival. Further, the theory holds that the militant posture of the herdsmen and the farmers must be understood in relation to survival (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014). To the farmer in Agogo, his/her survival depends on the cultivation and harvesting of crops. Therefore, any damage caused to the crops threatening the livelihood of the farmer. In the same way as the Fulani herdsmen; for the average herdsman, pastoralism is a way of living. In this regard, any threat to his herd amounts to a threat to his survival and destiny. As captured by Abbas (2012, p.331), *‘Our herd is our life, because to every nomad, life is worthless without his cattle. What do you expect from us when our source of existence is threatened? The*

encroachment of the grazing field and routes by farmers is a call to war’.

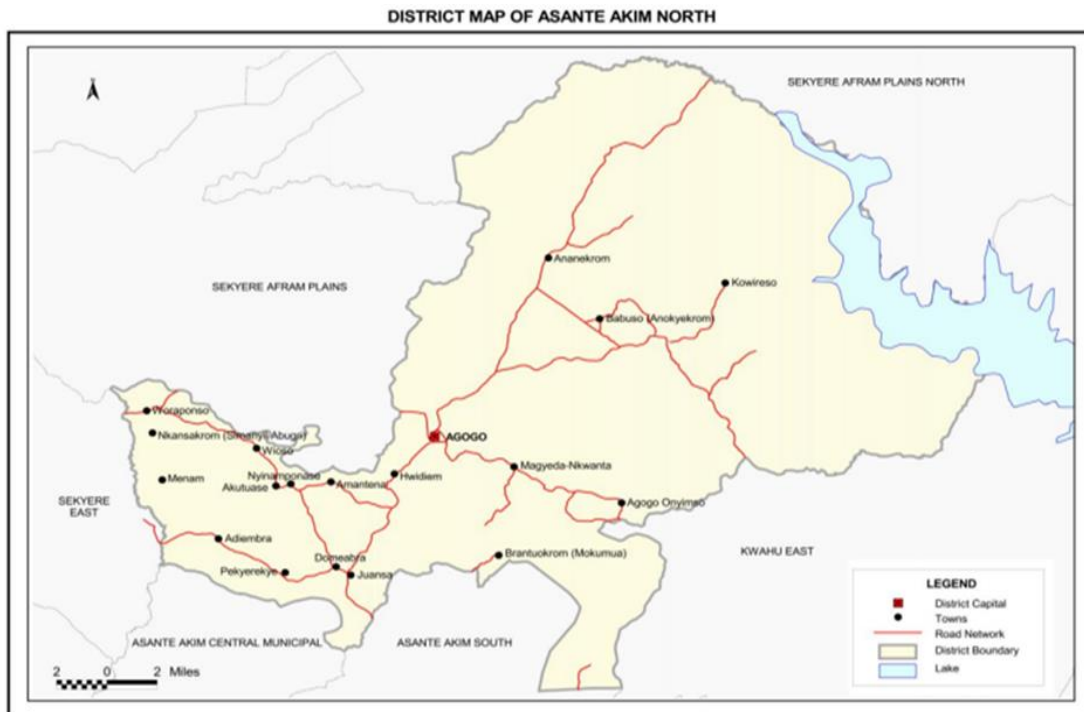
By applying this theory to Agogo, the aggression among the farmers and the Fulani herdsmen is motivated by a do-or-die struggle for a living in a territory that is competitive, and hostile to each other’s collective means of sustenance. In effect, the move by the locals to expel or eject the Fulani herdsmen from Agogo farmlands has been adjudged as a threat to the livelihood of the latter, resulting in attacks and reprisal attacks.

The environmental scarcity and eco-survivalism theories have been criticised over its reliance on resource scarcity as a cause of farmer-herder conflict in Africa (Peluso and Watts, 2001). However, Homer-Dixon posited that environmental scarcity is never a sole or sufficient cause of conflict or violence between two groups; it enmeshes with political, economic, and other factors to generate harsh social effects that in turn help produce violence (Homer-Dixon, 1999, pp). On this score, Tonah (2006) notes that farmer-herder conflicts are not only seen as resource conflict but also as an ethnic conflict involving the two groups. Since pastoralists and native groups possess distinct values, customs, physical and cultural characteristics; ethnicity plays a key role in their conflicts. To complement this, Olaniyan (2015) revealed ethnicity in his study on Fulani–Komboka conflict in Ghana. According to him, resource scarcity is evident as a cause of the conflict. However, the underlining factor remains the issue of ethnicity as the Fulani pastoralists are regarded as strangers in the land.

