LEGITIMISING SPACE IN MASSA LAND ON THE BORDERS OF THE LOGONE: THE CASE OF HIRDENG AND BOUGOUDOUM IN CAMEROON

MARAINA
University of Bertoua, Cameroon
maraina1985@gmail.com

Abstract

The Massa who occupied the left and right banks of the Logone River did so without worrying about future colonisation and the demarcations that would occur between Cameroon and Chad. The Logone River is generally used to designate the international or natural border. This article highlights the acceptance of the border by the inhabitants of the villages of Hirdeng and Bougoudoum. The methodology adopted for this work is the historical approach, which consists of reconciling the facts, interpreting them and analysing them. The article draws on interviews with the inhabitants of these villages, supplemented by the use of documents (archives, scientific works). Thus, the border has become an instrument that these inhabitants exploit to their advantage in order to lay claim to this or that space on the banks of the Logone. The demarcations of this border, the reasons for its acceptance and its effects form the backbone of this work.

Keywords : *Border, Logone, Massa, Space, Legitimation.*

Résumé

Les Massa qui occupent les rives gauche et droite du fleuve Logone le firent sans se soucier de la colonisation à venir et des démarcations qui adviendraient entre le Cameroun et le Tchad. Le fleuve Logone est généralement convoqué pour désigner la frontière internationale ou frontière naturelle. Cet article met en exergue l'acceptation de la frontière par les habitants des villages de Hirdeng et Bougoudoum. La méthodologie adoptée pour ce travail est la démarche historique qui consiste à concilier les faits, à les interpréter et les analyser. L'article s'appuie sur les entretiens réalisés auprès des habitants desdits villages, le tout complété par l'exploitation des documents (d'archives, travaux scientifiques). Ainsi, la frontière est devenue un instrument que, ces habitants exploitent à leur fin pour revendiquer tel ou tel espace de la rive du Logone. Les démarcations de cette frontière, les motivations de son acceptation et les effets de celle-ci constituent l'ossature de ce travail.

Mots clés : *Frontière, Logone, Massa, Espace, Légitimation*

Introduction

Borders have never been well defined; they are constantly changing. They are also the subject of arrangements between the different countries that share the same dyads (FOUCHER, 2014: 17). Needless

to say, these borders separated entire families, clans and villages whose borrowed labels changed according to the terms of the agreement. This is the case with the Massa, which had two administrations: first, an all-German administration whose jurisdiction extended from Bongor to Yagoua, and then a German-French co-administration following the agreements of November 04, 1911. Since then, the Massa hasve been divided between Cameroon and Chad. Hirdeng and Bougoudoum are the geographical area of our study. They are respectively a peninsula and a village located in Cameroon in the Mayo Danay Division in Yagoua. These villages border Chad, in particular with the district of Bongor. However, unlike some ethnic groups who ignored borders, the Massa of Hirdeng and Bougoudoum accepted them. They fight over the land that the retreating Logone River left empty. According to Mr Relly (colonial administrator in Cameroon between 1950 and 1952), every two or three years, the same disputes arose over the occupied areas. Local residents lay claim to these areas, which they find unoccupied. Others assert their seniority over these areas; these are the land chiefs (boum nagata). The border is used according to the interests of the inhabitants, even if traditional authorities sometimes get involved.

This article is based on interviews with elders (traditional chiefs, dignitaries and administrative authorities) in Yagoua, and the use of documents (archives, scientific works). In this way, the border is used to legitimise land occupation. It becomes an instrument that the inhabitants of the villages we have mentioned use to lay claim to this or that space on the banks of the Logone. The approach used is the historical approach, which reconciles the facts and explains them. The aim is also to show how the quest for vital resources, their depletion and the refusal to share them has led members of the same ethnic group to use the border to justify their occupation of the land and/or to claim rights to a particular area.

