



From Visibility to Invisibility

Conflicts Over Agro-Pastoral Resources in Tienko (Northern Côte d'Ivoire)

Tina Tra Goin Lou Virginie

June 2018

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Herdsmen crossing
the sub-prefecture
of Tienko with their
livestock during
migration.
January 2016.

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Impressum

ISSN: 977-1664-66810-0

Editors:
Till Förster and Lucy Koechlin
Institute of Social Anthropology
University of Basel
Münsterplatz 19
CH-4051 Basel

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Layout Ursula Bürki

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Tina Tra Goin Lou Virginie

Abstract:

Until recently, conflicts have been escalating in Tienko, a small sub-prefecture in north-western Côte d'Ivoire bordering Mali. Agricultural space has increased due to the promotion of cash crops, including cotton, and perennial plants and trees, such as cashew. Furthermore, more and more local farmers have included cattle raising in their livelihood, thereby reducing freely available cattle rangeland. Access to water and pastureland became more complex and challenging, exacerbating conflicts over agro-pastoral resources. In addition, the sociopolitical crisis of 2002 till 2011 transformed interactions between these actors and further instigated conflicts between farmers and herders. However, actors interviewed in 2016 reported that violent conflicts over agro-pastoral resources had turned into peaceful interactions. Based on ethnographic data, this article sheds light on the reasons behind the seeming disappearance of conflicts over agro-pastoral resources in Tienko.

Introduction

“Conflicts recorded by the sub-prefecture in Tienko are decreasing substantially this year.”¹

This extract came from my latest fieldwork in January 2016, when I was attending the New Year wishes celebrations at the sub-prefecture of Tienko. It was stated with satisfaction by the sub-prefect in his opening talk.

His statement was corroborated by other administration agents and leaders interviewed in Tienko who also observed that conflicts are substantially decreasing in the sub-prefecture. This was surprising, as the region was known for its serious conflicts between Fulani pastoralists (also known as “transhumants”) and local farmers.

In 2012, it was a total disorder here (Tienko), the administrative and village authorities collaborated with rebels [...] The Fulani have these authorities eating out of their hand. Since I came in 2012, I have started to tell the truth. I think that has contributed to the reduction of conflicts.²

1 “Les conflits enregistrés à la sous-préfecture de Tienko ont considérablement baissé cette année.” (Interview with the sub-prefect of Tienko, 13.01.2016).

2 “En 2012, c’était la chienlit ici, il n’y avait pas d’ordre. Les autorités qui étaient là, ont collaboré avec les rebelles... les Peuls avaient les autorités ‘dans leurs mains’. Depuis 2012, je suis arrivé, j’ai commencé à dire la vérité. Je pense que cela a contribué à diminuer les conflits.” (Interview with ‘agent de l’agriculture’ 30.01.2016).

New Year celebration
at the sub-prefecture
of Tienko.
January 2016.



Conflicts have decreased in Tienko, because nowadays, transhumants have several entry points. Some herders come through Minignan or Goulia.³

Many questions have been raised from these assertions, in particular the following:

- Is this observation also shared by others actors involved in the management of agro-pastoral resources in Tienko?
- What were the causes and manifestations of possible clashes over agro-pastoral resources?
- What has changed that the actors do not perceive conflicts to be as frequent as before?

These questions are my starting point to shed some light on the reasons lying behind these assertions by analysing the relationships between actors and how they position themselves accordingly.

I had been working on the conflicts over agro-pastoral resources since 2011. At that time, I found that clashes between different actors were frequent in this area and sometimes escalated into violent physical confrontation. During my previous data collection in 2011 and 2014⁴, I explored how an issue over resources became a matter of dispute. However, based on the current findings, the question underlying this study is: When is an issue arising over the use of or access to agro-pastoral resources no longer perceived as a problem?

- 3 "Les conflits ont diminué à Tienko car les transhumants ont maintenant plusieurs points d'entrée. Il y a en a qui rentre par Goulia ou par Minignan." (Interview with the 'président des jeunes' 15.01.2016).
- 4 During these field visits I updated my data for my PhD on the governance of natural resources and conflicts over agro-pastoral resources.

To answer this question, I will focus on the concept of governance as “coordinated action between actors to resolve complex societal problems” (Förster and Koechlin 2011, 8–9).

The first part of the paper gives some background information on the precarious situation of cattle raising in Northern Côte d’Ivoire, *inter alia* Tienko. In the second part, I underline on the one hand the visibility of conflicts by showing the causes and the manifestations of clashes over agro-pastoral resources; and on the other hand, the reasons underlying the invisibility⁵ of conflicts leading to the shared perception that the conflicts have significantly decreased.