Overview of the study area

Agogo is a town in the Asante Akim North District, one of the new districts in Ghana, created in 2012. It was carved out of the then Asante Akim North Municipal and established by Legislative Instrument 2057 (Republic of Ghana, 2012). The district was inaugurated on 28th June 2012 with Agogo as its capital (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

District Map of Asante Akim North



Source: Ghana Statistical Service, GIS

Demographically, the population of the Asante Akim North District, according to the 2010 population and housing census, is 68,186 representing 1.4 percent of the Ashanti region's total population. Males constitute 48.8 percent and females represent 51.2 percent. About 53.5 percent of the population resides in rural areas. The population is very heterogeneous, though the Asante is the indigenes². People from ethnic groups such as Ewe, Komkomba, Fulani, Kusasi, Frafra, Mamprusi, Gonja, Dagomba, Mossi, Akyem, Kwahu among others are all represented in Agogo (Agyemang, 2017). Politically, there are two parallel structures of authority in Agogo. The first is the Asante Akim North District Assembly, which is the highest political and administrative body, which exercises deliberative, legislative, and executive functions (Republic of Ghana, 1993). The second structure of authority is the Agogo Traditional Council (ATC), which encapsulates the chieftaincy institution with functions such as land allocation, dispute and conflict resolution, maintenance of law and order, as well as

² Indigenes refers the first people to occupy the area, and as such regarded as the aborigines. In this study, the Asante are referred to as the indigenes, while the other ethnic groups are referred to as settlers based on the Asante perspective and traditions.

upholding traditional customs. Economically, agriculture employs about 72.7 percent of the labour force. The industry employs less of the populace because the Asante Akim North District is an agrarian economy. There are however some private entrepreneurs in wood processing, batik making, and *gari*³ processing (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research strategy was applied as the methodological approach to finding answers to a number of research questions. This included the use of semi-structured interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), participant observation, text, and document analysis. This method was chosen as against the quantitative because the objects of interest (farmers and herdsman) in this study are fundamentally different from the objects of interest in the natural sciences. Also, the main objective of the paper is to study and understand a social phenomenon (conflict). Considering the objects and the social phenomenon, methodologically, it was prudent to adopt interpretivism which attempts to understand human experiences, values, and actions.

³ Gari is a flour made from cassava

In this study, Agogo is the study area, and a case study design was adopted. By choosing this research design, the purpose is to 'subject my respondents into an intensive examination' and access their knowledge on the mitigation responses adopted to resolve the conflict (Bryman, 2012, p.71). Finally, a case study design is especially good for examining the 'why', 'how' and 'what' questions which are particularly typical of this study (Yin, 2013a; Yin, 2013b, p.328). In selecting the focus communities for the study, a critical case approach was employed. A critical case approach involves the selection of cases that are likely to '*yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge*' (Patton, 2001: p. 236). As such, the selection of Bebome, Bebuso, Abrewapong, Agyanafo, and Nyamebekyere villages together with Agogo township was because, these villages were part of the areas mentioned specifically in the court ruling (Republic of Ghana, 2012a, p.19). The findings are based on an extensive eight-week period (two months) of field data collection across six communities in the Agogo Traditional Area, Ghana.

Under the semi-structured method, one hundred and seven (107) respondents voluntarily responded with the assistance of informants. Statistically, seventy (70) farmers, twelve (12) herdsmen, five (5) cattle owners, three (3) police officers, four (4) lecturers, two (2) chiefs, four (4) informants, a former Member of Parliament, a veterinary doctor, an immigration officer, the District Coordinating Director, a member from accident and emergency unit at APH⁴, a representative from AARB⁵ and a journalist.

Five (5) focus group discussions were held; one for the herdsmen and four for the farmers. The discussions were held at Bebome, Bebuso, Abrewapong, and Nyamebekyere respectively. Each discussion was made up of five (5) respondents, with overall respondents of twenty (25).