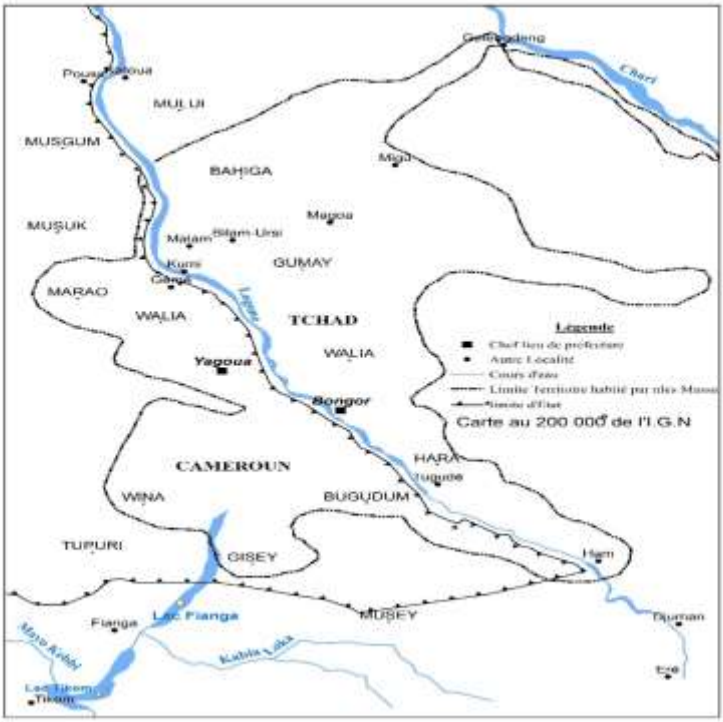
The limology has been invoked here to analyse bordersand understand the complexity of the processes involved in creating them. The flow of individuals contributes to crossing borders. Our question is: how do the inhabitants of these villages perceive and use the border? To what extent does the border constitute an instrument constantly used by these inhabitants to claim their right to an area? To answer this twofold question, we will analyse the delimitation and demarcation of the

border, the reasons for accepting it and, finally, the effect of the border on the Massa of these villages.

1. Demarcation and delimitation of the Massa's Border

Several factors have contributed to the demarcation and delimitation of the Massa's border. From a legal point of view, the border is the line that separates the territory of one State from the territories of neighbouring States.

Map 1: Repartition of the Massa around the Cameroon-Chad border



Source : Françoise Dumas-Champion, 1983 : 21.

1.1 The situation

The border is the result of arrangements between France and Germany. In fact, the idea of knowing how far Germany's limits could extend in its northern part led to the signing of the protocol of March 15, 1894, which established its sphere of influence in Lake Chad. Article 1 states that: 'From the point of access to the left bank of the Mayo-Kebbi, the border crosses the river reserve and runs in a straight line northwards until it meets the 10th parallel. It follows this parallel until it meets the Chari' (Akamba, 1985: 323). A large part of the Massa land was in the neighbouring colony (Cameroon). This agreement, which was not advantageous for France, led to the signing of another agreement, overseen by the Moll-Von Siegfried mixed commission. In 1908, another agreement modified the previous one.

Henceforth, 'it is understood that the islands of Lake Chad situated to the west and south of the border are part of German territory; those to the east and north are part of French possessions'[1]. Between 1911 and 1913, this border underwent further changes. In 1911, Kamerun was enlarged by 275,000 km2, but in 1913 it lost the duckbill, including Bongor. As a reminder, Articles 1 and 2 of the Franco-German Convention of November 04, 1911 stipulate that:

> On the right bank of the Ubangi and according to the geographical layout of the place, the German territory will be determined to extend over a space of at least six kilometres and at most 12 kilometres, the border will then rise obliquely towards the north-west, so as to reach the Pama river at a point to be determined to the west of its confluence with the Mbi, go up the Pama valley, then join the eastern Logone, at approximately the point where this river meets the eighth parallel at the height of Goré. It will then follow the course of the Logone northwards to its confluence. Germany cedes to France the territories situated to the north of the present limit of French possessions in the territories of Chad and comprised between the Chari to the east and the Logone to the west'. (Archives Paris, quoted by AKAMBA, 1986: 88-89).

