

Chapter 72

Vigilantism and Banditry in Southern Katsina Emirate, Northern Nigeria 1987–2015

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this chapter is armed banditry by the Fulani pastoralist and vigilante activities of farmers. The banditry in Pauwa district is shaped by the nature of the environment and the occupational activities of people in the area. The area is approximately 64.78 square miles. The recent rise in the activities of farmer vigilante groups in Southern Katsina emirate was associated to high activities of cattle rustlers and banditry by the Fulani pastoralist. These activities were identified to be the causes of armed violent conflict associated with farmer and herdsmen conflict. Thus, to underscore the nature of conflicts between the pastoralist and farmers in the area, the study has adopted structuration approach in describing the role of structure and individual agents in the conflict.

INTRODUCTION

Historically some people live by agriculture; the cultivation of vegetables and grains: others by animal husbandry, the use of sheeps cattle, goats, bees, and silkworms, for breeding and for their products (Khalidun, 1967). The cultural relations between the Fulani pastoralist and other communities through the Nigerian federation represent a focal point and important component of relationship between the teaming communities that are either farmers or postoralist. The sociocultural pattern of relationship between the Fulani pastoralist and Hausa farmers can be described as one of the best relationship that exist between the different Nigerian ethnic groups. This relationship in the recent past deteriorated due to incessant attacks on villages, cattle rustling, kidnapping, maiming and extra-judicial and violent response through vigilante activities. This is all associated with the banditry nature of activities of both the farmers and the pastoralist. Banditry is a specific phenomenon that exists within the socio-economic and political

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parameters. Banditry featured prominently in societies where the law takes the form of blood feud. It is a strong security challenge (Hobsbawm, 2012). The banditry in Pauwa district is shaped by the nature of the environment and the occupational activities of people in the area. Presently, the district is in Kankara Local Government Area of Katsina State. It is one of the well known districts of Katsina emirate, in the history of iron smiting in the 19th and 20th centuries. The location of the district along the fringes of Dajin Rugu and Yar'santa forest reserve stands as an important critical parameter in this context. It however marked a major distinctive difference between the area and other districts.

The recent rise in the activities of farmer vigilante groups in Southern Katsina emirate was associated to high activities of cattle rustlers and banditry by the Fulani pastoralist. These activities were identified to be the cases of arm violent conflict associated with farmer and herdsman. The farmers and pastoralist related violence has been on the increase in Nigeria. According to Olayoku (2014) about 615 violent deaths have been recorded by the database of Nigerian Watch and there have been about 61,314 fatalities that can be described as violent. According to the scholars, in 2008, there were 31 reported cases of cattle conflict while in 2009 the fatalities soared to 83 all occurring most primarily in the northern states of the country.

Many analysts tried to attribute the recurrent conflict to ethno-religious parameters which define the nature of Nigerian state as a multi ethnic and religious state. The farmer-pastoralist conflicts in Katsina are essentially economic conflict, irrespective of the religious, cultural and political colorations (Ab-bass, 2012:191). The conflict is related to population and growth and environmental degradations. The farmer-herdsman conflicts involve Fulani and Hausa famers, Fulani vs Tiv Farmer, Fulani vs Jukun Famers, Fulani vs Birom etc. Although, Fulani herders and farmers have for long coexisted in symbiotic relationships that have persisted through both peaceful and contentious encounters, reports of violent clashes between these two groups are becoming more frequent in the recent Nigerian History (Oyama, 2014:104). This has been the major source contention in Adamawa, Plateau, Nasarawa, Bauchi, Kaduna, Benue, Taraba, Katsina and Zamfara States (Oyama,2014).

With rapid population growth in both urban and rural areas in the country there is increasing demand for food in the country. Similarly, the Farmers and pastoral people are increasingly trying to make use of the same land in order to meet the growing demand. The demand of cities for crops and meat induces many producers to maintain large herds and to expand farmland. The availability of road transportation enables delivery of even fragile resources to remote markets and locations that are difficult to reach. It is along this line that conflicts erupt between the two interest groups. The farmer in his quest to meet the growing population demand expands farm hectares into the grazing reserves. While, the quest for greener pastures by herdsman usually brings them in contact with the sedentary population who are involved in crop production (See Oyama 2014). The struggle between these two interest groups, coupled with growing breakdown of law and order in the country led to continuous clashes between the two.

Four factors in particular account for this impressive development in the area. The first is the location of the area. The area is approximately 64.78 square miles (Kofar Sauri,1986). The area situated on the fertile loamy soil of southern Katsina state which is one of the most agriculturally productive regions of Katsina emirate. The landscape of the area could be divided into two broad categories, the rich loamy soil in the central and eastern part of the area comprising the village areas of Ketare, Dan Maidaki, Tudu, Gurbi, Jan ruwa, Kuka Sheka, Kankara, and the western part could be described as mountainous area. These include the areas of Yar Tsamiya, Pauwa, Zango, Katoge, Sherere. Also the thick forest of Pauwa situated south of *Dajin Rubu*. The area is dotted with some rocky hills especially in Pauwa, Zango and the areas that constitute the western part of the district. The Yar tsamiya areas also have such hills, there

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