



Impacts of large-scale land holdings on Fulani pastoralists' in the Agogo Traditional Area of Ghana[☆]

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ABSTRACT

This paper examined the impacts of large-scale land holdings on Fulani pastoralists' livelihoods in Agogo, Ghana in the light of questions of Fulani citizenship and increased violent conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. The study is theoretically conceptualized within issues of belonging, citizenship and legitimacy, which have heralded pastoralists' quest for land. We studied pastoralists land acquisitions in comparison with large land acquisitions of ScanFarm (Gh.) Ltd, Nicol-Miro Plantation Ltd and Bernard Kojo Ofori Teak Plantation Ltd as case studies. The study found increased competitions and demand for land by smallholder farmers, Fulani pastoralists and large-scale companies in the Agogo area. These competitions for land by large landholding companies and farmers alike have affected pastoralists' livelihoods negatively; which has pushed pastoralists to marginalized lands while crops are grown along pasturelands and livestock migratory corridors. Consequently, there is increased destruction of crops by cattle, leading to violent conflicts. Besides, pastoralists face high land tenure insecurity as local farmers and landowners seize their leased lands and reallocate them to large agro-companies, partly because of their lack of first-come claims to land.

1. Introduction

Limited access to adequate and secure land is a major problem for sustainable agricultural production in Africa especially for smallholders, migrant farmers and pastoralists. This has been heightened by the commoditization, commercialization, competition and high demand for land by various stakeholders (Flintan, 2012). Generally, land marketization move land tenure from communal towards individualized rights (Besley, 1995). The individualization of land rights, however, limits land access to vulnerable groups including local farmers, pastoralists, migrant groups and women, and thereby creates tensions, especially between pastoralists and smallholders. Flintan (2012) maintains that smallholders and pastoralists always suffer land tenure insecurity in times of agricultural diversification and expansion, conflicts and land grabbing. Evidence has shown in other places in Africa that large-scale land transactions have led to land grabbing and loss of land rights of smallholders and other groups including pastoralists (see Deininger and Byrlee, 2012; Deininger, 2003). Large-scale

land acquisitions are often driven by the demand for land for non-food items, especially for teak, cotton and rubber as well as demand for influential food crops such as coffee in Ethiopia, tea in Kenya, sugar cane in Zambia, soybeans in Tanzania, Jatropha in Ghana, eucalyptus in Mozambique and rice in Mali (see Cotula et al., 2009).

Land has gained economic value in Ghana following increased investments in its usage for commercial housing and agricultural purposes due to demographic pressures and increased agricultural production (Yaro, 2010). The Agogo Traditional Area of the Asante Akim North District clearly demonstrates this example of increased interests in land acquisition in Ghana. The area has attracted investments in land by many agro and tree plantation companies like ScanFarm (Gh.) Ltd,¹ Nicol-Miro Plantation Ltd and Bernard Kojo Ofori Teak Plantation Ltd. Indigenous smallholders as well as migrant farmers are also seeing value in agriculture and are making strides to increase their production by acquiring more land from customary land stocks and land they claim as first-comers. At the same time, more cattle owners and Fulani pastoralists are interested in the Agogo area and have acquired large lands

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¹ The name was changed from ScanFuel (Gh.) Ltd to ScanFarm (Gh.) Ltd in 2010 following a shift of the company's focus from jatropha in 2009 to food crops largely maize, soybeans, sorghum (with plans for rice production in the future).

for cattle production due to the conducive climatic conditions and availability of water and pasture for cattle rearing. These different investments in land have led to competitions for land and water resources and have increased land tenure insecurity for minority groups. Tsikata and Yaro (2011, 2014) have already noted that transnational land transactions have also caused conflicts among farmers and pastoralists and led to potential loss of arable land by smallholders in Ghana. Besides, pastoralists face high land tenure insecurity as farmers and landowners seized their leased lands, which are re-allocated to agro-companies. Their access to land is thus severely constrained.

Also, the citizenship question has affected Fulani pastoralists' quest for land and led to conflicts between them and farmers. Politics of citizenship are intricately related to access, use and control of land/resources. Fulani citizenship in Ghana is contentious as many local people and the state itself see them as non-Ghanaian. These perceptions have led to heightened tensions between local people and Fulani pastoralists with regard to use and access to land (Bukari and Schareika, 2015). This study is relevant to better position the relationship that exists among the various stakeholders in savannah resource use and allocation, and how these relationships are shaped by citizenship and belongingness as construct for legitimacy. The citizenship and belongingness dimensions are essential to explore, because land leasing by Fulani pastoralists alone has failed to guarantee tenure security. In fact, if the rule were the lease agreements, the premise of citizenship (or foreignness) will not be a major part of the discourse and will be discounted. This is because, there are a number of ways Fulani pastoralists enter Ghana since the 1960s. Local communities see some of these entries as illegal, and this is a source of much discontent and conflict. For example, some are brought by cattle owners through private herding contracts, some are tapped by chiefs and local people, and some are invited by their relatives who are already resident in various communities while others 'sneak' in since the herding environment is found conducive. This paper thus examines how land acquisition in the Agogo has affected pastoralists' relationships with farmers and their access and use of land. In line with this objective, we also discuss how violent conflicts and citizenship and first-comer claims to land impact pastoralists' land acquisition.