[1] ANY, Dossier : FA 1/17, Memorandum of understanding relating to the territorial delimitation between Cameroon and the French Congo of 18.04.19, fol. 32.

After the First World War, this agreement became null and void. The Germans, having been defeated, were forced to leave Kamerun. In AKAMBA's opinion,

> 'The fact that Germany had ceded the duckbill to France was an obligation and not a right for Germany. As a result, what Germany obtained from France is a right and Germany must return it ; on the other hand, what Germany ceded to France is an obligation and neither Germany nor its 'successors in title', in this case the colony of Cameroon, will be able to invoke the same Article 125 to recover the 'duckbill' (AKAMBA, 1986 : 93).

It was in this particular context of post-war arrangements that the Massa of Cameroon and Chad found themselves arbitrarily separated from each other. Before the First World War, however, the Massa were subject to a single administration. It was not until the French administered the Massa country that territorial disputes arose over the maintenance of the border. However, it is important to note that from 1913 onwards, Bongor was no longer under German administration, hence the co-administration. This meant that the Massa on both sides had to choose between the colony of Kamerun or that of Chad. This is also what Abdoul-Aziz (2006) calls the 'right of option'. [2]

1.1.1 Towards a 'right of option

No border had yet crossed the Massa land, or even the country under German administration. The Bongor station, created in 1902, exercised territorial jurisdiction up to Yagoua. The Massa on both sides of the river were then placed under a single administration. Later:

> The cession of the duckbill prompted the Germans to deal with the Logone pagans and reorganise them. They created the sultanates of Guirvidig and Pouss. They brought down to Pouss the chiefdom established at Mogroum on the left bank

[2] As the author points out, 'populations that had become reciprocally "foreign" obtained what can rightly be called the right of option. At the end of the demarcation of the border between the French Congo and the German territory of Cameroon, they had to make a choice. Although this choice was supposed to be free, it was in fact compulsory, as no native living in the French zone could claim to reside in German territory or to be subject to German authority, and vice versa'. (ABDOUL-AZIZ, 2006 : 79.) On this subject, see also the Franco-German convention of 1908.

> of the Chari. In the south, the Massa groups no longer depended on the Bongor station, which had become French, were placed under the authority of a very artificial sultanate, that of Yagoua (IYEBI-MANDJEK & SEIGNOBOS, 2000: 57).

The Massa groups of Bongor then separated from those of Yagoua changed their etiquette. The colonial authorities invited them to chose the colony of their choice (AKAMBA, 1986). Indeed, in 1912, the Minister for the Colonies of the French Republic instructed the Governor General of French Equatorial Africa (AEF) to inform the indigenous populations living in the territories ceded to Germany that if they wished to retain French nationality, they would have to leave their current homes before:

> October 1, 1913 or
> February 1, 1914 or
> April 1, 1914 or
> June 1, 1914 depending on whether they are in the zones to be handed over to Germany
> October 1, 1912 or
> February 1, 1913 or
> April 1, 1913 or
> June 1, 1913.[3]

This chronogram drawn up by the colonial authorities highlights this right of option and also reflects the arbitrary nature of the borders imposed on the populations who, without being consulted, were confined to different colonies. This leads us to conclude that the main aim of such an act was to keep a large number of inhabitants to levy taxes, build roads and develop the occupied territory. Hence the movement of defectors we observed, fleeing the payment of taxes and the very repressive laws in their new adopted country (MARAINA, 2022: 164). Since then, the inhabitants of the banks of the Logone have

[3] ANY, Dossier FA1/107, Administrative distribution of the protectorate and the colonial troops of the protectorate of Cameroon on the occasion of the taking possession of the Neukamerun after the Franco-German agreement of 4.11.1908 - Overview, 1.2-1913 p.187.