Background

Like other coastal countries in West Africa, Côte d’Ivoire periodically accommodates herders from Sahelian countries. This traditional mobility pattern, so-called transhumance, is an adaptive strategy of herders to supply fodder and water during the drought period within the large pastoral areas, fragmented by colonialism (Bonnet 2016, 6). Since the 1960s and early 1970s, cattle and herders are crossing the borders of coastal countries when moving back and forth between North and South. This is why the North of Côte d’Ivoire is witnessing the arrival of herders from Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger every dry season (December through April) until the beginning of the rainy season in May. More recently, however, the promotion of cash crops, including cotton and perennial crops such as cashew nuts, have led to an expansion of agricultural land (Bassett 2009). In addition, more and more farmers include in their livelihood cattle raising, which leads to a reduction of freely available cattle rangeland. Therefore, the competition over resources is becoming more pronounced (Dugué et al. 2004; Le Guen 2004; Kolhagen 2002), exacerbated by the overall depletion of natural resources as a result of climate change. These ecological changes have led to a decrease in the dense canopy cover and a reduced fallow period due to changing land usage. Consequently, access to water and land became more and more complex and challenging (Cecchi 2002). In Côte d’Ivoire, the already precarious situation deteriorated substantially during the sociopolitical crisis that rocked the country from 2002 through 2011.

In this period, the rebellion of the Forces Nouvelles (FN) led to a retreat of the state and its administration in the area. The crisis also accelerated the transformation of institutions of natural resource management in northern Côte d’Ivoire. Indeed, the country was divided into two parts: the northern part under the control of rebels and the southern part controlled by the government. The Forces Nouvelles survived by creating a unifying structure for the rebel forces in 2004 (Fofana 2012). *La centrale*, the financial centre for the Forces-Nouvelles, provided a tax system to ensure sufficient income (Hazzen 2013). Regarding the management of agro-pastoral resources, the FN rebels established new rules, namely by regulating access to pastoral resources for transhumant pastoralists from the Sahel. A so-called *filière-bétail*⁶ was set up, aiming to control the entrance of animals at the borders and to collect taxes. At the local level, however, there was much frustration with the FN. The rebels were accused of greed, as well as criticized for maintaining patron-client relations with herders.

5 Invisibility of a conflict is defined as the fact that conflicts are no longer perceived as relevant to the actors’ life-world and thus do not attract their attention anymore.

6 “Filière-bétail” refers to the management of the livestock sector.

In 2007, the so-called “Accord Politique de Ouagadougou” was signed. As a result, official administrative staff was gradually redeployed to the North of Côte d’Ivoire (Fofana 2012). However, in Tienko⁷, my study area, this situation led to disorder in the management of agro-pastoral resources, and hence to an exacerbation of conflicts between herders and farmers (Tra 2012). Indeed, the slow return of the administration after 2007 was welcomed with hope by some actors involved in the management of agro-pastoral resources, especially for those who perceived themselves to be the losers of the conflicts. But this hope quickly dwindled when they realised that the redeployed administration could not work properly due to the strong power exerted by the rebels who threatened state agents seeking to intervene in the conflict resolution. To cope with this situation, the population sought other solutions. Many started taking matters into their own hands through the use of physical violence. The discourse of increased violence over agro-pastoral resources was mirrored in the media, reported by the administrative authorities, and also mentioned by the village heads, farmers and herders I interviewed. According to them, the core period of conflict was during the period of transhumance in the dry season from late November through March. The post-election crisis of 2010 further exacerbated the conflicts between farmers and herders.

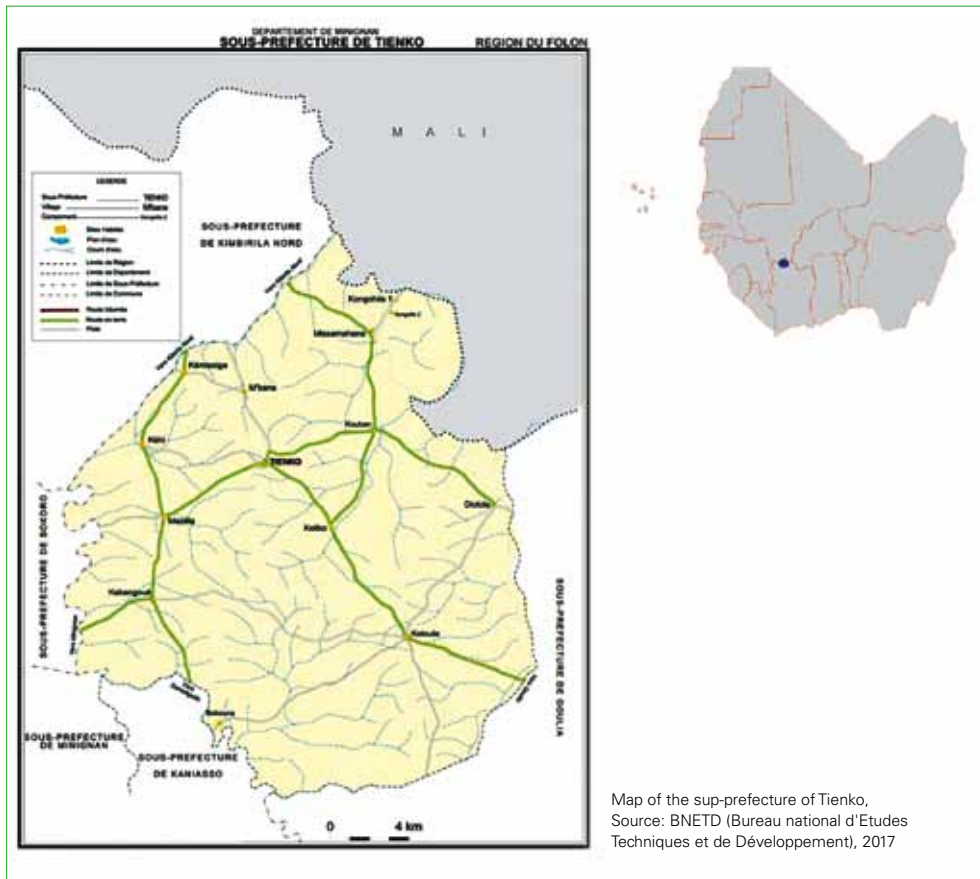
In 2014, with the aim of updating my data, I undertook further research, during which I observed that some members of the officially defunct rebel groups were still present in the area, although most had disappeared with the return of the state agents. Many of these state agents had previously left their posts due to the crisis and prevailing security issues. Key actors of the study stated that the conflicts have increased after the end of the rebellion in 2010. The situation escalated to the point that the Minister of Animal and Fisheries Resources visited the main cities of the North of Côte d’Ivoire in July 2012⁸.

