

FULANI MBORORO OCCUPATION IN THE UELE BASIN: IMPACTS AND PERSPECTIVES

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RESUME :

Il est sans doute vrai que ce sujet a fait bouger les lignes et a fait couler beaucoup d'encre, mais ce qui est évident c'est que chacun l'aborde de sa façon et cela, sous un angle approprié. Mais moi, je suis très préoccupé par les impacts et des perspectives y afférents. Cet article intitulé : « Occupation Mbororo dans le bassin de l'Uélé : Impacts et perspectives » appelle à la conscience de tous les citoyens congolais, il vise à alerter de manière anticipative les autorités politico-administratives de la République Démocratique du Congo et celles de la Province du Bas- et du Haut-Uélé en particulier afin qu'elles puissent garder un œil sur cette occupation irrégulière, d'origine inconnue et quelque peu masquée sous le vocable de « réfugiés climatiques » ; ensuite, cet article essaie de lister quelques impacts surtout négatifs de cette occupation et, il fait réfléchir aux mesures nécessaires pouvant prévenir les conséquences qui pourraient en survenir dans les prochains jours et suggère quelques voies de sortie.

Mots-clés: Mbororo occupation, Uele basin, Impacts, perspectives.

ABSTRACT:

It is undoubtedly true that this subject has moved the lines and caused a lot of ink to be spilled, but what is obvious is that everyone approaches it in their own way and from an appropriate angle. But I am very concerned about the impacts and related prospects. This article entitled: "Mbororo Occupation in the Uele Basin: Impacts and Perspectives" calls for the conscience of all Congolese citizens, it aims to alert in an anticipatory manner the political-administrative authorities of the Democratic Republic of Congo and those of the Province of Bas- and Haut-Uele in particular so that they can keep an eye on this irregular occupation, of unknown origin and somewhat masked under the term "climate refugees"; then, this article tries to list some mainly negative impacts of this occupation and, it makes us think about the necessary measures that can prevent the consequences that could occur in the coming days and suggests some ways out.

Keywords: Fulani, Mbororo, Impacts, Uele basin, perspectives

1. INTRODUCTION

As native of the concerned area, having worked on the same field at my undergraduate level at TTC ISIRO (the Northeastern Part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo); inspired by Professor Arthur CIMWANGA BADIBANGA'S book entitled *Mbororo, Invasion of a Nation*, (2016), I realized that these nomadic breeders' presence in my country (DRC) and in the Uele basin particularly is a great problem and may generate some other negative consequences in the coming days. So, as elite, I should not keep quiet toward such a situation without having said a word. In addition, the same adds that: "My compatriots, especially those who dwell in the Eastern part of DRC undergo the aggression of foreign negative forces such as Mbororo, LRA, AFDLR or ADF-NALU, so let's carry on the roof their murmurs, complaints or distress to rebuild and restore hope in their hearts..."

Consequently, the main concern of this article is to answer to these questions: what can be possible negative consequences or impacts of this occupation in the past and what will be in the coming days? what can be the attitude of each toward this situation? what can be the responsibility of the government towards this irregular occupation? and finally, what can be necessary measures to anticipate or to avoid those negative consequences?

Furthermore, this paper basically applies the mixed methods approach: Documentary, questionnaire, ...

In doing so, I hope that this article will awaken the citizeness of all Congolese and it will unquestionably attract Congolese politico-Administrative authorities' attention about this illegal and suspicious settlement in the Uele Basin.

To make clear the subject matter, keywords used in this paper have been explained as follows:

Fulani Mbororo occupation: is Mbororo settlement or Mbororo invasion (Patriotism and Nationalism as seen in Chimwanga's *Mbororo: Invasion of a Nation*. Term work p.9),

Uele basin: comprises the area along Uele river and mainly two Uele Provinces I mean lower and upper Uele (own explanations);

Impact can be understood as strong effect or influence on a situation, something or someone. (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org> consulted on Tuesday 27th 2024 around 5:3.

