

Poverty and Mobility in Arid Lands: The Case of Sahelian Pastoralists

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Introduction

Pastoralists in the Sahel generally have the same opinion about their present situation, i.e. life has changed for the worse. This is clearly expressed when the Fulbe pastoralists of Central Mali say *Min laati hono dabaaji* (we have become like animals) or *Arande buri welde, arande yimbe mayataa, daabaaji mbaatataa, jooi buri nyaw* (in the past it was better, people did not die, animals did not die, now there is much more illness). These remarks are made about the recent past, before the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s, had such a devastating effect on many pastoral families in the Sahel.

Indeed the situation of many pastoralists in the Sahel remained one of poverty long after the droughts. They lived and live far below a minimal subsistence level, and in economic terms they can be called poor. However this definition of poverty in economic terms does not explain their reactions and feelings about the situation.

The daily experience of hunger and poverty and a decline in wealth are elements of reality to many pastoralists today. A reality that evokes emotions and reactions colouring how people cope with their poor material situation. However, people have selective memory and it only covers a short timespan. Looking further into the past, it becomes clear that periods of hunger, famines and poverty are part of the history of the pastoral peoples of the Sahel (Iliffe 1987). Strategies for coping with poverty such as social security arrangements and political or social structures can be expected to have been institutionalised in these societies. The pastoralists' present-day way of dealing with their situation is an interplay between long-term processes, confronting a culture with scarcity and hazard, and the daily experience of its people.

The pastoralists' comments cited above make it clear that this poverty is not just an economic experience, it is much more. It even makes them doubt their identity, since they 'have become like animals'. Poverty has a clear cultural and even a psychological dimension for the individual. In order to understand how

people cope with poverty, it is important to understand the cultural dimension of poverty on a societal and an individual level. In addition, it can have clear historical explanations.

In this paper, mobility is a central theme. Mobility is an essential element in the coping mechanisms of pastoral people in arid and semi-arid lands. Being mobile is a way of adapting to harsh living conditions. Especially for pastoral groups, it is an important pre-condition for the survival of the animals they are emotionally and culturally tied to. However, mobility is not only an adaptation to a natural environment, it has also become a way of life that goes beyond adaptation. It has become an integral part of the culture of pastoralists and of the personal identity of each pastoralist, man, woman or child. Mobility can thus be viewed as a cultural mechanism to adapt to certain living conditions and it has a very personal interpretation linked to identity dilemmas. Is mobility also a way of dealing with poverty, and does mobility give the pastoral poor a sense of identity even if they have lost the most crucial instrument of their livelihood?

In this paper I do not try to define the poverty of pastoral people in economic terms. I primarily investigate the cultural and historical dimensions of coping with poverty and the individual way pastoralists interpret it.

Insecurity and Poverty

A life in arid lands requires a very flexible attitude and a readiness to adapt to changing circumstances. This is a direct consequence of the ecology of these lands, where rainfall is not only scarce, it is also erratic and variations occur within the year, from one year to the next, and spatially. The major way of dealing with the variability in these areas is mobility. The nomadism of pastoralists can be seen as a direct reaction to variations in resource availability resulting from the fluctuations in the physical environment in other words from ecological insecurity (Gallais, 1975; Scoones, 1995).

Another reason for pastoral peoples' nomadism and the mobility in arid lands has to do with political struggles and conflicts. Political insecurity also makes people move and migrate, as recent refugee flows show. This is as old as the history of the arid lands. Conflicts over resources, between states and between competing sedentary and nomadic groups have been part of the political scene of arid lands ever since biblical times.