The analysis of secondary sources was used to complement the primary data. The secondary data involved intensive research from books, journals, magazines, newspaper reports, articles, internet materials, and unpublished works related to the study. Specifically, this study reviewed the literature on the farmer-herder conflict concerning the causes, effects, and factors that attract the nomads to Agogo. The review of scholarly works served as both a theoretical and empirical base for the analysis of data collected. Other data were sourced from the Agogo Police Station (CID) including;

- Dadson Commission report in 2010 after disturbances in Agogo concerning the conflict
- 2012 Kumasi High Court ruling concerning the activities of the Fulani herdsmen

- 2012 Evacuation plan to eject the cattle and Fulani herdsmen by REGSEC⁶
- Copy of the lease/indenture between the paramount chief and some cattle owners (Alhaji Karim Grusah and Alhaji Ali Mamudu)
- Statistic of murder in Agogo from January 2014-January 2016
- Reported cases on the conflict from January 2009-April 2010
- List of cattle owners and herdsmen at Agogo as at 2012
- Pictures, Briefs, protests, and medical reports

Empirical findings and analysis

History of cattle rearing in Agogo of Ghana

The document analysis revealed that cattle rearing is an old phenomenon to the people of Agogo as it has been in existence since the colonial era. Throughout this period, there was no conflict between the farmers and the herdsmen. Indeed, the cattle owners and the farmers coexisted peacefully. At that stage, the cattle reared were under the semi-intensive system (kraals) for consumption and domestic purposes such as payment of bride price, prestige, and honor. The number was usually between five (5) to about fifty (50) heads per family. This, notwithstanding, the owners sold some of the cattle occasionally during festivities and in times of financial needs. There was no nomadism as the cattle were fed in their kraals with cut grasses, cassava, and plantain peels by their owners. At times, they were led to nearby bushes and refuse dumps by the local herdsmen to graze without any damages to crops and farms. At sunset, they were led back to their kraals. In this regard, the rearing of cattle on large scale for commercial purposes and the nomadic system were not in practice. The analysis showed that nomadic system began in 1997 after an agreement between some cattle owners and the Omanhene of Agogo (the paramount chief). A seventy-two-year-old man, the krontihene⁷ of Agogo explained:

From my infancy, through to the 1960s and 1970s, this has been the situation. The cattle were not in the bush; they were inside a fence. So, anytime they were (are) going outside, herdsmen followed them, and by sundown, followed them back to their kraals. Cattle are animals that will not cross a fence even if it is made up of palm fronds. There was no destruction of farms, there were harmony and peace between the people (Personal Interview, 9/1/2017).

⁶Regional security council

⁷Krontihene is a chief and the second in command in terms of the Agogo chieftaincy hierarchy.

⁴ Agogo Presbyterian hospital

⁵ Asante Akyem Rural Bank

Correspondingly, a ninety-year-old man, a farmer and former Assemblyman⁸ of Abrewapong and a leader of Agogoman MmaKuo⁹ supported:

Since the time of the Gold Coast (colonial rule), cattle were in Agogo. They (cattle) were reared at home, not in the bush. Occasionally, the cattle were led to graze at nearby refuse dumps and grasses. The cattle owners and farmers were at peace; no conflict, no killing, no destruction of crops and farms. It is only when the Fulani herdsmen came that all these negative activities started (Personal Interview, 9/1/2017).

Of importance, the veterinary doctor for Agogo and the Bebomehene¹⁰ confirmed that the issue of nomadism started in 1997 after some Fulani herdsmen approached the Agogo Traditional Council (ATC) for land to rear cattle. They were five (5) in total with their leader, Sambo. It worth mentioning that these cattle owners had already been operating at the Abrewapong village of Agogo where they were chased away by some farmers for invading their farms. This necessitated their need to call on the ATC. The cattle owners were led by the then Assemblyman of Abrewapong to the Council. The paramount chief of Agogo gave them a piece of land at a fee of eighty-five Ghana cedi, GH¢ 85 (\$17)¹¹. It is must be noted that the piece of land allocated to Fulani herdsmen at that time was very thickly forested, with no farming activities. Commercial agriculture at that stage was on small scale due to the poor road network. In a verbal agreement as narrated by the elders, the ATC and the cattle owners agreed on the following;

- Introduction of intensive system or cattle ranching or confinement
- Digging of boreholes to provide water for the animals to avoid water pollution
- Not to allow the animals to cause damage to other people's property
- The cattle owners were warned, if they breach the agreement, they would be sacked (Personal Interview, 9/1/2017).