been caught between two different colonial systems. On the left bank there were the Germans and on the right bank the French.
Under German administration, the Massa had no restrictions on their movement within their country. It took the Franco-German agreements between Captain Julien Émile Pie, seconded to the Chad territories and commanding the Moyen Logone circle, and Kund Herbert, a lieutenant in the Imperial German troops in Cameroon, commanding the Bongor station, to reveal the division between the Massa people. After recognising, studying and investigating between Chari-Logone-Toubouri, from December 10, 1904 to February16, 1905, the undersigned decided and determined the border. Sections 24-25 of the 1905 provisional convention read as follows:

> Section 24 :
> - the border thus being delimited between Chari-Logone-Toubouri, any village that settles north of this line becomes French.
> Section 25 :
> - Plantations that French villages will continue to maintain on German territory will come under German authority.
> Any plantations that German villages may have on French territory come under French authority. [4]

We now have German speakers on one side and French speakers on the other, faced with the realities of the border. Boubacar BARRY notes that 'borders were henceforth managed according to the interests of the colonial powers, to the detriment of the populations divided on either side by new customs, linguistic or administrative barriers' (BARRY, 1999: 61.).
From 1911 onwards, the Germans and the French set up the conditions for movement between the populations, erecting barriers at the borders and imposing taxes. Albert-Pascal TEMGOUA maintains that:

> 'In order to prevent livestock farmers from exporting to neighbouring colonies, the Germans introduced the following

[4]ANY, Dossier FA1/8, Provisional Franco-German border agreement on the border demarcation in the Chari-Logone-Toupouri area : Copy of the contract, 27.7.1905 p. 168.

> taxes from 1911 onwards: 100 marks per exported horse, 20 marks per cow and 10 marks per donkey (...), customs officers assisted by dozens of riflemen were posted at the main traditional trade routes' (TEMGOUA, 2014: 159).

They managed to guard their territories through police patrols with the Polizei Truppe, as Baguirmi slavers frequently violated German territory under the orders of the Sultan of Baguirmi. Lieutenant Kund complained about this behaviour to the French authorities on more than one occasion. It should be pointed out that the Baguirmi country was under French protectorate and the Sultan enjoyed the support of the French authorities, who encouraged him to take captives, which depopulated the German zones to the benefit of the French zones.[5] Henceforth, 'the colonisers made it compulsory for native Cameroonians wishing to leave the country to obtain an exit visa' (MORGEN., 1982: 334).

From 1916, Cameroon and Chad were administered by France. And the Massa under French administration were not merged into a single colony as Britain had done. They remained separated by the Logone River. However, Bakole, Balondo and Isangele in Southern Cameroon, which found themselves in the same situation (under British administration), were integrated into the colony of Nigeria. The aim was to facilitate a reunion between the formerly separated brothers, some of whom were in Nigeria and some in Cameroon. In the opinion of Victor J. NGOH, 'London justified its decision on the grounds that British Cameroon was sparsely populated and lacked political and tribal homogeneity' (NGOH, 1978 :146). This British policy was not applied by France. However, like Great Britain, it was mandated by the League of Nations (SDN) in 1922 to administer Cameroon. With the border maintained, an anarchic situation persisted, with new demographic groupings emerging. There are now two groups of Massa : Chadians and Cameroonians. Unfortunately, this ethnic homogeneity of the population did not allow the border to be removed. Surprisingly, the border was accepted by the latter.

[5]ANY, Dossier FA1/8, General political, military and economic conditions. - Southern Mousgoum Territories - Report by Lieutenant Kund, Bongor, circa 1906 fol. 194-204.

2. Acceptance of borders: Chadian or Cameroonian territory?

Some peoples who have been separated by borders have ignored them. However, in Hirdeng and Bougoudoum, it is skilfully exploited to justify the right to land or to claim this or that cultivable area. Just look at the way they settle territorial disputes.