However, during my recent visit in 2016, I was informed by both administrative and village authorities that conflicts have decreased considerably, to a degree where they were barely recorded in the sub-prefecture in that year. It seems that in Tienko, violent conflicts over agro-pastoral resources have turned into peaceful interactions.

7 See the section on the study area, below.

8 Between 2011 and 2012, several cases of violent conflicts between local population and Fulani settled herders have been recorded in many cities located in the Centre (Bouaké, Beoumi) and North of Côte d’Ivoire (Katiola, Touba, Odienné). One of the most violent incidents took place in Touba where 650 animals were killed on the 13th of May 2012. To cope with this escalation, the current president, Alassane Ouattara mandated the Minister of Animal and Fisheries Resources Adjoumani Koffi on the purpose of encourage these actors to a peaceful cohabitation.

Study area



The sub-prefecture of Tienko, where I conducted my fieldwork, resembles most pastoral areas of northern Côte d'Ivoire. However, it is an important passage for herders.

I have chosen to work in this geographical area due to the increase in conflicts reported in newspapers in the North, namely in Odienné⁹, where violent and frequent conflicts between farmers and herders have been recorded. Some of these conflicts have escalated into fighting between the Fulani (herder) community and the local (settled) population (Tra 2012).



Signboard of the checkpoint for cattle in Tienko.
January 2016.

9 Odienné is a town located in the North-west of Côte d'Ivoire, capital of the district of Denguélé. Before becoming a district, Odienné was a department to which the sub-prefecture of Tienko belonged until 2011.

History of cattle rearing in Côte d'Ivoire

In Côte d'Ivoire, for many decades, agricultural and pastoral activities have been intertwined. In 1908, a report on cattle rearing in central and northern Côte d'Ivoire¹⁰ posits that Korhogo had around 9,370 cows then (Meignan 2015, 43). At that time, cattle breeding was not a common practice, and it was only done by indigenous agro-pastoralists, while semi-nomadic Sahelian pastoralists practiced transhumance (Ancey 1996; Meignan 2015). There was, however, a consistent cattle trade between French Sudan, now Mali, and the west of Côte d'Ivoire, in particular Man and Daloa, operated by Sudanese traders from Bougouni, Bamako and Ségou (Meignan 2015, 44). In 1962, Fulani from Mali and Upper Volta, now Burkina Faso, began their migration to the North of Côte d'Ivoire. They were originally from Barani, Western Burkina Faso, and had migrated to the region of San, Mali, during the 1950s. Having lived in Mali for more than two decades, these herders were forced to move to Côte d'Ivoire in the 1960s (Diallo 2001). As a result, cattle trade between Mali and Côte d'Ivoire was banned for political and economic reasons (Diallo 2008). This new migration of Fulani people was motivated by economic concerns, among them the absence of taxes, reducing livestock costs and ensuring a better selling price due to the proximity of the Ivorian market, free veterinary care, as well as ecological reasons, in particular prospects of new pastures and low population densities in the Savanna region. Until that time, the migration of Fulani people into Northern Côte d'Ivoire had been an isolated phenomenon.

From 1970 to 1985, however, the Sahel was hit hard by several waves of droughts, which caused accelerated degradation of pastoral resources. This situation has led to changes in the management of livestock from the Sahelian countries to the coastal countries (Ancey 1996). In Côte d'Ivoire some people have described this development as the *invasion des Peuls*, “the invasion of the Fulani” (Bernadet 1984). This so-called invasion, which was recorded as the most important migratory movement of that time, began when herders fleeing droughts moved to coastal countries such as Côte d'Ivoire that had better climatic conditions.