According to the veterinary doctor for Agogo, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture of Ghana in 1999, upon media reports on the activities of Fulani nomads in the Afram Plains including the Agogo area, conducted a study to ascertain the veracity of the situation. After visiting the area and verified the nomadic activities, the team met with the ATC to discuss it with them. The

⁸ Assemblyman is a government official at the lowest level (grassroots)

⁹ Agogoman MmaKuo is an association of the people of Agogo, fighting for the welfare of the farmers.

¹⁰ Bebomehene is the chief of the village called Bebome (one of the study areas)

¹¹ At the time of the fieldwork, \$1=GH¢5

veterinarian further explained that the chiefs accepted that they knew the herdsmen and confirmed releasing the land to them¹². Since the cattle owners were nomads, they were moving from one place to another in search of pasture and water for their animals. Later, a series of complaints were made to the Council by the farmers in Abrewapong about the nomadic nature of the Fulani herdsmen. This was because commercial farming was gaining momentum as the government started constructing roads to the villages. As a result, people started venturing into cash cropping on a large scale. Afterward, a meeting was held between the immigration authorities, the police, the army, the district assembly, and the chiefs by which a decision was made against the Fulani herdsmen. They were sacked from the land as the agreement was breached. Consequently, the Fulani herdsmen moved to the Kwahu area of the Afram Plains.

The indenture and the formalization of nomadism in Agogo

A year later, in 2000, the paramount chief together with some sub-chiefs released a portion of Agogo lands, specifically in Nyamebekyere village¹³ to some businessmen for cattle rearing. These cattle owners were Ghanaians, but not indigenes or settlers from Agogo. Though the formal agreement was signed in 2006 and 2007 respectively, their operations started in 2000. According to the indentures, one prominent cattle owner was to pay GH¢500¹⁴ (\$150)¹⁵, while another was to pay GH¢150 (\$30) yearly as rent respectively for fifty (50) years. Among the main issues stipulated in the indenture are;

- a) Not to use the demised land otherwise than for a cattle ranch farming purpose only.
- b) Not to allow anything on the demised land which may become nuisance damage or annoyance to the chiefs or any occupier of the adjacent property.
- c) The cattle owners were strictly to ensure that the cattle are kept within the area assigned to them and to ensure that the animals do not stray into other areas which will constitute a nuisance to other farmers in the neighborhood.

¹² Personal interview 9/2/2017

¹³ Nyamebekyere is a village in Agogo and one of the study areas

¹⁴ In the contract, the amount is written GH¢5,000,000 and GH¢1,500,000 respectively, because the agreements were made before the redenomination of the Ghana cedi in 2007

¹⁵ At the time of the fieldwork, \$1=GH¢5

- d) To provide facilities to the cattle in such a way that they do not pollute water bodies outside the area granted.
- e) The cattle owners were strictly forbidden to extend the facilities offered them under this lease to a third party without the consent of the Lessor.
- f) To provide such other facilities to the cattle so as not to create problems that will undermine community cohesion and destabilize the community leadership because of the activities of the cattle.
- g) That, the nomads roaming illegally in the area, on the whole, have engaged in anti-social activities which have disturbed farming activities; hence, the cattle owners were sworn to keep strictly to the conditions of the grant.

Though the agreement was duly signed by both parties, in contrast, the cattle owners failed to confine their animals and provide them with food and water per the contract. They allowed the cattle to move freely in search of pasture. Sometimes, the herdsmen led the cattle to streams and rivers for water. This rotational movement is the beginning of nomadic practice and the genesis of the conflict in Agogo. The reality was that most of the cattle were grazing on people's farms, thereby destroying food crops. Besides, their nomadic movement attracted other herdsmen to the area who were previously afraid of invading the Agogo lands. Hence, both the cattle owners and the alien nomads¹⁶ moved their cattle from one place to another while causing damage to peoples' farms, polluting the water bodies. This resulted in a frosty and tense relationship between the cattle owners and the farmers leading to armed conflict.