Perspectives: Oxford learner's Dictionaries defines it as a particular attitude toward something; way of thinking about something (<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com> consulted on Tuesday 27th 2024 around 5:16.

I explained the overhead terms to orient and permit the good understanding of the subject matter of this paper.

Then, this article is divided into the following sub-points:

- ❖ Brief historical background of Mbororo arrival in Uele basin.
- ❖ A short study on the field of study (Uele Basin)
- ❖ A survey on geographical situation of Mbororo presence in Uele basin
- ❖ Questionnaire about Mbororo real status in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
 - Nomadic breeders?
 - Irregular migrants?
 - Climate migrants?
 - Armed group or armed group facilitators?
 - Invaders?
 - Second "Nyamulenge phenomenon"?
- ❖ Impacts of Mbororo presence in Uele basin
 - Political context
 - Security context
 - Socio-Economic context
 - Sanitary/Health context
 - Environmental and Exosystemic context.
- ❖ Conclusion and suggestions.

2. PREVIOUS STUDIES

For sure, Mbororo phenomenon has attracted attention if not all but, a great number of intellectuals and each of them tackled this theme regarding his interest, purpose, significance and scope. In many African countries; Sahel belt, Chad, Cameroun, Central African Republic and in Democratic Republic of the Congo particularly, it is even a "monnaie courante" these last decades just because the phenomenon touches several sectors of life and it almost concerns all social classes.

Moreover, M'PONGO and IPAINGBA (2021): in « *De statut des Mbororo en RDC: Enjeux et perspectives* » focus on the real statut of Mbororo breeders in DRC. That is, in their study they simply want to know if Mbororo in DRC are migrants, refugees...At the end of their analysis, they have discovered that Mbororo in DRC are "illegal migrants" who crossed borders without any appropriate or required documents.

In addition, ROSOUMN N (2008): "*From mobility to settlement: Management of Natural resources and Territories by Mbororo Cattle Breeders in Northern Cameroun*" tries to prove how Mbororo changed from nomadic to sedentaries in North Cameroun; he tried also to show the way Mbororo breeders managed the Natural resources and Territories that they occupy, he explains some problems (consequences of this settlement.

At last, Félicien KABAMBA MBAMBU (2011): « *Les Migrants Climatiques en quête adaptation: Les éleveurs Mbororo du Nord de la RD Congo* » shows that Mbororo transhumance is mainly based on adaptation and the search of favorable areas or climate where they can settle.

This paper is based on Impacts or consequences of Mbororo settlement in Uele Basin (haut- and Bas-Uele provinces in the North-Eastern part of Democratic Republic of the CONGO). In my analysis, It foresees some other consequences in the coming days; alert about the situation and call up on all Congolese to make proof of true patriotism and Nationalism toward this situation.

2. BRIEF STUDY ON THE CONCERNED AREA (Uele Basin)

To the Uele Basin refers to the zone comprises along the Uele river between the two Uele Provinces (Bas-and Haut-Uele).The zone comprises: Ango, Bambesa, Bondo, Buta, Dungu, Faradje, Niangara, Poko, Rungu, Wamba and watsa Territories.Furthermore, it is inhabited by Zande, Boa, Ngbetu people who are basically hunters, fishers and famers. Being an agricultural zone, The Uele Basin faces problems and it difficultly cohabits with those Fulani Mbororo.

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MBORORO ARRIVAL (MIGRATION) IN THE UELE BASIN.

The present section is mainly concerned with a clear explanation about what are Mbororo breeders, what is their true origin, how and when they succeeded to get in DRC and particularly into the Uele basin.

Furthermore, it worth keeping in mind that Mbororo are known as “Fulbe”, “Peuhl”, “Fulani”. They are semi-nomadic Islamic pastoralists. They are from the vast region that stretches along the Sahara desert’s southern rim from the Atlantic to the Sea; that region comprises some western African countries such as: Mauritania, Malia, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Soudan, Ethiopia; that Sahel belt has a tropical semi-arid climate. They seemingly run from Sahara desertification toward sub-Saharan area to look good an abundant meadows and pastures.