However, this massive influx of herders into the North of Côte d'Ivoire has led to countless cases of destruction of the crops of the local agricultural populations, stirring discontent that was manifested by several complaints. These complaints even made their way up to President Houphouët Boigny¹¹. Therefore, the state decided to make livestock a national priority (Bassett 1988). The strategy of the institutional actors aimed at reconciling modern breeding and farming in the same area (Le Guen 2004). Such agriculture-livestock combination would help to reduce the dependence on animal proteins whilst increasing the local livestock. To facilitate the implementation of this strategy, the government established a parastatal management body, the SODEPRA, which operated under the aegis of the Ministry of Animal and Fisheries Resources. SODEPRA was in charge of all research, extension, design, and implementation of all projects and programs related to livestock. From 1972 on, it implemented management programmes, which included the establishment of a stabilisation zone for Fulani herders to ensure the development of livestock. SODEPRA also constructed vaccination centres, defined livestock routes, and distributed cultivated seeds at subsidised prices. To illustrate, SODEPRA created a checkpoint in Tienko – due to its geographical position close to Mali – to regulate the entrance of livestock and ensure the sanitary control for transhumant animals on the one hand, and the sale of animals for the supply of urban markets on the other hand.

10 See “Rapport de l'administration du cercle de l'Indiéné au sujet de l'élevage dans le baoulé et la haute Côte d'Ivoire”, quoted by Meignan 2015.

11 Houphouët Boigny was the first president of Côte d'Ivoire from 1960 to his death in 1993.



Cattle pen installed by the (now defunct) SODEPRA at the checkpoint of Tienko. January 2016.

In addition, between 1982 and 1992, SODEPRA facilitated the construction of several watering points in northern Côte d'Ivoire (Cecchi 2007; Diallo 2008; Le Guen 2004). However, the benefits and success of SODEPRA's policies were uneven, a fact that did not go unnoticed by foreign donors and the Ivorian government (Bassett 1988). When the effects of the economic downturn¹² (Bassett 1988, 469; Contamin 1997; Dago 2016; Förster 2012, 44) started to be more acute, the Ivorian government was forced to privatize or close some parastatal enterprises, in the wake of which SODEPRA was disbanded in 1993.

When conflicts were visible ...

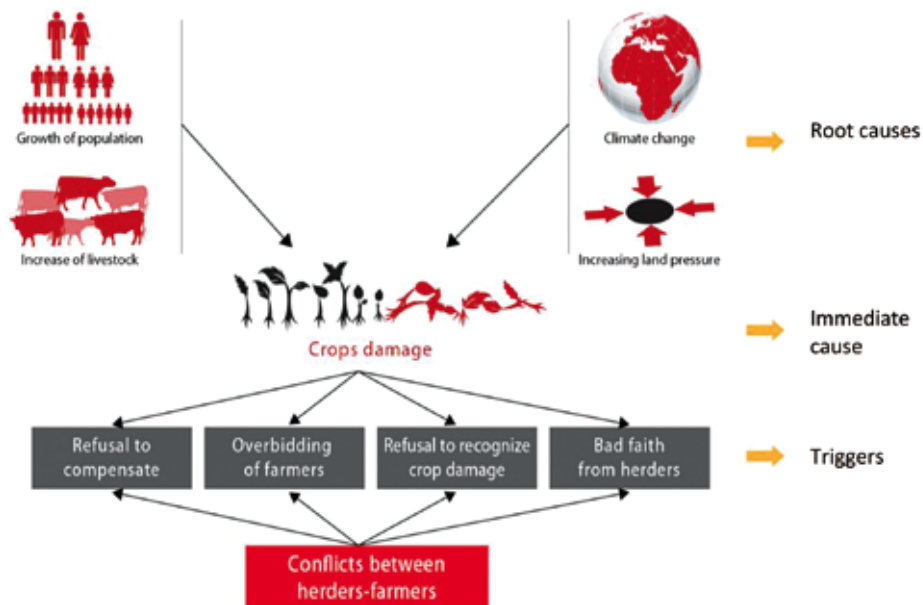
Many scholars argue that conflicts over agro-pastoral resources are caused by environmental and physical factors such as the population growth (Abass 2012; Mwamfupe 2015; Bonnet 2014), scarcity of resources (Homer-Dixon 1994), climate change (Bronkhorst 2012), lack of institutions (Moritz 2006), or political crises (Greiner 2013), to quote but the main factors. These root causes are important to understand the conflicts. However, they alone do not explain the variation in conflict outcomes. As Moritz (2010) suggests, processual approaches which focus on the dynamics of the conflicts themselves can contribute to a better understanding of conflicts, in particular their multiple structural and processual causes. In my study areas, in most of the cases the immediate cause is damage to crops due to the obstruction of passages to grazing areas and watering point, as the conflicts started when crops were destroyed by cattle.



Cotton crop destroyed months ago by cows about 2 km from Tienko. January 2016.