With the creation of the colonial state and the subsequent independence of the African states, this political instability has decreased. However, there are now new insecurities for the pastoral and nomadic population, such as national borders that often cross their pasture areas, the introduction of new taxes, and the creation of a political elite that often bears no relation to the pastoralists and thus does not defend their interests (see e.g. De Bruijn & Van Dijk, 1993; Doornbos, 1993). These changes have led to the gradual sedentarisation of many pastoralists. However, pastoralists do not feel any connection with the new states and have become increasingly marginalised in a political sense. Pastoral production itself constitutes an important part of the national economies by virtue of

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the export of livestock, but this is not reflected in the pastoral populations' economic and political position in arid lands

Recent conflicts such as the unrest in Tchad, the Tuareg insurrection in Niger and Mali, and the civil war in Sudan and Somalia, the Ogaden war, have all led to new movements of people internationally known as refugees, including many pastoralists (Bourgeot, 1989; Salih, 1995; Allen, 1996; Doornbos e.a., 1992; Markakis, 1998). Internally, the Sahelian countries witness migratory movements due to ecological fluctuations such as droughts, leading to new forms of pastoral nomadism (Baxter, 1993; De Bruijn & Van Dijk, 1999). These movements are part of a flexible lifestyle and social organisation that is a necessary prerequisite for life in arid lands.

Conflict and war are also important causes of pastoral poverty (Doornbos e.a., 1992; Markakis, 1998). The refugees in Eastern Africa are a clear example of the consequences of war for pastoral societies (Allen & Morsink, 1994; Allen & Turton 1996). The impact of political conflict is comparable to the impact of severe droughts. Society is disrupted, and the women are often left behind when the men go to war, leading to changing gender relations (Selassie, 1992). Wars also lead to general impoverishment due to the loss of cattle and the loss of access to resources. After the conflict, 'returnees' from refugee camps have to struggle for a new existence, often starting from scratch (Allen & Turton, 1996).

The effects of ecological insecurity and political instability are not the same for everybody. Iliffe (1987) demonstrates in a historical analysis that life conditions like these inevitably generate a group of poor people who carry the burdens of these insecurities. Beck (1992) has introduced the term 'risk position' to explain the various effects of crises on groups of people and on individuals. Some people are more vulnerable than others, and this is related to their gender, age, status and so forth. They are the first to be affected by the insecurities of their environment and are more apt to become poor than others.

In the configuration of arid lands and the political situation prevalent in most Sahelian arid countries in sub-saharan Africa, the pastoral population is in a more vulnerable position than other groups, especially the people who herd livestock and make a living this way. The position of the political and religious elites is somewhat better, although it is not very stable either. So in times of crisis the pastoral populations are among the poorest. Within the pastoral groups it is especially the women, the elderly and the former slave groups who are in the worst position. They are the most affected by insecurities all around them.

Poverty of Nomadic People in the Sahel

One consequence of living amidst these insecurities is the inevitability of poverty among the people living in arid lands. In recent literature on nomadic people in the Sahel, poverty and political marginality are among the dominant themes. Most of these studies concentrate on the last three decades, when so many pastoralists lost their animals and their access to crucial resources like pastures and water due to development interventions, state policies and the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s (see e.g. Swift, 1977, 1982; Baxter & Hogg, 1990). There

are also examples of pastoral groups who make the best of the changing circumstances, for example by means of technological innovations, and now live a very good life (Juul, 1996). In most literature, no clear distinction is drawn between pastoral people as such and the political and religious elites. Most authors refer to the pastoralists when they mean the herdsman who own a viable herd. Only a few of them differentiate these groups and show that the fate of the elites has often been quite different than that of the pastoral groups (Klute, 1996; De Bruijn & van Dijk, 1995).

The droughts have meant a fundamental change in the way of life of many pastoral Fulbe in Mali. Some fled to the towns, where they have no choice but to try and earn a living in the margins. This process has been well documented for other pastoral groups as well (White, 1990; Bovin, 1990; Salih, 1995). Others exchanged their home area for other rural areas in the south, where they herd the animals of sedentary farmers (Basset, 1994; De Bruijn & Van Dijk, 1999). Some families choose to stay where they are and live on the fringes of their own society. For people who did not lose everything, other options have been open. They can change the composition of their stock and concentrate on the growth of their herd of small ruminants. Others choose to take up cereal cultivation, and others again have taken their livestock to more fertile areas. Men and women have been differently affected by the droughts, and in general the women were worse off (Ag Rhalay e.a., 1987; De Bruijn, 1997).

