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Review

Cyprian Ekwensi's *Burning Grass*: Literacy, Ruga and Fulani Herdsmen Migration in Nigeria

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Abstract

This discourse examines the contexts of literary source of Cyprain Ekwensi's fictional prose – Burning Grass. It explains the lifestyle of the traditional Fulani herdsmen culture. This paper highlights some aspects of nomadic Fulani culture, identity and itinerant and migration nature. The paper examines the aridity of the Sahel and northern regions, advancing desertification and excessive weather conditions which has influenced the migratory movement of the herdsmen struggle, rivalries, challenges and conflicts, occupation, religion and culture .The migration bid of the herdsmen has implications on varieties of language spoken in Nigeria and most especially English language. The paper also shows the effects of migration on language expansion and socio-economic life of the people. The paper is focused specifically on Burning Grass as well as application of current environmental factors for the evaluation of the primary data of the study.

Keywords: Burning Grass, Fictional Prose, Herdsmen, Migration

INTRODUCTION

The paper examines the cultural and social realities of the Nigerian Fulani herdsmen as presented in the literary context of Cyprian Ekwensi's *Burning Grass*. The novel captures a sensitive and detailed picture of the culture representation, identity and environment of traditionally Fulani society in Nigeria predominantly dominated by herdsmen. The fictional work exposes the lifestyle of the traditional Fulani people. The title of this paper illuminates the ingredients of socialization, value system, cultural beliefs that are attributes of migration in the socio-cultural perspective in Nigeria environment.

Aniago (2012) notes that novels are clear representation of typical and actual realities of a society and not just a pigment of an author's imagination. The novel *Burning Grass* highlights real life scenario, showing Fulani herdsmen struggles, conflicts, challenges, religion and culture and occupation. Dogon-Daji (2016) in his earlier work on *thematic analysis and significance of the Cyprian Ekwensis novel, Burning Grass* explains the factors affecting the day to day activities of the Fulani herdsmen and also factors causing the downfall or coming apart of a family in the Fulani community of Dokan Toro in the novel. According to him, several cultural practices exist as unifying factors that brought people under a single roof. He further notes that it also highlights how generally love separates people as well as holds a family, a house or a society together.

The paper explores Fulani herdsmen culture as described in Cyprian Ekwensi's *Burning Grass*. Gabriel and Blackduke (2018) state that the traditional Fulani culture in the later decades of the twentieth century and this twenty-first century has been challenged by modernity in several ways. The paper therefore explores these challenges and notes that the traditional Fulani herdsmen play significant role in Nigeria.

Dogon-Daji (2016) states that the Fulani people live in the Northern part of Nigeria. The Fulani's are alien tribe whose grazing habits bring serious problem to the country's agricultural and forestry practice because of the persistence and consistent conflict of the Fulani herdsmen with farmers. This often results to migration. Dogon-Daji (2016) citing Iro (1994) says that Fulani's are

nomadic and pastoralists whose primary occupation is livestock raising. They engage in random movement of cattle and trans-human migration. He reports that the Fulani herdsmen are largely found in the Sahel and the semi-arid parts of West Africa. Because of climate changes, the herdsmen have migrated further south into the Savannah and tropical forest-belt of West Africa. He lists some of the countries where the herdsmen are found like Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Guinea, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire and Cameroon. The dominant occupation of the Fulani in Nigeria is cattle rearing. Dogon-Daji notes that the Fulani herdsmen engage in both random and planned transhumance movements. According to him, the pure nomadic Fulani herdsmen usually take these random movements while the semi-nomadic pastoralist takes the planned movements. The major reason for their migration is to reach areas with abundant grass and water for the cattle. Other reasons for their migration are to avoid payment of tax, harmful insects and hostile weather as well as social environment. The advantage of the movement for the herdsmen is make available food resources for their cattle.