12 Between 1977 and 1993, Côte d'Ivoire experienced a protracted economic and financial downturn. Indeed, the deterioration of the terms of trade, which considerably reduced the revenues of the Ivorian State, was exacerbated by the fall in the value of investments. The economic crisis led the state to implement the so-called Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), imposed by the Bretton Woods institutions. However, the effects of the privatisation and liberalisation policies which were supposed to revitalise the economy led to its decline (Contamin 1997; Dago, 2016)

In reality, the escalation of conflicts could have been caused by many other reasons, such as refusing to compensate during face-to-face encounters, overbidding of farmers, refusing to recognize crop, or dishonesty.



Causes of conflicts over agro-pastoral resources. Source: Tina Tra Goin Lou Virgine, 2016

The following section will focus on conflicts between settled herders and crop owners on the one hand, and pastoralists and crop owners on the other hand.

Conflicts between settled herders and local farmers

These kinds of conflicts often occur between settled herders and local farmers namely of the Manding (Bôdougouka)¹³ ethnic group. According to the herders, the reason for their encroachment on farmlands is the increase of crop, which results in difficulties in accessing watering points, and overall reduces the amounts of available grazing land. Indeed, due to the introduction of perennial crops, there is less and less space for pastures. The farmers, on the other hand, argue that the conflicts arise due to the increasing sizes of the herds and the inability of the few shepherds to manage them. However, in this context, actors know one another and this coexistence plays a crucial role in the resolution of conflicts.

Conflicts between local farmers and transhumant

Pastoralists move periodically for the purpose of ensuring the survival of their animals. However, transhumance is not only the migratory movement, but it also involves a series of social exchanges between local populations and nomads.

Several factors mentioned above have contributed to reshaping the interactions between the local population and transhumant herders. Subsequently, recurring conflicts have been observed between transhumant herders and local farmers. The vignette

13 Local language spoken in Tienko.



Transhumant cattle in a cashew plantation.
January 2016.

below, stemming from an interview with the agriculture officer of Tienko describes the conflict between a local farmer and pastoralists and its escalation into a violent conflict. It helps to better understand the emotional aspect of the conflict.

I arrived in Tienko on December 12, 2012. On January 05, 2013, I was confronted with the very first case of a conflict, which happened in the village of Naguina. A farmer named Mamadou Doumbia, an elderly man, went to his field and saw cows eating his corn, which he had previously stored in his granary. At the same time, he saw a shepherd not too far from his field. He suspected that the shepherd had opened the granary with his machete. The ensuing discussions between him and the shepherd turned into a stormy debate. Very irritated, the old man threatened the shepherd with his gun. The shepherd, however, knocked away the gun and injured the old man with his bush knife. Aware of the gravity of his actions, the shepherd ran away and went to Manankoro in Mali. I was called after that fact. I went to this village to investigate the issue. The whole village was in uproar. When I finished my observation, it was about 5pm. Unfortunately, the sub-prefect was absent traveling to Abidjan. I initially sent the victim to the hospital of Tienko for medical attention. Then I tried to calm local people who wanted to retaliate. After four days of care, the old man returned to Naguina. During this time, the sub-prefect returned. He called the sub-prefect of Manankoro to inform him about the situation. Following this, investigations were undertaken in Mali and the culprit was arrested. The shepherd in question had gone away with the victim's

gun, which he gave to the owner of the cattle when he reported the situation. The owner of the cattle then went to the sub-prefecture of Manankoro where he handed over the weapon to the sub-prefect. With the combined efforts of the two sub-prefects (Tienko and Manankoro), the case was settled amicably. The owner of the animals compensated the victim and the village. Although, according to rules in our African culture, when blood is shed, the soil is spoiled and so it must be cleaned. For this reason, the owner of the oxen agreed to pay everything, he did not discuss. I think the total damage was 450 000 CFA francs.¹⁴

Once a conflict begins, the parties are engaged in an interaction that unfolds as a sequence of moves, each in response to the immediately prior move (Moritz 2010). The first phase, which is the crucial one, is when the farmer observes the destruction of his crop and sees a shepherd around his field. This direct face-to-face contact during the initial stages of the conflict is determinant for the bargaining. Emotions run high and translate into verbal abuse, which refers to violence that denigrates or demeans the other person using insulting remarks that are likely to hurt emotionally. Surveys have found that in the vast majority of cases, it is the farmers who instigate the conflict by making invectives in connection with the intimate parts of the herder himself or his parents. One of the most common insults is *bataradéni*.¹⁵

As Riesman (1975) posited, for the Fulani, calling someone a bastard is the worst insult possible, to the extent that it reduces the individual to nothing because it calls into question his right to a place in the social web. This insult has the power to hurt and provoke a reaction. In order not to lose his face, the shepherd replies in kind, and these altercations can then turn into physical confrontations. A strong verbal altercation between the protagonists is therefore, often followed by physical confrontations, with the actors using weapons such as sticks, knives, machetes, and in a few cases, firearms. When the conflicts occur in this way, it is obvious that the first step of the resolution of conflict will fail. That means that the conflict shifts from the particular to becoming general, involving other actors. The second stage is generally the involvement of the customary authorities and the village committee for the resolution of conflicts. In the particular case related above, the conflict was transferred to the sub-prefect committee.