“The migration and settlement of Fulani Mbororos in North-Eastern DRC has led to acute tension between communities and local authorities. The Fulani Mbororos, also known as “bush Fulanis”, are pastoralists from the Sahel Belt. Present in a number of West African countries, Chad, the CAR, the DRC and as far as Sudan and South Sudan, there are several groups of Mbororo with a diversity of livestock. In the nineteenth century, led by their tribal chiefs (ardo), thousands of Mbororos emigrated from Hausa territory and the Jos Plateau in Nigeria to Cameroon. In the 1920s, some of them, still looking for abundant pastures, crossed the border and settled in the CAR. Insecurity and communal tensions led many pastoralists, especially Fulani Mbororos, to leave for neighboring countries.108 70,000 left the CAR for Cameroon, the DRC, Chad and Sudan, while others, harassed by road bandits, left north-western CAR to settle in the south east. Successive waves of Mbororos moved from the CAR into the DRC’s poor and marginalized districts of Bas- and Haut-Uélé Fulani pastoralists had already crossed the border, marked by the River Mbomou, by the 1980s but their attempts to settle in the former Zaire were repulsed by Mobutu’s armed forces. The porosity of the borders and the deterioration of Congolese government infrastructure in Orientale Province at the start of the 2000s encouraged them to return to Congolese soil This migration led to a de facto coexistence with local populations that, at best, is marked by suspicion and, at worst, by violence” (The security Challenges of Pastoralism in Central Africa. 2014.p19).

4. A SURVEY ON GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION OF MBORORO PRESENCE IN THE UELE BASIN

The following lines, draw and indicate territories where Mbororo are settled since they reached DRC and Uele Basin particularly up to nowadays.The brief historical background above shows clearly how Mbororo left other countries and CAR for DRC mainly for the “poor” and “marginalized” districts of Bas- and Haut-Uele former Districts (nowadays Bas- and Haut-Uele Provinces).Investigations and other own researches reveal that the former Orientalial Province is about to be fully occupied by those nomadic breeders, but target Territories or places where Mbororo are settled are shown in the chart below:

Chart 1

| N° | TERRITORY | PROVINCE | TARGET PLACES |
|----|-----------|----------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Bondo | Bas-Uele | Monga, Lobi... |
| 2 | ANGO | Bas-Uele | Banda, Bwendi, Dakwa, Boso... |
| 3 | BAMBESA | Bas-Uele | Angodia, Dembia... |

| | | | |
|---|----------|-----------|---|
| 4 | Poko | Bas-Uele | Dili, Nangombio, Angare, soronga, |
| 5 | Niangara | Haut-Uele | Manziga, Magadha, Tapili, Longbo, |
| 6 | Dungu | Haut-Uele | Diagbe, Bangadi, Mbamu, tongotongo, Bitima, Ngwawele, Doruma, |
| 7 | Faradje | Haut-Uele | Logo-Ogambi, Budu, Logo-bagale, Logo-Bagira |
| 8 | Rungu | Haut-Uele | Wauwa, Ndingba |
| 9 | Watsa | Haut-Uele | Mungbere, Sokopa, Gombari, Moku, Tora |

Note that this chat gives just target places where Mbororo have settled for a long time and can be easily. It does not precise other small places where they are. In another hand, this chat shows how at least the Uele basin is occupied at 75% by those migrants.

4. QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT MBORORO REAL STATUS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

The presence of those nomadic breeders leads to several questions which make intellectuals to deepen analyses about their real status in DRC; this fact also pushes some scholars to think in different ways. As said in introduction, I too I was much more interested, but before I list some impacts of those nomadic breeders and some perspectives (my main concern), I have first to give answers to questions below:

- **Are they Nomadic breeders?**

Sure, since they do not have a fixe place where they are definitely dwelling nor a well-known destination. The term “Nomadic life means: Roaming or traveling from place to place, for various reasons, without settling down with a permanent home or residence <https://www.vocabulary.com> consulted on Wednesday 28th 16:51.