2.1 The Hirdeng Island case

Throughout Africa and elsewhere, where the same ethnic groups have been separated by the border, they have used it to defy colonial authority by moving from one place to another regardless of the border. However, the Massa on both banks of the Logone, particularly the Hirdeng, people with extensive cultural boundaries and limited political boundaries, began to identify with the new borrowed citizenship they had been given by their masters. From the 1950s until around 2000, there were several clashes between the Massa settled in this area straddling Cameroon and Chad. To resolve these disputes, they regularly called on the administrators of each border district, notably Bongor and Yagoua, to determine ownership of the disputed island. As Maurice DELAUNEY[6] points out,

> 'Very early one morning, I saw the banana chief from Yagoua Makaini arrive[7]. He warned me that on an island in the Logone, some thirty kilometres from Yagoua, a battle had just broken out, that there were several thousand men involved, and already many wounded. It was a territorial dispute between the banana of Yagoua, in Cameroon, and the banana[8] of Bongor, in Chad. Each claimed a fairly large island that was regularly flooded and which, of course, had very fertile land. The Makaini chief urged me to come to the scene, and also to warn my colleague from Bongor. [...] As we approached the island by

[6] A pupil of the colonial school, he was posted as deputy to the head of the Edéa region in Cameroon, then administrator of the Eséka region ; he then served in Fort Fourreau (now Kousseri) in 1948 and in Yagoua in 1952. The story told here is a sombre tale of border limits that could have ended badly.

[7] Makaini was the chief of the Massa of Yagoua, and some of the old men we interviewed said that his power extended as far as Chad, particularly over a few villages on the Cameroonian border, although this remains to be verified.

[8] Banana : generic term adopted by the Foulbés, meaning friend in Massana. Among the Massa, any foreigner is first and foremost a friend ; in reality, it was the Massa who called their neighbours by this name, but the latter labelled them as such.

> the pirogue, we could hear shouts and war songs, chanted and haunting. On the island, as in the battles of the past, two clans of several thousand men each, ten thousand in all, perhaps more, stood a hundred metres apart. Arrows and throwing knives were flying in all directions. And there were already many wounded. I assembled all my guards, around twenty of them, the militiamen of the Makaini chief armed with milking rifles. And I asked my colleague from Bongor to join me, also with some reinforcements. [...] The Bongor administrator came to join me a little later, as we hadn't been able to coordinate our meeting perfectly due to a lack of radio resources. We planned - however - to meet again to try, with the chiefs and notables of Chad and Cameroon, to settle this border dispute. Four or five months later, the problem was settled... to the advantage of the Cameroonian Banana' (DELAUNEY, 1986 : 61-62).

How then can it be understood that the Massa occupying this island in Cameroon and Chad have come to fight over it, which was once inhabited by the same people, on the grounds that they are in a separate village belonging to another country ? And yet, before the French presence, the Massa moved from one point to another without embarrassment, cultivating fields on both sides of the Logone. They grazed their animals wherever they wanted. The Massa of this village no doubt sensed a possible reduction in resources, a threat to their activities (agro-pastoral, fish farming), hence their mistrust and rejection. So the stakes are there, and it was certainly wise to preserve this vital space. Although they were brothers by blood, clan and other ties, they were forced to leave the island.

During the confrontations that almost degenerated into a battle on the island of Hirdeng, its inhabitants, led by chief Makaini, demonstrated and consolidated their right to this disputed area. Guy GEORGY states that, 'Makaini demonstrated to the French administration that this island was Cameroonian and that its authority had to be re-established there at all costs' (GEORGY, 1992 : 135). According to oral tradition, the authority of this traditional chief extended as far as the Massa

territories of Bongor. Bouba Madjaina [9] tells us that when the Germans arrived on the Miogoye side of the Logone River, they fixed the logs in place. It was from this point, up to Hirdeng, that the settlers determined the borders with French Chad. As the Logone River narrows, it usually leaves an empty space in the land, and this encourages the local people to settle anywhere. And, in the absence of landmarks, it is impossible to determine precisely to whom any given piece of land belongs. This calls into question the Berlin Act, which established rivers, lakes, streams and mountains as borders. This state of affairs creates a legal vacuum, gives rise to border disputes and calls into question intra-clan relations. In Armel Sambo's opinion,

> It is inconceivable that a river belongs to no-one, especially in the Chad basin where water has always been a factor in population settlement and state covetousness. And secondly, giving sovereignty over a river to another can be a source of conflict (2010 : 133).