14 "Je suis arrivé à Tienko le 12 Décembre 2012. Le 05 Janvier 2013, j'ai été confronté à mon tout premier cas de conflit dans le village de Naguina. Un paysan du nom de Doumbia Mamadou, un vieillard du troisième âge, se rend dans son champ, et surprend des bœufs en train de manger sa provision de maïs qu'il avait préalablement stocké par un grenier. Il semblerait que c'était le bouvier qui se trouvait non loin du champ qui a ouvert le grenier de paysan avec sa machette. Le pays alors demanda des explications au Peul qui s'est transformé en une houleuse discussion. Le vieux très irrité menaça le berger avec son fusil qui lui profita d'un moment d'inadvertance pour s'accaparer du fusil du vieux. Il le neutralisa et lui infligea quelques coups avec sa machette. Conscient de la gravité de son acte, il prit la poudre d'escampette et se retrouva à Manankoro. C'est suite à cela que j'ai été sollicité. Je me suis rendu dans ce village pour effectuer un constat. Tout le village était sur le pied de guerre. Lorsque j'ai fini le constat, il était environ 17h. Malheureusement, le sous-préfet était absent, en déplacement sur Abidjan. J'ai d'abord procédé à l'envoi de la victime sur Tienko afin qu'il puisse bénéficier de soin. J'ai ensuite calmé les ardeurs des populations qui voulaient s'en prendre aux éleveurs. Après quatre jours de soin, le vieil homme a regagné Naguina. Le sous-préfet qui était entretemps rentré a appelé son homologue du Mali pour lui faire part de la situation. Suite à cela, des enquêtes ont été entreprises au Mali et le coupable a été arrêté. Le bouvier en question avait emporté dans sa cavale le fusil de Mr Doumbia qu'il avait remis au propriétaire des bœufs à qui il avait fait part de la situation. Le propriétaire du bétail s'est à cet effet rendu à la sous-préfecture de Manankoro où il a remis l'arme au sous-préfet. Avec les efforts conjugués des deux sous-préfets (celui de Tienko et de Manankoro), l'affaire a été traitée d'ailleurs à l'amiable. Le propriétaire des animaux a dédommagé la victime et le village. Parce que j'ai exigé que nous sommes en Afrique, il y a le droit qui intervient mais quand le sang est versé, le sol est sali, il faut donc le laver. Le propriétaire des bœufs a accepté de tout payer, il n'a pas discuté. Je pense que le préjudice total s'élevait à 450 000 Francs CFA." (Interview Mr Tapé, 15.01.2016).

15 'Illegitimate child' or 'bastard' (translated from Jula to English by the author).

Legal and military actors are mobilised at this stage for the resolution of the conflict. However, the choice of authorities is not made randomly; each step is underpinned by the interests, logics, and tactics of the different parties involved.

In summary, encroachments have turned violent when the protagonists have not opted for an amicable resolution and have instead decided to take justice into their own hands. This situation is observed when the protagonists have already experienced disappointing resolutions in the past. Indeed, the protagonists blame the patron-client relation and also the corruption of authorities for the failure of effective conflict prevention. For farmers for example, some violent interactions are the consequences of herders' impunity. These farmers store the images of violent conflicts and keep the stories alive amongst the members of the community. These images contribute to the negative portrayal of herders and specially transhumants. Thus, violent interactions develop through a process of social interactions shaped by the collective memories of negative images of herders stemming from past experiences, stereotypes and discourse. Therefore, conflicts are fueled by "society's cultural perception that gives specific meaning to the situation, evaluating it on the basis of experience of past conflict, stored as objectified knowledge in a group's social memory" (Schmidt and Schröder 2001, 4). Consequently, clashes, which occur over agro-pastoral resources, are framed by a legitimising discourse by the community before or after they occur (Bukary 2016).

Precisely such occurrences – violent conflicts embedded in specific discourse legitimising the violence – were frequent in Tienko, until 2014.

What has changed that actors do not perceive conflicts to be as frequent as before?

Making a good showing of oneself?

As mentioned above, conflict between local farmers and herders were not well managed by the rebels during the time of their domination in the North (2003–2010). After Côte d'Ivoire was unified again in 2011, it is possible that the decrease of conflicts was used by the reinstated authorities to embellish their tarnished image in the North. The public discourse, however, is articulated along different lines; according to the members of the village committee for conflict resolution, the reduction of conflict was due to their good management whereas the sub-prefect claims that it is because of their awareness-raising tours (see below).