The researcher contacted Alhaji¹⁷Grusah, one of the leaseholders with the chiefs on this issue¹⁸. He accepted that he and his colleagues were the first to settle in the area, and it is true that, at times the animals go astray. Alhaji however denied that his group had been inviting other herdsmen to the area. He posited that he and his colleagues had driven them away initially. He further accused some residents of Agogo of releasing their lands to the alien herdsmen in return for cattle and money. This assertion is evident in the evacuation plan report obtained from the REGSEC through the CID¹⁹, Agogo Police Station (Republic of Ghana, 2012b), where some local residents have transferred a parcel of their lands to some cattle owners for the rearing of cattle at a fee. The said transaction occurred in 2008.

¹⁶ Herdsmen who are mostly from other countries, and particularly do not have land agreement with the chiefs

¹⁷Alhaji is a title given to a Muslim man, who is rich and been to Mecca before.

¹⁸ Personal interview 6/2/2017

¹⁹ Criminal Investigation Department

Lastly, one prominent cattle owner was of the view that the influx of the alien herdsmen to the place started the whole problem. This is because they were not having lands to rear their cattle, hence they were moving from places to places. The cattle owner also accepted that he had failed to confine his animals but explained that his animals only feed on his acquired land, and only go out to drink water. He was quick to add that, even if the animals cause damages to people's farms, he pays compensations to those farmers.

Therefore, it can be deduced that the leasing of the lands to the businessmen for cattle rearing is the genesis of nomadic practice and the conflict in Agogo. The fact is that commercial rearing of cattle in Agogo began with the settlement of the cattle owners after the signing of the indenture.

The study argued that had it not been the indenture, the nomadism would not have started in the first place. The document from the Kumasi High court showed a ruling against the cattle owners including the expulsion of the cattle from all Agogo lands. Indeed, an evacuation plan was made in 2012 to eject all the cattle but to no avail. Consequently, the central government adopted an expulsion policy as response to the conflict. Under this policy, a team of military and police personnel were sent to the Area to drive away the cattle owners and their cattle. However, this study found out that the policy is not sustainable due to the actors involved. The next section discusses the various stakeholders in the conflict.

Actors involved in the conflict and their roles

Unlike the farmer-Fulani conflicts in the sub-region such as Mali, Niger, Mauritania and Nigeria (Agyemang, 2019; Collinson, 2019) which normally involve the two groups i.e. farmers and herdsmen; the conflict in Agogo is very complex, dynamic, intractable, and involves many actors and factions with an economic interest. Below are the main actors from the fieldwork conducted;

First and foremost are the farmers of Agogo. The farmers are the main actors and victims in this conflict. They are made up of two groups: the natives and settlers. The natives are the indigenes of Agogo and the owners of the land. Most of them belong to the Asante ethnic groups. The settlers are migrants from other parts of Ghana (especially Volta, Bono, and Northern regions) and neighbouring countries like Benin, Togo, and Cote d'Ivoire. Due to intermarriages, there are no divisions among them; all are now 'owners of the land' and are fighting against the pastoral activities in the area. They produce foodstuffs such as plantain, watermelon, maize, cassava, beans, and so on.

In addition to the farmers, are their allies, partners, and supporters (Agogoman MmaKuo, Agogo Youth Association, Local council of Christian churches). Once again, their membership cuts across all ethnic groups, both natives and settlers. Their main role is to drive the

cattle and the Fulani herdsmen away from all Agogo Traditional Lands. In this regard, they have staged a lot of demonstrations, protests, and written petitions against the paramount chief of Agogo, cattle owners, Fulani herdsmen, the police, and the government. A ninety-year-old man, a former Assemblyman (Government representative) of Abrewapong is very instrumental in these associations. Among their actions and activities are; the 2010 demonstration against the chiefs and the herdsmen that led to setting up of a commission of an inquiry (Dadson Committee Report, 2010, p. 1); the petition at the Kumasi High Court that led to the 2012 ruling in favour of the farmers (Republic of Ghana, 2012a).