Poverty 'Alleviation' in Pastoral Societies

Who are the poor in a pastoral society and how are they perceived? Of course no two pastoral groups are the same in this respect. I concentrate on the Tuareg and the Fulbe in this section. The position of the poor in these societies is related to various ideological complexes, i.e. religion (Islam), the ideology of pastoralism, and ideas related to the social hierarchy. Social care for the poor is also related to these complexes.

In general, the pastoral ideology is based on wealth in the form of animals. People who do not own cattle are considered poor, though wealth may also be expressed as 'knowledge', especially knowledge of the Koran. The Fulbe and the Tuareg both distinguish two types of poor people, those who can still work and are healthy, and those who have do not have the strength to work. The latter are the disabled, the elderly, and the ill. The Fulbe indicate this distinction with different terms: *talka* and *miskiine* (De Bruijn, 1999). The Tuareg draw the same distinction (Spittler, 1992: 231-232). The *miskiine* are the poor who can be helped by others who give gifts. In the harsh circumstances these people live under, poverty is unavoidable and to a certain extent accepted as such. For the Fulbe, becoming poor is related to the will of God (Allah) and it is impossible for an individual to change it. Wealth is linked to the benevolence of God or *barke*, a divine force, 'One day Allah makes you rich and another day he makes you poor'. Wealth and poverty are two sides of the same coin and it is a matter of change whether one is to be rich or poor. Inequality is only logical and nobody really worries about it that much.

Islamic ideology, which pervades social life in Tuareg and Fulbe society, teaches that the poor are to be helped by the richer members of the community. Acts of helping the poor yield these richer people *baraka*. Official institutions for the purpose are *zakat* and *sadaqa*, which are both 'taxes' for the poor. Islamic knowledge can also provide the poor with an important survival strategy. Islamic scholars can even earn a living with it. Reciting Islamic prayers is a way to obtain an income from the Muslim community (De Bruijn, 1994). Thus Islam gives the poor an identity and a way to cope with their situation.

Fulbe and Tuareg societies are characterized by social hierarchies with strong codes of behaviour. The clearest division is between the noblemen and the non-noblemen or the free and the non-free. This is based on the old hierarchy with slaves at the bottom and a political and religious elite at the top. The main codes of behaviour relate to feelings of shame; in principle, the work and attitudes of slaves are shameful for noblemen. Pastoral groups are generally noblemen and free people.

A social hierarchy can serve as a safety net for the poor. As Iliffe (1987) notes, in the past noblemen who became poor could become vassals or slaves of other noblemen and thus continue to be part of their own society. The social obligations between the various status groups also defined help and care relations. Masters had the duty to sustain their slaves in times of crisis. These mechanisms still function to a certain extent, though often in a different way than in the past. Former slaves are still morally obliged to help their masters and vice versa, though this notion is on the wane. Nowadays vertical help relations have partly been transformed into relations between ethnic groups. For example many Fulbe families who lost their cattle in the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s herd the cattle of farmers of other ethnic groups, merchants or rich townspeople. In fact the impoverished herders have become the vassals of other ethnic groups or townspeople (De Bruijn e.a., 1997).

In the event of poverty a nobleman may be forced to do slaves' work or he might no longer be able to adhere to the moral rules that apply to the nobility. In this type of situation feelings of shame may arise and could even lead to psychological problems. The poor have often lost their livestock and thus an essential component of their pastoral identity. This puts them in the same situation as slaves. Poor pastoralists lose their nobleness and try to compensate for the loss by behaving as very pious Muslims, or by avoiding non-noble behaviour as much as possible, even if it means they have to face starvation. The poor not only lack the material means to survive, they are often also denied a moral existence. And indeed many poor do choose to leave. They migrate to towns or to other rural areas where they look for work, preferably as herdsmen or doing something else related to pastoralism and the values attached to it. These are the poor people who are *miskiine*, and are still able to move. There are of course also poor people, *talka*, who are unable to move. Lastly there is a group of poor people who prefer to stay despite the humiliating situation.