Good conflict management: village committees for conflict resolution

Based on decree No. 96–431 of 03 June 1996 regulating grazing and movement of live-stock, village committees are constituted by a representative of traditional authorities, the representative of the settled herders, the representative of the farmers, and the representatives of some leaders in the village. The village chief is president. This committee is installed by the sub-prefect. In case of property or crops being damaged, the committee is mandated by the village chief to make an inspection of the damage and make proposals for the resolution of the conflict.

According to this committee, conflicts have declined due to their competence in good management of conflicts. This competence is explained by the fact that, unlike the previous Bureau, the members of this committee claim to refuse any form of corruption. According to them, this choice is inspired by the Qur'an, which forbids all unhealthy practices and encourages all actors to tell the truth. Furthermore, protagonists are reportedly mostly satisfied with the resolution of the conflicts. Therefore, cases of conflict are rarely transferred to the sub-prefecture level.

Awareness-raising tours: Sub-prefecture

In 2014, a new sub-prefect was transferred to the sub-prefecture of Tienko. The new sub-prefect began to tour the villages of his sub-division. According to him¹⁶, the purpose of this campaign was to foster social cohesion weakened by the socio-political crisis, focusing on the regulation of grazing and movement of livestock as key points. Therefore, the sub-prefect and his team claimed that the decrease of conflicts was the result of these awareness-raising tours. The sub-prefect supported his argument with the fact that few conflict cases have been reported to his office. However, the fact that the sub-prefecture has not recorded many cases of conflicts can be explained by other factors. For instance, during these tours, the sub-prefect would recommend that the local population appeal to authorities only if herders were caught, whereas the majority of cases of crop destruction occur overnight. In the absence of a culprit, the farmers often decided not to complain. Nonetheless, according to the local population, the current sub-prefect is more focused on the strict application of the law. Therefore, they prefer to avoid him in order not to create more tensions resulting from his verdicts. The village committee, for example, refers conflicts directly to the gendarmes with whom they can make arrangements to maintain a certain margin of manoeuvre during the resolution process. Evidently, if the conflicts are transferred to the sub-prefect, the village committee loses its power to negotiate and resolve the conflict.

Change of intentional objects: Agro-pastoralists

In the past, the negative images and stereotypes that herders had of farmers and vice versa led to the volatile escalation of conflicts. Farmers, for example, considered herders to be ignorant people, bovine, proud and dishonest. Nowadays, these negative images and stereotypes seem to have been reshaped. According to herders, conflicts have declined as a result of the overlapping of pastoral and agricultural activities, and therefore both the understanding of the other as well as diverging interests have been modified. Indeed, the ethnic and cultural separation is becoming increasingly obsolete. Nowadays, settled and even transhumant herders are owners of crops and vice versa, many farmers equally own cattle.

In the past, conflicts were caused by misunderstandings, but because nowadays farmers engage in the activities of herders and vice versa, conflicts have dropped considerably. On that point, one farmer said: “Now we understand each other, today your cows have eaten my field, tomorrow my cows can eat your crops.”¹⁷

A significant number of herders explained that violent conflicts occurred because farmers did not have a pastoral culture; the reduction of these conflicts was due to the progressive acquisition of such culture. Indeed, knowing about the activities of others, and feeling what they feel, has helped in changing their images. According to them, this changed image has influenced the articulations which have shifted from conflictual to consensual. In other words, this change of image has led to acceptance and tolerance, as illustrated in the vignette below:

In 2013, cows destroyed the crop of a farmer in Tienko. The damage was so high so that the farmer decided to inform the sub-prefect committee. Around three hectares of maize and one hectare of cotton were eaten by cows. The sub-prefect mandated the veterinary and an agent of the sub-prefecture to undertake an inspection, but the agent for agriculture was absent. After that,

16 Interview with the sub-prefect of Tienko on 25.01.2016.

17 “Maintenant, nous nous comprenons. Aujourd’hui tes boeufs ont mangé mon champ, demain mes boeufs peuvent manger tes cultures.” (Interview with A. Doumbia, farmer in Tienko, 20.01.2016).

they submitted a report to the sub-prefect and asked the owner of the crop about the value of his crop, which was 650 000 CFA. The sub-prefect committee begged him to reduce because the amount was too high. So, he said 400 000 CFA. They bargained until they reached 300 000 CFA. The owner of the cows discussed and apologised for not having this amount currently and paid it back days later. They said that he also owns a field, and even if it was him, he would not be happy, if he found his field destroyed by cattle. Some days later, he paid for this damage.¹⁸



Agro-pastoralist
cattle in Tienko.
January 2016.