Furthermore, are the cattle owners. These are the influential people (politicians, chiefs, businessmen, security officers) who have their cattle in Agogo. They are also one of the main parties involved in the conflict. Apart from Alhaji Abdul Karim Grusah, who has openly and publicly declared that he owns cattle in Agogo, all the others are anonymous. They have employed the services of the herdsmen to tender the cattle on their behalf. According to the veterinary doctor for Agogo, there were about thirty-one (31,000) herds of cattle on Agogo lands of which all the owners are Ghanaians as of January 2017. Among these, some have 4000, 3000, 1000, 700 heads, and so on (Personal Interview, 9/2/2017). These owners are being accused by the farmers of supplying the Fulani herdsmen with weapons (AK 47, Pump Action guns, bullets, and others). According to a document obtained from the CID at Agogo Police Station, the cattle owners and Fulani herdsmen in Agogo were all not indigenes of Agogo. However, there was an allegation from a section of the farmers that some indigenes own some of the cattle.

Supporting the cattle owners are the Fulani herdsmen (settler herdsmen and nomads). Fulani herdsmen are also one of the main parties in the conflict. There are two types of herdsmen in Agogo: the settler herdsmen and the nomads. The settler herdsmen are mainly from the Fulani ethnic group, however, there may be some from other ethnicities. They are most familiar with the local dialect, Twi (the local language for the people of Asante including Agogo). It is worth mentioning that there are some Fulani who is not herdsmen but is doing farming in Agogo. The settler herdsmen are permanently staying in the bush on various parts of Agogo; Bebome, Nyamebekyere, Mankala, Bebuso, Abrewapong. Some have grazing lands acquired by their cattle owners from the chiefs, while others acquired the land themselves. On the other hand, the nomads are predominantly foreigners from the Sokoto in Nigeria, Tuaregs from Mali, fulbe from Burkina Faso, Wolof from Senegal. They are mostly tagged as "alien herdsmen". They normally migrate to Agogo in the dry season, and hardly speak or understand any local dialect. It is alleged that they carry along with deadly weapons such as AK 47, pump guns, and have

disregard for human lives. The Immigration Officer for Agogo indicated that the nomads' point of entry in the country is through the Paga²⁰ border in the Upper East Region of Ghana. From Paga, then they descend southwards to Agogo.

Next, are the chiefs. The chiefs are the traditional rulers of Agogo. They form the Agogo Traditional Council. It is very hierarchical with the Agogohene/Omanhene being the paramount chief. It is the Omanhene who entered into an agreement with some cattle owners in 1997 and leased some lands to them that led to the influx of the settled herdsmen and nomads to Agogo. The Omanhene and some chiefs (Gyaasehene²¹ and Nifahene²²) are partly blamed by the farmers for the conflict. The farmers alleged that these chiefs are in support of the Fulani herdsmen and have their cattle being tendered by them. They are also accused of taking bribes from the cattle owners and herdsmen at the expense of human lives. Given the narrative analysis from the history of Agogo presented earlier, it can be deduced that the chiefs are to be blamed in the ongoing conflict in Agogo.

The security personnel are also involved. The security, especially the police of Agogo is constantly in a brawl with the farmers. According to the police, they are to protect lives and property including the cattle. Again, is very difficult for them to identify a herdsman anytime a complaint is made against them for causing damage to farms and crops. This is because the Fulani herdsmen, especially the nomads are not stationary. Consequently, the farmers are of the view that the police are not doing their best to protect them, hence been biased in favour of the settled herdsmen and the nomads. The farmers also accused the police of being taking bribes from the cattle owners and the Fulani herdsmen anytime a complaint is made. One of the issuing confrontations is the 2010 demonstration in which three (3) persons sustained various degrees of gunshot wounds from the police, leading to the transfer of the district police commander at that time (Dadson Committee Report, 2010, p.45)

Completing the list are the middlemen. During the fieldwork, the researcher observed and was also reliably informed about intermediaries and partners of the Fulani herdsmen, who aid in their settlement and stay in Agogo. They mediate between the cattle owners and herdsmen, between herdsmen and farmers, between the police and the herdsmen, between the chiefs and the herdsmen. For instance, if a farmer makes a complaint about causing damage to his/her farm, the middlemen are called, to help identify such herdsman, and negotiate for

²⁰Paga is a town in the North-eastern part of Ghana, very close to Burkina Faso

²¹Gyaasehene is a chief in charge of home affairs

²²Nifahene is a chief who heads the right wing

compensations for the farmer. They also arrange for the coming of the Fulani herdsmen to Agogo and lead them to cattle owners for jobs (Republic of Ghana, 2012b).