Often, impacts of large-scale land acquisitions are more visible and widely reported on local farmers than on Fulani pastoralists. Scientific studies have also often focused on impacts of large-scale land acquisitions on smallholders and concerns of smallholders on land access and crop damage (e.g. see Tsikata and Yaro, 2014). This study, however, focuses on how land acquisitions have negatively impacted Fulani pastoralists because their status as 'late-comers' in land access put them at a disadvantage. The issue of citizenship of Fulani pastoralists and their vulnerability to community evictions, lack of easy access to land and resources and high tenure insecurity are also important to explore, hence, the need to study these dynamics in relation to Fulani pastoralists in Ghana. The contribution of our paper to existing knowledge lies in the fact that it is the only study that brings to the fore core issues of everyday problems pastoralists face in access to land in the light of large scale land acquisitions in Ghana. Our study becomes more relevant in the midst of recent mass eviction of pastoralists and cattle out of Agogo in January 2018, with over 60,000 cattle driven out of the area, which puts more strains on pastoralists' access to land. Theoretically, our study contributes to the debates on resource access conceptualizations, while in terms of policy it brings to the fore issues about land policy reforms especially about Ghana's customary land administration system, which has not proffered solutions to issues of cattle farmers/pastoralists' access to land.

1.1. Land rights and tenure system in Ghana

Ghana's land tenure stem is a mix of customary and statutory land tenure systems (Ubink and Quan, 2008). Customary land tenure is based on a community's customs, norms and traditions. In Ghana,

different communities practice their own unique customary land systems. With statutory tenure system, vested lands owned under customary tenure are held and managed by the state (government) for public purposes. In Ghana, 80% of all landholdings are customary hold whereas the remaining 20% is held by the state for public purposes (Kasanga and Kotey, 2001). Four types of land interests exist in Ghana. These are allodial title, freehold title (customary freehold or common law freehold), leasehold and sharecropping: *abunu and abusa* tenancies (Da Rocha and Lodoh, 1999; Ollennu, 1962).

Allodial interests are land titles held by stools (skins),² sub-stools, clans, families and individuals in some cases (Bentsi-Enchill, 1964; Da Rocha and Lodoh, 1999). It is the highest land title in Ghana and operates in a form of common property system. In Agogo, the study area, the allodial title is held by the stool and sub-stools. Individuals and families mostly hold 'customary freehold' from the allodial landholding group. According to Bentsi-Enchill (1964), customary freehold denotes the near maximal interest in land in Ghana. Also, chiefs and *Tendaana* belonging to families also have interest in family or communal land (Kasanga, 1988; Kasanga and Kotey, 2001). Both members of the land owning group (*subject usufructuary*) or strangers (*stranger usufructuary*) can hold the customary freehold interest (Kuusaana and Bukari, 2015).

In leasehold interest, a lessee is given legal rights to a land for a specific duration, to occupy and use the lessor's land at a periodic fee (Kuusaana and Bukari, 2015). Under the laws of Ghana, Ghanaians are entitled to a lease of 99 years while that of a foreigner is 50 years (Kuusaana and Bukari, 2015). The lease could also be as short as one year Fulani pastoralists in Ghana acquire lands through many ways. One is leasehold arrangement (purely cash-based) with allodial trustees (chiefs and usufruct holders). Others' presence is secured locally by inter-personal relationships – informal agreements between neighbours or linked to the fact that some farmers entrust their cattle to them or formal ones, like the one with ATC in Agogo. Since such land transactions by chiefs are completed with limited participation of usufruct holders, this has implications for peaceful co-existence. Whenever conflicts erupt with members of the host communities, the chiefs and the state are pressured by local communities to evict the pastoralists. The last type of land acquisition in Ghana is a lesser interest created through shared-cropping. It operates under customary tenancies where a gratuitous tenancy is created in which land is given for free use to a person by a landlord. The most common examples are *Abusa* and *Abunu* sharecropping agreements.

Land in Agogo is a form of common property system, managed by the Agogo stool, usufruct families and partly by the government in trust for the people. Land rights in Agogo are thus communal with the Agogo stool having allodial title to administer land and lease them out to individuals and companies desiring to acquire lands in the area. Community members with autochthonous roots also own usufructuary rights to free use of land for farming activities and building through application to their respective *Odikro* (village chief) (Kuusaana and Bukari, 2015). Kuusaana and Bukari (2015) note that the *Odikros* only have the power to lease out lands up to 5 ha and if they have to allocate more than that, it must be sanctioned by the *Agogomanhene* (Paramount Chief). The power and right to own land are also given by the stool to families who may lease or sublet such lands to a third party, but only in "consultation with the stool, but not necessarily with the stool's consent" (Kuusaana and Bukari, 2015, p.56). Family heads manages family lands. The Ghanaian state through The Forestry Commission (FC) also manages some forest reserves and thus owns these lands in trust for the people.

Fulani pastoralists' agreement to formally acquire land in Agogo was first in 2006 when four pastoralists acquired about 190 acres of land from the ATC to rear cattle in the area (Kuusaana and Bukari,

² The terms stool and skin used here refer to the symbol of authority for chiefs in the southern and northern parts of Ghana respectively.

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