These natural disasters have left the island undecided, as can be seen on the map opposite.

Map 2: Contested area during the dry season

Source: Adaptation of a map drawn by Igor de Garine, 1964, pp.12-13, produced by Henri Zobo

[9]Bouba Madjaina, farmer, Yagoua, interviewed on 12/05/2016.

The effects of the climate (drought, the shrinking of the Logone) lead us to wonder who owns this strip of land. The attachment to the land and the sacred nature of the land mean that people now see each other as 'sum-sa-gahona' strangers. Mr RELLY once again maintains that these border conflicts 'arise every two or three years, particularly between boundary stones 46, 47, 48 to the west of Lake Fianga (Gangalang-Kankharoua village of Doukoula, Koumargui [village of Wina] and between boundary stones 49 and 50'[10]. He also notes that during his time in the Yagoua subdivision

> 'Border disputes were always settled by mutual agreement between the two subdivision chiefs concerned. Together with their respective chiefs, they walked the line between boundary stones 47, 48, 49 and 50, preached peace to the disputing parties, marked out the boundaries and went their separate ways with peace of mind, certain of having settled once and for all the irritating palaver that always ended in fights, often bloody... and two years later the same stories would start all over again in the same places'. [11]

Territorial disputes are frequent, and we agree with Zacharie SAHA that: 'in the absence of natural landmarks such as rivers and mountains, the head of the family would show the extent of his domain with a hand gesture, a space that he could not always delimit concretely' (SAHA, 2006: 175). It should also be noted that in the Logone valley, land is the subject of many tensions between intra- and inter-clan communities, often caused by the demographic explosion and the climate, which dashes the hopes of the inhabitants. This regularly leads to immigration and/or emigration of populations to new lands in search of a better life. As a result, the race to occupy vacant land leads logically to territorial disputes between the Massa of the two shores. In the opinion of Ali NDJIDDA,

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[10] ANY/APA, 2AC 6716, M. Relly the head of the Yagoua subdivision, 1950, on the Cameroon-Chad border between the Yagoua subdivision and the Fianga district.

[11] Ibid.

The two heads of subdivision mentioned here are none other than that of Yagoua and its counterpart in Fianga in Chad.

> 'Demographic growth and imprecise borders encourage the uncontrolled expansion of populations, which often leads to disputes, especially as the rainy season approaches. The inhabitants of villages or settlements located on the border often go to cultivate on wet and fertile land in the neighbouring country' (NDJIDDA, 2017: 66.).

Ethnic groups generally live in clans and communities. Leaving this circle means crossing the ethnic border, as the ethnic groups are different from one another. This ethnic differentiation also marks the border between villages. In the past, borders in the legal sense of the term had no meaning for the Massa, but the designation of the Logone River as a natural border by the European powers changed their habits and led to a reconfiguration of space. It has to be said that the Massa of Hirdeng and Bougoudoum in Cameroon accepted the border, which led to a de facto rejection of the other as a stranger. Ali NDJIDDA (2017) points out that, in an environment where fertile land has become scarce, relations between the different clans are deteriorating. It should also be noted that cattle rustling and kidnapping were also sources of disagreement between the different clans. When people on either side of the border committed such acts, they took refuge on the other side of the border. This usually led to clashes between them.