In addition to the institutions mentioned above, there are local level social security mechanisms. They can vary greatly in different Fulbe and Tuareg groups. Some groups have virtually no help relations, like the Fulbe in Central

Mali, where sharing systems only exist on a symbolic level (Van Dijk, 1994). Other groups have an extensive network of help relations, like the Wodaabe in Niger who have an extensive cattle sharing system (White, 1990). These differences might be based on the risks each person runs of becoming either poor or rich. Why share with your brother if you yourself can become poor the next day (Platteau, 1991)?

There are also gift relations between neighbours or friends. They usually involve small gifts, which are mainly symbolic and are designed to reinforce these relations rather than serve as real material help (Spittler, 1992; De Bruijn & Van Dijk, 1995). In a situation of starvation, these gifts may make a big difference. Help relations also exist between family members. The core of the family group in nomadic societies is the mother and her children (the hearthhold), and the strongest ties of social care are established between them (De Bruijn, 1997). Social care is also exchanged between members of different ethnic groups. For nomadic people who largely depend on the outside world, these relations can be crucial to their existence.

How Do Poor People Cope with their Situation?

The poor Fulbe who are no longer mobile

What do these social security mechanisms mean to the poor? Here it is difficult to rely on literature and I mainly refer to my own findings in Mali among the Fulbe. Fulbe from different family groups or lineages have lived widely dispersed in Central and Southern Mali ever since the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s. Various distinctions can be drawn along lines of gender or age and they also coincide with the strategies open to them for dealing materially, socially and existentially with their situation of poverty. In this paper I draw a distinction between the people who had the option of leaving or migrating, and the people who decided, voluntarily or involuntarily to stay at the 'home camp'.

The latter group mainly consists of the elderly and of women whose husbands left to seek their fortune elsewhere. The elderly include individuals who not only lost their material wealth, but also their faith in their own people. They were left behind by their sons, or their sons are too poor to look after their parents, which would be the 'normal' pattern. In pastoral societies it is quite common for old people to have no wealth of their own. This is part of the inheritance system, based on a gradual transfer of property (Van Dijk, 1994). The other side of the coin is that the elderly are looked after by their own children. Nowadays this is often no longer the case. This is reflected in how the elderly perceive the younger generation, which they say no longer adheres to the Fulbe codes of behaviour. However, they do not totally condemn the decision to migrate, since they themselves see it as an important strategy and would have done the same themselves if they could. Indeed some elderly people have travelled after their children and if they found them, simply settled near them. Not caring for one's elders may be more accepted in nomadic societies than in sedentary ones (cf. the case of the Inuit, see also Stenning on the Wodaabe in Nigeria). This may be the case for

the Fulbe in Central Mali, for whom this view about old people is counterbalanced by Islamic concepts of *barke*. They feel old people have a lot of *barke* and should be respected. However, they admit that this respect is waning, probably due to the general impoverishment. Nevertheless many old people survive thanks to the small-scale help they get from the larger community (including other ethnic groups) in the form of Islamic gifts like *zakat* and *sadaqa*, the fruits of their own labour, and sometimes the help of a distantly related nephew who would help cultivate a plot of land.

During our stay in Central Mali, we met many old women for whom the *temps de soudure* (pre-harvest season) was extremely difficult. One old lady who had some relatives in the camp could not be sustained by them. She had to leave the camp to settle close to a Dogon *marabout*, who was so kind as to help her. She told me he helped her because her late husband had been a *marabout* too and was a friend of this Dogon. In another case, two childless old women lived with a Dogon family in town. Their nephews did not look after them and their brothers were all deceased or too poor, so they ended up with this Dogon family, friends of their late brother. They earned a certain amount making mats, but they also lived off the numerous gifts from this family and other Dogon in the neighbourhood.