Dogon-Daji (2016) citing Caldicott (1996) notes that before migration, the Fulani herdsmen send a reconnaissance team to study the area for availability of resources like grass and water for grazing. The Fulani herdsmen have several species of cattle such as Zebu cattle, dwarf Ndama, Bigimi, Turuka, Mbala and Popo. The Zebu is most common in the West African hinterland because of its drought resistant tracts while the dwarf Ndama cattle is commonly herd in the wetter areas of Fouta Djallon because of their resistant to trypanosomiasis and other conditions directly associated with high humidity.

Tonah (2012) asserts that the Fulani pastoralists graze in lands around the arid and Sahel regions of West Africa because of the conditions of the environment, which limit the amount of land for agricultural purposes leading to loss intense competition for land between farmers and herders. He further notes that the Fulani pastoralists started their migration into Northern Nigeria from Senegambia region around the 13th or 14th century. Okello and Mejekodunmi (2014) also state that after the Uthman dan Fodio's Jihad, the Fulani became integrated into the Hausa culture of Northern Nigeria.

CyprainEkwensi, posits that the colorful nuggets of information the character of Mai Sunsaye gives on the Fulani's helps in understanding their uniqueness. Through him, we learn about the life and values of the Fulani herdsmen:

'We are Fulani's , the son of Dan Fodio, master magicians, we who fight like cats , who die a hundred deaths and live, we who test out manhood by the Sharro' 'we are men of cattles, our cattles come first and since it is our wish to take them to better pastures, all else must succumb to that wish. ''There is that immediate instinct of the Nomad, developed over a lifetime of exposure to danger from man, beast and nature.' 'A good herdsman must know each one of his cattle by name, colour and habit: the Fulani does.' They could 'eat kneaded flour in sour milk' and other things but 'Fulani would not eat the meat from cattle: it was forbidden by the herdsmen.' 'A town must have the smell of a cattle to please a Fulani. If there is no smell of a cattle-dung, it's like a hospital.' 'Most of the Fulani girls were light skin with straight noses and thin lips like those of the white people; they could milk cows, separate butter and cheese from the milk, ferment the milk and cook. She hawks the sour milk. ''A Fulani youth who had not taken a flogging at the sharro would never find a maiden to marry him' Their 'Custom says that a woman is no wife until she is brought under a hut. ''To the herdsmen who has spent most of his time on the move, home was a cluster of huts, anywhere from which no more movement was contemplated.'

Dogon-Daji (2012) observes that during the dry season when tsetse fly population is reduced, the Fulani pastoralists move their cattle into the middle belt zone dominated by non Hausa groups returning to the north at the onset of the rainy reason. The grazing of cattle on farmlands sometimes lead to destruction of farm crops and results to conflict.

In *Burning Grass*, Cyprian Ekwensi highlighted the nature of grass, its importance and the need for the Fulani herdsmen to move southward with their cattle in search of grazing lands. According to Cyprian Ekwensi, when they begin to burn grass in northern Nigeria, it is time the herdsmen to be moving the cattle southwards to the bank of the great river. Cattle rearing are the occupation of Fulani people as shown in the character of Mai Sunsaye in Cyprian Ekwensi's *Burning Grass.*

Lack of literacy by the pastoralists is shown when Mai Sunsaye, following the bird's movement would mean deserting his sense of reason, his wife, his children and his people. When asked about his wandering, Sunsaye will tell anyone that cared to listen that he was in search of Fatimeh, the Kanuri slave girl whom he saved from her masters. Fatimeh was caught up in a love triangle with Sunsaye's love sick son Rikku and Hodio whom she eloped with. All Sunsaye wanted was to bring Fatimeh back to his most loved son Rikku. But in his search for one, he finds another.

In the course of his journey, Mai Sunsaye opened a window for readers to view the nomadic life of the Fulani. Through lonely hills, rivulets and rocks, the herdsmen will thrive. Loneliness was their drink, they are nomads; wandering cattlemen and women. As their families are scattered beneath different piece of sky in their moving lives, it is little surprise that Mai Sunsaye walks into the embrace of his first son Jalla who has now grown rich with a thousand cattle in the town of New Chanka.