The above actors do not only make the Agogo conflict different from other farmer-herder conflicts but also make the government's policy of expulsion not sustainable. As such, the conflict has moved from a resource conflict to an economic conflict involving competing factions. The study found out that the cattle business in Agogo is very lucrative due to the geographical location of the town. Therefore, any policy to curb the situation should be holistic by considering all the parties involved. This next section explains the land tenure system in Agogo.

Land ownership and tenure in Agogo

Given the land scarcity in Agogo, it is important to explain the land ownership and various forms of arrangement in securing land in the Area. Under chapter 21, articles 258 and 267 of the 1992 constitution of Ghana, all lands in Agogo can be grouped into government lands (forest reserve) and stool lands (farmlands). The government lands are managed by the forestry commission. The stool lands are vested in the paramount chief, with various families and family heads being caretakers. The family members then share among the lines for individual use and ownership. Therefore, land ownership for the stool lands takes the form of communal, family, and individual possessions. Apart from these, there are land tenure arrangements for (foreigners, settlers, migrants) who do not belong to the families. The study identified various ways in securing land in Agogo. In this study, the arrangements are grouped into five (5) main headings:

The Lease/concession agreements category. Leasing of farmlands to businessmen to undertake an economic activity is very common in the Agogo traditional area. The lease is granted for a period, with accompanying payment depending on the terms of the agreement. Typical examples are the indenture by the chiefs and the cattle owners (appendix 1 and 2), which was granted for fifty (50) years with an option for an extension. The concession is granted by the forestry officers to investors. The main difference between lease and concession in this study is based on the allocator or lesser and type of land. While the lease(s) is/are granted by the chiefs and some individuals on family or farmlands, the concession is granted by the forest officers on government lands or from forest reserves.

The sharing agreement is the third category. The sharing agreement is also pervasive among the Asante including Agogo. Under this, it can take so many forms, however, the commonest is the crop sharing agreement "*do ma yenkye*" (do it and let's share or divide). A family or an individual can give a land out to someone or a group of people for cultivation, and after harvesting, the crops are shared depending on the terms of the contract. Here, the sharing normally depends on the type of crop, the

duration (total growing period), and the cost involved. For example, in the case of maize, the landowner is given one-third of the yield. Again, a landowner may take its share based on the total land size given out. For instance, some may charge based on acres, for example, a bag of maize for each acre.

Land hiring and purchase are the fourth categories. The hiring of land is similar to land leasing, however, with the former, the duration is shorter compared to the latter. The land reverts to the owner(s) after the duration of harvesting, as he/she stills have the ultimate right over the land. The fee to pay is negotiated between the two parties, but the researcher was reliably informed that, is between GH¢100-200 (\$20-40) per year for an acre of land. However, land purchase is the outright sale of land to a buyer or businessmen. It involves the transfer of one's rights and ownership over the land to the new buyer. Indeed, this practice is not common; it normally happens in times of financial crisis on the part of the landowner(s).

Lastly are the forestry contracts. Under this system, the forestry commission may give a piece of land out, especially areas deemed to be degrading to farmers for cultivation. However, the farmer(s) would be either instructed to grow trees and take care of them or allow the forestry officers to cultivate trees on the farms. In any case, the farmer has the responsibility of taking care of the trees. The idea is to promote afforestation in the area.

CONCLUSION

This study was specifically conducted in Agogo to analyse pertinent issues of history, actors, and land tenure systems that surround the farmer-Fulani herdsmen conflict that is common in the area. This conflict is one of the major issues the government of Ghanaian has been battling with in recent times. The study argues that on the surface of the conflict is between the farmers and the herdsmen but there are many actors involved with competing interests.

Although the study recognizes environmental and social factors, yet, it argues that the conflict is mainly economic. Apart from the farmers and the herdsmen who seek to advance their livelihood, the other actors such as the chiefs, cattle owners, middlemen, and some security personnel have economic gains from the cattle business in Agogo. Most importantly, the study brought to the fore the challenges in dealing with the farmer-herder conflict in Agogo.

While both the local and central government are working in resolving this major crisis, their approaches are narrow and do not consider the various actors and the land tenure issues (Agyemang, 2019). Consequently, any conflict resolution mechanism should be holistic by considering the history of the conflict, the actors involved as well as the land tenure system.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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