Younger women are generally worse off than men. They have to look after their children and can not leave as easily. In fact it is forbidden by their culture. In 'normal' times this would not pose a problem because Fulbe and Tuareg women have ample freedom and have important responsibilities in the economic field. Often they earn more selling milk than the men do and they are the caretakers of the household. In fact the women remain independent of their husbands. This is also translated into relations of care. It is especially the brothers who have to take care of their sisters if necessary, but only within the limits of their own material wellbeing. Thus at times of widespread poverty, the women are forced to look after themselves. The women's work consists of selling milk they bought with another milkwoman, tressing the hair of other ethnic groups or their own group, repairing calabashes and so forth. The revenues of this work do not earn them more than a very meagre living (De Bruijn, 1994, 1997).

Some poor families are forced to leave their home camp to work in small rural towns for several months a year. They earn a living cleaning the homes of rich families, fetching water, or herding goats. Women familiar with the Koran can earn some money praying for other people. Other poor families stay in their 'home camp' all year round with what few animals are left and depend heavily on their children's labour.

It is clear from this sketch of an impoverished group of pastoral people that social security mechanisms do not enable them to escape poverty. This is why many of them decide to leave the camps and try their luck elsewhere on their own.

The poor who choose to move

For many impoverished Fulbe, it is a better option to leave the home camps. They choose the migration option. This migration is stimulated by poverty (Krokkfors, 1995), but it originates in a nomadic culture where migration is an accepted 'adaptation' to changing circumstances. The people who migrate are mainly families or young men, some of whom are later followed by their wives.

The Fulbe in Central Mali who left their home area after the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s are not a homogeneous group. They live widely scattered and live under different conditions in the areas where they settle temporarily. This must have also been the case with earlier migration waves. These groups have ultimately formed separate groups with common ethnic identities (Amselle, 1990; Amselle & Mbokolo, 1985).

The migrating or more mobile poor Fulbe in Central Mali can be divided in two categories: the ones who leave for a distant destination and start a new life, and the ones who remain in the same area and seem to opt for a temporary solution to their problem.

The latter group lives dispersed over Central Mali. I would like to discuss the case of the poor pastoralists on the Bandiagara plateau. The Fulbe all came to live on the plateau at the end of the 19th century and in the course of the 20th century. There were several reasons for their first migration i.e. to escape tax collection by the French, or to flee from other warrior peoples like the Mossi in Burkina Faso. They settled on the plateau in the middle of Dogon country, where they lived a relatively prosperous life. The droughts of the 1970s and 1980s disturbed this life. Many families lost their cattle and were forced to seek another way to earn a living. They decided to migrate a second time. Their situation on the plateau was aggravated when the Dogon and impoverished and more sedentary herdsmen increasingly colonized the cultivated land. Many families left their camps to live somewhere on the plateau near a Dogon village where they could herd the animals of the Dogon. In some cases it was clear that the Dogon took care of these families without expecting anything in turn.

These families experienced a change in their life; they became dependent on the Dogon and perceived it as giving them feelings of shame. However I had the impression that as long as they stay near the Dogon families they know well, these feelings of shame are not very prominent there. It is as if the superiority of the Fulbe cannot be destroyed by this upheaval in their history. It is clear that they choose to be poor in the vicinity of the Dogon instead of staying poor in their own camps or villages. Their situation is humiliating indeed, but they share it with many others. For them this is a temporary situation and they all expect things to change for the better. Moreover they are so well integrated into the Dogon world that they feel at ease asking them for help.