2.2.2 The Bougoudoum case

In the early 2000s, the Massa from Tougoudé and Ham in Chad and those from Bougoudoum in Cameroon fought over a strip of land at boundary marker 52. Here, the local people are aware of the existence of this border, but they deliberately ignore it, as the people we met in Bougoudoum made clear during our stay. Seasonally settled in Bougoudoum, the Massa from Chadian villages behave like locals. This is what Wakna Tama[12]. told us. The existence of this boundary marker 52 did not prevent the Chadian Massa from cultivating and carrying out their activities on this Cameroonian territory.

Bougoudoum is in the administrative subdivision of Gobo in Cameroon. The traditional authorities and their people wanted to build a road through Karam (on the border with Chad) to Nouldeyna

[12]Wakna Tama, notable to the chiefdom of Bougoudoum, 71, Bougoudoum, interview conducted on 24/06/2017.

(Cameroon). They wanted to exploit and develop the area occupied by their Massa brothers from Chad. But the latter were opposed to that. One of them took a bit of earth and told his protagonists to smell it, if it had a Cameroonian odour,' a dignitary of the Bougoudoum chief told us. Faced with the opposition of the Chadian brothers, tension mounted between the two parties. What's more, as Madi Kouna[13] tells us, they appealed to the Divisional Officer of Gobo. The latter informed his Chadian counterpart and, by mutual agreement, they brought the two parties to their senses. They brought a map of Cameroon and Chad and told them where they should be. The Massa (from Chad) accepted the resolutions taken by the administrative authorities. It was also suggested that another site be found where they could settle temporarily. The latter option was chosen. On this point, we agree that 'land or territorial conflicts, as Zacharie SAHA writes, are by far the most frequent and violent that can be encountered, (...) the scarcity of land coupled with a desire for expansion is no stranger to this type of conflict' (SAHA, 2006 : 109).

3. Effects of the border on the Massa

As a result of colonial policies, the Massa were exposed to and adopted two different ways of life. This undoubtedly explains their acceptance of the border.

3.1 Creation of two groups of Massa

Going back to colonial times, the Massa under German and French administration were shaped in the image of their masters (German and French). To better serve the colonial masters and be understood, the natives had to understand the colonial language. The Massa were taught to speak either German and/or French. Wherever the French were present, they were hostile to the use of the vernacular in schools. For the French, the best training for an African (or anyone else) was an education according to the methods and traditions of metropolitan France through the French language.

The border has thus divided these inhabitants. They no longer see each other as brothers, but rather as strangers. Calling themselves Chadians

[13] Madi Kouna, notable to the chiefdom of Bougoudoum, 75, Bougoudoum, interview conducted on 24/06/2017.

or Cameroonians. The establishment of the border broke down the long-standing clan solidarity that had existed between the inhabitants of the two banks of the River Logone. Henceforth, they sometimes neglect relations based on agnatic kinship and matrimonial alliances. The very meaning of the golla or cattle loan, which strengthens the bonds of friendship between the men of the different farana, has been lost (MARAINA, 2022 : 170). Stereotypes have developed among the people, who now look at each other in mirror image. In other words, the imposition of the border by the West divided them in several aspects. This imbalance was exploited by the colonisers in order to rule better and pit one against the other. Throughout history, the inhabitants of Hirdeng and Bougoudoum have been part of this logic.

3.2.1 Economic and social impact

The effects of the border have had unfortunate consequences. Both economically and socially. The tensions arising from the Hirdeng and Bougoudoum crises, for example, are hardly conducive to cohabitation.

- **Economic impact**

Livestock farming, agriculture and fishing play an essential role in the life of the Massa. They almost have a special relationship with these activities. However, as a result of the acceptance of the border, which leads to the expulsion of newcomersbecause of the disputed areas, the economy in this area is taking a hit. In the past, these activities were carried out in complete peace, particularly fishing. Joseph Domo notes that 'like desert dwellers who cannot live without their camels or dates, fishermen are linked to the presence of water' (Domo, 2013 : 65). Unfortunately, in such an environment, collective fishing and farming were no longer possible. The local masters or chiefs felt that these newcomers were responsible for the difficulties they were experiencing, forgetting that as resources dwindled, it was not necessarily the neighbours who were to blame, but rather the vagaries of nature. With the desert advancing at a rapid pace, the Lake Chad basin is shrinking considerably, leading to a reduction in the flow of the Logone. It should be remembered that the river that separates them by a considerable distance is a reservoir of fish. And when this void is left, the river withdraws or dries up and the riverside populations come to farm or settle, which creates tensions.