Details in the *Burning Grass* helps shed light on why since 1987, nomadic literacy projects of Nigerian governments targeted at millions of out of school children of Fulani herdsmen has failed. Herdsmen continue to display apathy towards these government driven literacy projects. Though language may serve as an impediment, there is also the lose of grazing areas which may make it impossible for nomad children to negotiate herding and literacy within the same space. The nomadic Fulani's until present day remains challenged with incidence of cattle rustling, conflict, rural banditing, animal diseases among others. As Mai Sunsaye *said,* 'we (Fulanis) are men of cattle, our cattle come first and since it is our wish to take them to better pastures, all else must succumb to that wish.' Perhaps in teaching them how to grow their cattle sustainably and make their young increase, their literacy skills will begin to develop and expand.

The novel, *Burning Grass* highlights the domination of the culture, customs and general way of living of the Fulani herdsmen. The novel presents the life of the Fulani herdsmen and their nomadic lifestyle. The novel highlights the struggles the Fulani herdsmen face in order to attain their objectives through courage, hardwork and determination. The subject matter of Fulani herdsmen, migration and RUGA settlement is of significant concern in Nigeria especially now that they herdsmen are ascribed as being agents of terrorism or the Islamic sect – Boko Haram that has created conflicts and clashes between the herdsmen and farmers.

The RUGA settlement for Fulani herdsmen and their migration controversy has become a positioning prime factor in the setup of permanent settlements for Fulani herdsmen. The paper further examines the whole picture of RUGA settlement and the difficulties to overcome the challenge. The problem of Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria is the combination of climate change, desertification and droughts especially in the northern part of Nigeria.

From the above exposition, it is possible to take analytical look deeper in the context of *Burning Grass* as literary reality and source material for this current paper in providing sufficient highlights and clearer understanding on recommendations to solve a problem of herdsmen invasions, appropriations of farmlands and other crimes in host communities across Nigeria.

The major objective of the present study is to explore the traditional Fulani herdsmen culture as described in the fictional work of Cyprian Ekwensi in the novel, *Burning Grass.*

The study adopts the historical and phenomenological approach to explore and study the concept validity of subject under consideration. The approaches were used to investigate the implications of Fulani herdsmen migration and impact on literacy, herdsmen and farmers conflict in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The study anchors on frustration-aggression and conflict theories. The theories are suitable, relevant and best explain the phenomenon leading to the prevailing issues of conflicts between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria.

Frustration-Aggression Theory

According to Myers (2007) citing Dollard, (1939) frustration and aggression theory refers to outcome of frustrating an individual's effort towards achieving a purpose. It further asserts that frustration arising from interference in a goal oriented activity gives rise to readiness for aggression when triggered results lead to aggressive tendency. Rationis (2014), states that the trigger could be an insignificant element of behaviour like casual joke, gesture or mild criticism that ought to be overlooked, but to the frustrated individual who is already waiting for an opportunity to show his frustration, which may provoke aggressive response. This is typical occurrence resulting from herdsmen-farmers conflict.On the other hand, the herdsmen would always want to have well fed and healthy cattle and be able to make profits as well. When any of these expectations was not realizable, either by the herd (cattle) eating up and destroying the farmers' crops or that the farmer encroached on grazing reserves or use water reserved for cattle to irrigate their farms, aggression would be triggered. Either of the parties that felt frustrated to achieving their economic goals may decide to reprise as to show their displeasure and as a result, conflict will occur. Furthermore, a clear readiness for aggression could be likened to the Fulanis' justification on why they attacked ten Agatu communities of Benue State on February 10th, 2016 and massacred hundreds of persons. Mayah, Tukur and Adebayo, (2016) states that the leader of the Gan Allah Fulanis Association, the conflict was a reprisal attack against the killing of their prominent son by the people of Agatu who stole his cattle in April 2013. This shows three years of frustration or grudge against the Agatus and perhaps repeated unsuccessful plots for attack, until the farmers' reaction on crops destruction by the herds triggered the aggression from the herdsmen.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory is advocated by Karl Marx (1818-1883). This resulted from his marginalization caused by his revolutionary ideas and the misery of his alienation. *According to* Charles (2005)Marx's conflict ideology is an analysis of inequality under capitalism. Ritzer and Stepnisky, (2014) contributing to this states that capitalism is inherent conflict of interests between two