The Fulbe we followed in their trek to rural areas in South Mali where they settled are mostly poor families or poor men. They left their home camp or village because they no longer felt it was possible to live a decent life there. In the camps, stories are told about their departure. They often left by night and just disappeared. Most of them were not heard from for years, but in most cases

their families later heard something, often through other travelers... around all the sedentary villages in the South of Mali, there are some families from the Mopti region who recently settled there. Given the number of villages, this means it must be a fairly sizeable group of people. Their exact number is not known. As recent migrants, they are not registered and do not register themselves. Government services do not keep any record of their existence either. Perhaps in a decade or so, they will leave their anonymous existence and decide to register and pay taxes in the South of Mali at some nearby village. Up to now, they have been the invisible poor.

They often go to areas they have already heard of. They make contact with potential employers through relatives, acquaintances or people who they know like the Fulbe. In one village, there might be various 'brokers' for the Fulbe. There might be a broker for each lineage or family group, or a broker for people from one region. Most Fulbe work as shepherds for rich cotton cultivators, or for rich Fulbe who settled there earlier and no longer herd their own cattle, or for rich merchants. They settle in the bush near the village of the cattle owner. They live from the milk of the animals. In many cases it is all they have. The contract the shepherds get varies from one village to the next, and even from one cattle owner to the next. The only rule is that there is a certain type of exchange (Van Dijk, 1998).

When these people enter new zones in the South of Mali they also come some into contact with other ethnic groups. Groups they did not know before. The Fulbe adapt easily to these new conditions, though it may take two generations. All the respondents we spoke to had learned the language of the dominant group in the area; they became friends with the sedentary people. Most first generation migrants deny in public that they speak the local language and are adapting to the new culture, but it was clear that their behaviour and their language have been influenced by the new environment. Even to the extent that the people who went home were accused of having forgotten their own language and having abandoned the Fulbe lifestyle.

In most cases, the young men who leave marry a Fulbe woman in the South, but hardly ever from the same family group or lineage. We met a young man who did not dare go to his home village with his wife because she had a different fulfulde dialect. He said his people would laugh at her. The only reason these migrants go back to the North to their home camps is to pay their respects in the event of a death of a family member or to inform the family of the death of a migrant. In some cases, young men are summoned by their family to return and marry a woman. Some men may do this, but it does not keep them from leaving again. They either take their new wife with them or leave her behind, in some cases forever. Only a few men decide to stay after their marriage. We have hardly seen any people who returned because they earned sufficient money and were prepared to return and start a new life back home with their own people.

In the new area, these poor Fulbe can simply retain to their occupational identity as shepherds. This gives them a reason to be there and they can escape their feelings of shame about their poverty in the face of their kinsmen. Before

these other ethnic groups and the other Fulbe lineages, who are in fact strangers to them, they can escape the feelings of shame about their poverty. In the 'new world' their lifestyle and identity are accepted.

Some of these migrant families may end up relatively rich. Others may turn out even poorer than they were before. They might opt to continue their migration. In some cases, they also return to their home camp, simply because no other opportunities are left. This is often the case for people who are too old to migrate successfully and people who did not migrate over long distances (within a radius of 40 kilometers from their home area).

The situation for migrants to the South has changed a lot over the past few decades. Due to the scarcity of resources and changes in cultivation techniques, access to pastures and to livestock has become more difficult. For recent migrants, this means shepherding is done under worse conditions, and they have difficulty finding a plot of land to cultivate. They are often forced to continue further to the South. The recent political changes in Mali and the decentralisation have not changed this process. On the contrary, decentralisation is one of the factors behind this process. Decentralisation means the creation of land-based communes, which consist of sedentary farmers of the indigenous populations. Newcomers, like the Fulbe shepherds are denied access to this process and consequently have no way to claim rights to land.

Poverty and Change

Due to the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s, inequality has once again increased in the pastoral societies of the Sahel (Baxter & Hogg, 1990). Poor pastoralists constitute a large part of the pastoral population. These poor people have a different definition of their pastoral identity than the rich people, and their strategies for coping with poverty have fundamentally changed the pastoral enterprise. The people who move are also becoming different themselves, they come into contact with new ideas and change their attitude towards their own people at 'home'.