In the past, before the border was established, the peoples living on the borders of the Logone built their relationship on these activities. In days gone by, bartering was the most common form of exchange between the Massa on both sides of the river. Today, however, land claims here and there and bullying by the local masters are having a huge impact on this practice. Livestock farming is under threat, and Armel SAMBO maintains that 'livestock farmers move from one island to another in search of pasture' (SAMBO, 2010 : 189). Although these movements are seasonal, they are misinterpreted by the inhabitants of Bougoudoum and/or Hirdeng, who see them as permanent immigration. There are regular territorial quarrels between the inhabitants of these areas. Also, the newcomers very often send their harvested produce to markets in Chad rather than to Bougoudoum or Hirdeng, because the village chiefs send these 'foreign' producers to collect some sort of tax on the pretext that it is 'the chief's right', which further pollutes the climate.

- **Social impact**

On a social level, this feeling of rejection has created a certain amount of frustration and resentment among these new arrivals. In her work, MARAINA (2022) points out that one case, and not the least, is that of the inhabitants of the Miogoye villages living in Hirdeng, where the lawans of these respective villages, which bear the same name in Chad and Cameroon, turned away a group of Massa on the grounds that they were not on their land. Not knowing whether they were Cameroonian or Chadian Massa, they found themselves stuck in the middle. How did they end up there ? There is no clear answer. But we can say that it was certainly because the river receded, leaving the land vacant, that they settled there.

The border, which was accepted by the inhabitants of Hirdeng and Bougoudoum because of their borrowed nationality, makes cohabitation difficult (MARAINA, 2022 : 204). There is now a resurgence of cattle rustling, with both sides blaming each other and passing the buck. When a theft occurs on the other side of the right bank, they point the finger at the inhabitants of Bougoudoum and Hirdeng. The border then becomes a means of concealment, because once crossed the tracks are almost impossible to find. The accomplices on the other side protect their brothers. Some even go so far as to bribe

and/or put pressure on the administrative and traditional authorities so that they are not unmasked. The sub-prefect of Gobo[14] told us that Chadian farmers manipulated their authorities, in this case the Divisional Officer of Hollom-Games, who attached Chadian flags to trees in Cameroonian fields, particularly in Koro and Kaina, to justify the fact that these areas were Chadian.

Conclusion

At the end of our study, we wanted to show the acceptance of the border by the inhabitants of Hideng and Bougoudoum, and what explains the recourse to it in the event of territorial disputes, as well as the rejection and mistrust of elements of the same ethnic group with the same history and geography. This study shows that the demarcation of the border between Cameroon and Chad, and that imposed in Massa country, have been appreciated in different ways. While elsewhere certain ethnic groups have ignored this border, in Massa land the inhabitants of these villages have accepted it, with all the consequences that this implies. Access to and control of dwindling natural resources have led them to fight over strips of land. When the Logone retreats, it leaves unoccupied spaces that some riverside dwellers settle in, in search of fertile land and pasture. We also note that the border separating the same ethnic group has created two groups of Massa who claim to be either Chadian or Cameroonian, depending on the area they live in. This had socio-economic impact with unfortunate consequences. The secular exchanges and practices deteriorated. Today, these 'border residents' use the border to commit acts of violence on one side and take refuge on the other. Newcomers are expelled and sent home. Others manipulate the administrative and traditional authorities to legitimise their actions. Such is the situation in the Hirdeng and Bougoudoum areas where the now Chadian and Cameroonian Massa live.

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