- **Are they irregular migrants?**

According to 12 septembre 1983- ORDONNANCE-LOI 83-033 relative à la police des étrangers. (J.O.Z, n° 18, 15 septembre 1983, p.15) Art.3 « Tout étranger doit, pour entre au Zaïre (actuelle RDC) doit être muni des documents et visas prévus par le Président de Mouvement populaire de la révolution » This official document states that all strangers must have their official, legal documents and visas established by the President of the Republic.

Daniel BOTOKO M’PONGO and Edmond TIZA IPAINGBA (2021) : explain that : « Par migration irrégulière il faut entendre le mouvement d’une ou de plusieurs personnes vers un pays d’accueil, de transit ou de résidence par des moyens illégaux, sans document valable de voyage (passeport, visa ou tout autre titre de voyage) ou à l’aide des documents frauduleux » i.e. By irregular migration we mean wave of on or many persons toward a country where they are passing or supposed to settle by illegal means, without legal documents (passeport, visa and all others related to trip) or again by illegal documents (own translation).

A migrant in an irregular situation is “a migrant contravening the regulations of the country of origin or destination, whether he has entered the territory of a State irregularly, or whether he has remained there beyond the duration of validity of the residence permit (also called illegal migrant/illegal/undocumented)” (IOM, International Migration Law, Glossary of Migration, 2007).

This definition is confirmed by the relevant texts of the legislation of the DRC in matters of foreigner’s police. Thus, upon reading article 3 of Ordinance No. 83–033 relating to the police of foreigners, illegal immigrants is any foreigner who enters the DRC without having the documents listed in Ordinance No. 87-281 implementing measures for the ordinance-law n°83–033 of September 12, 1983 relating to the immigration police. These documents to be held by the foreigner refer to the valid passport or any other valid travel document, as well as the vaccination certificate prescribed by the police regulations. A foreigner staying in the DRC is also illegal. for a period of more than six months without holding a residence card issued under the conditions of Ordinance-Law No. 83–033, or who stays without a settlement visa or with an expired settlement visa.

So, Mbororo in Uele basin irregular migrants just because they entered DRC without appropriate and required official documents that is, they are undocumented.

• **Are they climate immigrants?**

Félicien KAMBAMBO MBAMBU (2011): states that: “A large part of African agriculture is rainfed agriculture. With the acceleration of climate change, major disruptions in the articulation of growing seasons are hitting food security hard. If the agricultural production necessary for human food is increasingly affected, that intended for animal feed has become both rare and expensive. This deficiency poses real problems of adaptation for African livestock breeders living in regions which are bearing the brunt of the harmful effects of climate change, changes which have induced modifications in temperature conditions, in the regime of the growing seasons, as well as in pastoral organization. in its entirety. Driven by the austerity of climate change, these pastoralists are migrating to the central part of the African continent. Arriving in the Democratic Republic of Congo around the year 2001, they live in the northeast of the country, in the Uele region located in the Orientale Province, an area remarkable for its wooded savannahs characterized by the natural articulation of savannahs and of the forest.

In the above statement, the writer tries to prove that the Mbororo are not whatever other persons suppose, but simply “Climate immigrants”; they are roaming for search of good pastures, the regions where climate is comfortable. He also insists that the Climate change which affects their pastoralism activities is the main cause of their roaming and migration toward DRC (own translation)

For sure, the Sahara desertification and tropical semi-arid climate of the Sahel which is almost hot, sunny, dry and windy all year long can not permit those breeders to live in such conditions with their catles; the tropical climate and the largest wooded savannah in Northern part of DRC can undoubtedly attract them.

• **Armed group or armed group facilitators?**

Considering their way of living and their behavior, Fulani Mbororo are usually accused to be in a closer relation with several armed groups wherever they are. They are heavily armed.