The people who stay home redefine their identity along religious lines (Niezen, 1990). When talking about appropriate behaviour, they stress the religious aspects. Pastoralism is still highly esteemed but their opinion it is second best. The elderly Fulbe stress that the youth have abandoned the real Fulbe lifestyle. They no longer live according to their customs. One reason for this opinion is that their sons and nephews who should have taken care of them according to Fulbe custom had abandoned them. Furthermore they felt the youths did not care as much about cattle as they did in the past. This was part of their explanation why times had changed for the worse in recent decades. The younger people felt though that their parents and grandparents had spoilt their wealth, so they could not have a herd and could not live a decent pastoral life. There was thus evidence of a generation conflict.

Due to the loss of cattle, pastoralists have sought alternative ways to survive. This is why they entered the towns and became watchmen, housemaids and so forth, all new jobs for them. This was also why they became shepherds for other

people's cattle. Although this used to be quite normal, the enormous scale on which it took place in Central Mali after the droughts was new. It has completely changed the pattern of cattle ownership.

The people who moved into their own region like the Bandiagara plateau have taken up shepherding for others as a new lifestyle. They live with it as something that is only temporary. They all have the idea that someday they will go back and live with their own herd. In view of the recent developments, it remains to be seen how realistic this is. They can believe in it because they know that there have been similar periods in their own history, since they migrated less than 100 years ago to the plateau. Shepherding other people's cattle was also an option at the time. Furthermore, they are used to living next to another ethnic group, and are not disturbed by these changes. Instead they see them as part of their life. In fact they 'dogonized' a long time ago. With this 'dogonization', they abandoned some of the cultural values of the Fulbe. This may also have changed their attitude towards poverty, but not towards the feeling that as noblemen, they are superior to Dogon cultivators.

People who migrate to the South enter a new environment, where they have a certain freedom to redefine their identity. In this new environment, where all the pastoralists from the North are in the same situation, feelings of shame about being poor are not as prominent as they are in the North in their 'home area'. How these people perceive and define themselves depends on how long they have lived in the new area and the way of life they have been able to develop there. Some families have been able to manage the herd of a rich farmer and cultivate land that was lent to them by the same farmer. They live a relatively prosperous life and feel 'rehabilitated' from their poverty. Although they still have no herd of their own or only a very small one, they see themselves as winners. Often people who perceive themselves this way remain in the South longer.

People who have migrated more recently have more difficulties due to contract changes and land access problems. We met many families who have not been able to build up any material wealth. They are still as poor as they were shortly after the droughts. They have not been able to secure access to any pastures or arable land. Their contracts with the farmers are of little use to them. They can barely survive. These people are having a very hard time with their situation. They feel deprived of their social life, living in remote places and often far from any family. Still they can not return to their 'home area' because it would arouse too many feelings of shame. These people are not only poor in a material sense but also emotionally and socially.

Fulbe migrants in the South of Mali may either decide to continue further to the South or stay where they are. In their new environment, they inevitably change their attitudes to pastoralism and to other groups. They are in close contact with the other ethnic groups whom they depend on for access to the resources necessary to their survival. This leads to cultural changes in the sense that they take elements from the culture of these people. They also come into contact with other Fulbe who migrated to the South. Will they form new Fulbe lineages in the future? Processes like these took place in the past. These Fulbe

are now part of the social landscape of the South. They have adopted the language and other cultural elements of the Bambara (Amselle, 1990). They have passed through the stage in which many poor Fulbe in southern Mali are in now, poor not only in a material sense but also emotionally. They feel deprived of their identity, the cattle belongs to someone else, they are forced to live among other people, and they have no access to their own resources.

Discussion

What does this case study from Central Mali demonstrate? The most essential lesson is that poverty is not only material, nor is it purely social. It also raises emotional and existential questions for the people involved, it raises questions of identity. In pastoral societies where wealth is such an important asset of a person, poverty inevitably leads to these problems. The emotional and existential aspects of migration and poverty are often overlooked in poverty studies.