Moreover, the reduction of conflicts can further be explained by such alliances as marriages and other social arrangements, which ensure that disputes stay within the family. Thus, when crop damage occurs, the farmer, after discussion with the herder,

18 "En 2013 à Tienko, des bœufs ont détruit le champ d'un paysan. Les dégâts étaient tellement importants que l'agriculteur a décidé d'informer le comité sous-préfectoral. Environ trois hectares de maïs et un hectare de coton ont été détruit par les bœufs. Le sous-préfet a mandaté le vétérinaire et un agent de la sous préfecture pour faire le constat, l'agent de l'agriculture n'était pas là. Après cela, le rapport a été soumis au sous-préfet qui a demandé au propriétaire de champ le montant estimé de la valeur de son champ. Celui a dit 650 000 F CFA. Le comité sous-préfectoral l'a supplié de réduire cette somme car elle était trop élevée. Finalement le remboursement a été fixé à 300 000 F CFA. Le propriétaire des bœufs s'est excusé de ne pas avoir l'argent sur lui et qu'il reviendrait payer dans quelques jours. Il a aussi dans pendant les négociations qu'il avait lui-même un champ, et qu'il ne serait pas content s'il trouvait son champ détruit par les bœufs. Quelques jours plus tard, il est venu s'acquitter de cette somme." (Interview with a member of sub-prefecture committee, 24.01.2016)

does not require any reimbursement. According to Riesman (1975), little damage is compensated in practice since it is very bad to expect payment from someone with whom one shares the life of a community. The fact of not making someone pay is a sign of your solidarity with him, while the search for a compensation shows a rupture or a lack of links between the parties concerned. Therefore, he decides to drop the issue¹⁹ or leave the issue (and its resolution) to God²⁰. These assertions can usually hide frustrations.

Oxen plow belonging to agro-pastoralists.

January 2016.



Avoiding taxes and a lack of pasture: pastoralists

Before moving, herders gather information on the quality and quantity of resources at their destination. They evaluate the conditions of the access to resources such as the local norms as well as their capability to bargain with local leaders and the powerful local actors (Ancey 2017). The displacement of transhumant goes with a certain logic. Based on this analysis, they avoid areas with too many taxes. In this light, the reduction of conflicts can also be explained by the increase in taxes imposed on transhumant herders. Indeed, in Tienko, aside from the regular taxes imposed by the *Ministère des Ressources Animales et Halieutiques*, the sub-prefecture taxes, there is also the tax imposed by the municipality. In addition, migrating herders suffer from illegal road harassment by soldiers and policemen.

19 In French "laisser-tomber".

20 In French "laisser à Dieu".



Receipts for taxes paid for the passage of cattle. January 2016.

Herders also pointed out the scarcity of resources such as pasture and watering points in the sub-prefecture of Tienko. Indeed, pastoralists depended upon the availability of crop residues; since there is a crop fodder shortage in Tienko, they prefer to go somewhere else for grazing.

Thus, pastoralists choose to move to other places beyond Tienko. Additionally, these herders claim that pastures are becoming rarer in Tienko because of the increase of crops, and also that the previous alliance between them and farmers no longer exists because of the permanent cultivation of land and the use of pasture by settled cattle.



Conclusion

This paper aimed to understand the reasons which lie behind the seeming disappearance of conflicts in Tienko – a town where conflicts once used to escalate. The (in)visibility of conflicts points to the relationship between actors and how they position themselves. The first part of the article showed that conflicts between farmers and herders in the North of Côte d'Ivoire often turned violent. My vignette has stressed the role of face-to-face interactions in the escalation of conflicts during the first stage of bargaining. The second part highlighted the divergent points of view of actors about the reduction of conflicts. According to the sub-prefect committee the decrease of conflict is the outcome of his good management (village committee) and also the effects of the awareness-raising tours of the sub-prefect. The agro-pastoralists explained the decrease by highlighting the recent embeddedness of farming and livestock activities. In addition, for the migrating pastoralists, it is a strategic choice to avoid taxes and to cope with the lack of pasture by avoiding Tienko. In fact, findings from my research show that conflicts have not necessarily decreased, but they have shifted below the radar screen.

This raises the question, then, to whom are conflicts invisible? In other words, below whose radar screen have they slipped if they are still present?

At the lower level, such conflicts are still visible to village chiefs and agro-pastoralists. But the framing of these conflicts has made them invisible to outsiders. Agro-pastoralists and sedentary herders for example no longer consider crop destruction as the source of conflict, in the absence of transhumance. Also, at this level, conflicts can be dormant because involved parties prefer not to reveal their frustrations in the name of kinship; however, such dormant conflicts may become more visible when crops are damaged repeatedly. For some settled herders, on the other hand, because they are still outsiders in the community, they do not want to raise their concerns about damaged property out of the fear of being chased away.

However, these conflicts have become invisible on the broader administrative level. It is important to highlight that the administration's image was tarnished further during the rebellion. To counter this reputation and (re)embellish their image, the conflicts' apparent invisibility at the administration level could be explained by their will to portray that everything is working perfectly due to its reestablishment.

However, it is difficult to verify the decrease of conflicts by more evidence. The registry kept by the village committee for the identification of conflicts could not be found, and the sub-prefect stated that he also did not consult this register. Official statistics are, therefore, based only on data provided by the sub-prefecture.

To sum up, conflicts are articulated in different ways and are no longer spectacular anymore. Because the settled herders are strongly linked with local farmers, the destruction of crop is more tolerated or in latent phase in comparison to the nomadic transhumant who are just passing through.

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