“The regular trips into the bush made by the Mbororos have led to frequent accusations that they have links with armed groups, supply them with information and food, and even help them commit atrocities. In south-eastern CAR, in the DRC and in South Sudan, public opinion believes that the Mbororos cooperate closely with the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). It is true that some pastoralists carry arms to protect themselves and are geographically close to LRA fighters, but they are also victims of the LRA. Suspicion against the Mbororos is widely held: the revival of LRA activity in 2007-2008 coincided with the rapid deterioration of relations with local communities.116 Conversely, today, the reduction in LRA activity and the change in the frequency and nature of its attacks in Orientale Province have been accompanied by a clear improvement in relations between the local population and the Mbororos” (Tensions surrounding the Migration of Fulani Mbororo in DRC p20).

Elsewhere, we can also read this “Today, most cross border transhumance from Chad is said to involve “troupeaux des combattants” belonging to senior Chadian military officers. These droves are frequently tended to by Fulani herders who have contracted their services to these investors. This fluidity of affiliations has further entrenched the conflation of Mbororo, including Central African Fulani, with intrusive “foreigners” from Chad.25”. Pastoralism and cross-border transhumance have played a defining role in the CAR’s security landscape, even before and especially since the 2013/14 crisis. IPIS (2018) “Central African Republic: A conflict Mapping pp.62-76”.

Another illustrative example is that the incident which occurred on 14 August 2013: Firearms and ammunition were recovered following clashes between the army and the Mbororos. (Crisis Group interview, Congolese army officer, Dungu, 14 August 2013)

Considering the statements above, it easily realized that those breeders are not only concerned with pastoralism, but also other aspects. (negative or no).

• **Invaders?**

Yes! They can be seen occupiers, conquerors, just because they got in DRC without permission with the intention of settling down. This is clearly proved by their settle down in NIANGARA Territory in MANZIGA and OKONDO Chiefdoms; in WATSA Territory at TORA. Additionally, to that they are still asking for portions of lands.

• **Possible second “Nyamulenge phenomenon?”**

Banyamulenge who originate from this group outside the kingdom of Rwanda which came before colonization. They settled in south Kivu between the 16th and 18th centuries, having come from RWANDA, BURUNDI, TANZANIA and UGANDA. They are largely cattle keepers as Mbororo, they mostly occupy south kivu province: the Fizi, Mwenga, and Uvira Territories. In 1996, on the eve of the first Congolese war, their number was estimated at 400,000 people.

This paper speaks of “possible second Nyamulenge phenomenon” just because the phenomenon in question started in the same way; at that time people were a bit absent-minded regarding those cattle keepers from different foreign countries; this the same situation concerning Mbororo that we are crying down today. Nowadays we are undergoing ensuing repercussions about Nyamulenge just because we did not pay more attention. In short, we don’t want to relive the same story.

5. IMPACTS OF MBORORO PRESENCE IN THE UELE BASIN

This point is the main concern of the paper; by impacts I mean all kinds of consequences due to the presence of those Mbororo breeders in the Uele basin which is the basic point of this study. Thus, damages caused Mbororo transhumance in the Uele basin are mainly in political, security, socio-economic, sanitary or health context; they also have a great environmental impact on Ecosystem.

- **Political context**

This political context gathers many aspects, but here, I'm much more concerned about non-respect of national and internal laws; those Fulani cross willingly borders without appropriate and required documents; they do not respect migration measures; the government seems to be absent or non-concerned. Their presence leads other great local and politico-Administrative leaders to bribes and corruption.