Another important lesson to be learned from this case study is that although mobility and migration are accepted ways of coping with poverty, this does not mean there is no misery. On the contrary, poor people who recently migrated are often in a miserable situation. It is striking to see how poverty is gendered. When we examined the migration strategy of the poor, we saw that in the first instance, it is mainly men who migrate. Migration to towns is a particularly male affair (Guggler & Ludwar-Ene, 1995). Rural-rural migration is also dominantly a male affair, especially in the first few years. Women are worse off in the sense that they are left behind. They have to cope with a situation of deprivation at 'home'. Their brothers have left, and their relatives are too poor to look after them. In pastoral society, the 'noble' women only have a few ways to earn a living. Their noble status limits their possibilities. As we noted, they can earn a marginal living in small towns, but women are often overworked when their husbands migrate.

Poverty is a historical given in pastoral societies. In the case of Central Mali, this has not led to very extensive social security mechanisms. On the contrary, social care and help relations are minimal and the poor have to look after themselves. The loose social structure and a flexible ethnic identity indeed preclude the organisation of extensive social care mechanisms. Emotional and existential difficulties are eventually overcome in this flexible structure when people integrate into new nomadic groups or even into sedentary society.

As regards mobility and flexibility as a strategy for coping with poverty, the recent migration of many pastoral people is not a new or modern phenomenon. It is part of nomadic life. People move forward all the time. However this mobility leads to dispersion, and the migrations after the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s have made many pastoral people virtually invisible.

These people are difficult, if not impossible for development projects and policy, to reach. The recent developments in Mali do not give rise to optimism about the future of pastoral nomadic people. Their maneuvering options are restricted by the limitations on their use of space due to the establishment of new forms of government based on devolving authority to communities and the

sedentary organisation models adapted by the Malian government as well as other African countries

The situation of the poor individual becomes a little hopeless if we regard the situation of the pastoral people as a whole. They are in a 'high-risk position' in modern times. Even if they are materially rich, they are bound to lose out in the future. Access to resources is becoming increasingly difficult, their mobility is limited by land scarcity, lack of space and changes in property relations. These developments will lead to the further exclusion of pastoralists from the resources, from politics and from economic life. This will make it more and more difficult for the poor pastoralist to create and maintain a nomadic pastoral existence

9 Poverty, Informality and Coping Strategies. Comparative Views from Latin America

*Henri Gooren & Dirk Kruijt**

Introduction

Poverty, informality and social exclusion are not synonymous. In academic debates a certain oversimplification has obscured the empirical and conceptual analysis of the three phenomena.² Poverty, informality and social exclusion are however related. Whereas poverty is generally measured in terms of income possibilities and consumption patterns at the household level, informality is primarily perceived as the individual's position in a segmented labour market or a process of class formation, always related to the boundaries of law and order in the economy and society. Social exclusion refers more directly to a cultural and political sphere and is associated with elementary human rights and unambiguous citizenship.

The study of the poverty-informality-exclusion question entails two problems. Firstly, due to the strong emphasis on definitions and measurement problems and the elaborate methodological and operationalisation procedures, a great deal of the research deals with the 'objective mapping' of poverty and social exclusion. Much of the academic debate is dedicated to measurement methodology instead of the analysis of broader social consequences. Secondly, the expansion in most of the countries of Latin America of mass poverty, mass informality and mass exclusion makes it more urgent to look for similar causes and consequences. Poverty alleviation, the reincorporation of informalised population segments into a basic social, legal and security system, and the reduction of the exclusion tendencies that generate second-class citizenship on a more permanent and hereditary basis all require fundamental policy answers at the national level.

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1 We use arguments and empirical evidence published in Alba Vega & Kruijt (1994), Koonings, Kruijt & Wils (1995), Kruijt (1997) and Gooren (1999). Wil Pansters made critical comments that helped improve this paper.

2 For a more detailed analysis, see Cartaya (1994: 223-225) and Pérez Sáinz (1996).