- **Security context**

Mbororo presence in the Uele Basin is a great problem. First, there's no peaceful cohabitation with indigenous and local communities; second, they are aggressive and holders of firearms; third, some of them are cooperating with armed groups and they are also involved in lootings, bandit attacks and murders. On 07/12/2014 around 9:00 a.m. in the Bula locality, 14 km from Bimbo road, Niangara territory, an unidentified Mbororo shot Mr. NGBENGELE aged 25 years old at point blank range in the left leg because the latter had surprised the Mbororo stole the cassavas from his field. On 04/05/2015 in the Ako locality, Magombo group in the Manziga chiefdom 50 km from Niagara, Niangara-Bangadi road, the Mbororo "OUDDA" fired several shots in the air to scare away the civilian population who were there for fishing so that the streams in this region remained at the sole disposal of their animals. Examples are numerous. (own translation).

- **Socio-economic context**

Though some economic actors from different areas mainly: ISIRO, WATSA, DURBA, TORA, BUTA, DINGILA, NIANGARA and elsewhere have boosted their economy, though cow meat is everywhere and that in cakes price, those Mbororo's cattles have seriously impacted the Uele Basin region which is mainly an agricultural region since colonial epoch by ravaging farms, by occupying and destroying places where local people were farming meanwhile agriculture is the basic sector of economy of the region.

- **Sanitary and Health context**

Some investigations reveal that Mbororo are responsible of diseases from countries where they are from; their cattles are also responsible of nature pollution through rivers that their crossing and drinking water; their cows brought with some contagious insects which sometimes dangerously bite and cause several sicknesses. Some agro-veterinary experts do unquestionably advice that their cow meats need to be checked by laboratorians before being eaten in order to avoid some contagious epidemic illnesses.

- **Environmental and Ecosystemic context**

Cattle are frequently cited as having the most severe overall environmental impacts among livestock species due to: methane and nitrous oxide released from digestion and manure; land use and conversion; desertification; inefficient ratio of weight of feed and water consumed to weight of meat and dairy produced. (Jacob et al (2011) Environmental implication of livestock: Cattle. abstract)

Livestock production, like any economic activity, can be associated with environmental damage. Unclear property rights and the lack of adequate governance of the livestock sector can contribute to the depletion and degradation of land, water and biodiversity.

As previously said, this transhumance has a great impact on the environment and ecosystem; the statement above shows clearly the impact of livestock up on the environment. This exactly what occurs in the Uele Basin some areas where Mbroro are.

Some of those breeders do not respect protected areas; this the case with BILLI UERE Hunting Domain, API and PENGE reserves and Garamba National Park situated in the Uele Basin.

"Pastoralism, and more precisely small- and large-scale transhumance, has become a priority issue for biodiversity management at the fringes of protected areas, within buffer zones or in much larger ensembles such as the greater Zakouma. The peripheries of the various protected areas in the Sudanese and Sahelian zones are complex spaces in which wildlife habitats, arable land for farmers, natural pastures and grazing areas for pastoralists overlap". (The dynamic and impact of transhumance and Neo-Pastoralism on biodiversity, local communities and security: Congo Basin, 2021 p.20). This just an extract to show how those breeders sometimes enter protected areas and cause damages.

6.CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In light of these facts, it may be said that Mbororo occupation in the Uele Basin is to be seen with more precaution because it has many negative impacts which affect many sectors of life mainly: health, economy, politics, security, and I'm sure that the list is not exhaustive.

In the future, the settlement can generate problems for next generations if attention is not paid.

- To sort out these problems the government which is the guarantor of all institutional sectors has to feel concerned with the situation.
- The government to establish and emphasize worthy services able to control our borders.
- The migration service has to census them regularly.
- To avoid the second "Nyamulenge phenomenon", the government has to take some necessary anticipative measures regarding this illegal occupation.
- The government should seriously examine this issue by promoting a regulation of the transhumance that includes all relevant.
- To save the future generation, children have to be told and warned about what occurred in the past and what can probably occur in the future in such context.
- In schools, teachers have to emphasize lessons, debates, plays, theaters which will teach moral lessons about the past and the future regarding such situations to let them be sufficiently prepared.
- Scholars and intellectuals have to make their pens work, they must flow ink to alert about that issue, and that, regularly.
- In churches and others public places, people have to be awarded about this situation to avoid possible consequences in the present and the coming days.

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