opposing classes. In their submission, they note that the most basic cause of the conflict between two groups is access to material resources. The important idea of the theory is that two opposing groups in the society always struggle for limited or scarce resources, where each group struggles to acquire more resources than the other as a result of scarcity, struggle and conflict occur. Idowu, (2017) in a related study notes that every group tries to protect its own interest, while blocking the progress of another. The land resources such as farmlands, crops, grass/pasture and fresh water etc. are scarce in Nigeria and needed by both farmers and herdsmen for sustenance of their various sources of need. The struggle for this results to conflict.

Conflict, however, would not only occur between herders and farmers as both strive with another in pursuit of these resources; but as either of the groups tries to intrude or exploit another's already secured and long acquired resources. Again, as the herders who usually take miles without their wives or certain about grazing fields in the various communities they visit, could possibly obtain sexual gratification forcefully or have their cattle fed in farm crops and would normally face confrontation for violation and destruction of crops. Similarly, conflict would likely arise when farmers who are in need of arable farmlands encroach into grazing reserves or criminals in the host communities try to steal cattle for economic gains.

Burning of Grass as a Socio-Cultural Reality of Fulani Herdsmen

Burning Grass illustrates the socio-cultural realities of the Fulani herdsmen. The novel revolves around elderly Fulani herdsmen, a leader of his people in the village of DokanTorro who is the central character – Mai Sunsaye. The tribulations of Mai Sunsaye and his family started when he was grazing his cattle in company of his sons, Hodio and Rikku. This explains the fact that cattle rearing among the Fulani pastoralists are a transgenerational occupation. This is shown when the grass was burnt; Mai Sunsaye and his sons graze their cattle. Their traditional occupation according to Gabriel and Blackduke (2018) reasonably sustain them despite the availability of training and access to other economic activities.

The writings of Cyprian Ekwensi like other Nigerian novelists such as Chinua Achebe, Elechi Amadi and Onuora Nzekwu present uniqueness in their use of traditional love, indigenous customs and oral tradition to bear testimony of creativity, *Burning Grass* are a thorough representation of reality of the African environment. Ekwensi through the Burning Grass affirms the existence of the valid culture of a people, the nomadic Fulani culture. The reality of the socio-cultural reality of Fulani people as represented in *Burning Grass* highlights existence, manifestations and the phenomena of life. Aniago (2012) explains that the reality of *Burning Grass* is best appreciated by characterization, geography, topography, language and the story line of the text. According to Aniago, the novel represents the peculiarity of history, culture and environment and a re-enactment of events of the social group.

Dogon-Daji (2016) explains that in *Burning Grass*, Cyprian Ekwensi pictures the totality of the Fulani herdsmen ways of life, struggle, hardship and diverse cultural values and occupation. These were highlighted through the characters such as Mai Sunsaye, Jalla, Hodio, Rikku and Leibe. According to Cyprian Ekwensi, there were both internal and external problems especially the rivalry with Ardo. The major character Mai Sunsaye fell sick with stroke, which is described as "Sokugo", a wandering disease with the sole purpose of sending him away from his home and his chieftaincy.

Challenges of Herdsmen

In *Burning Grass*, the narratives of Mai *Sunsaye*, the Chief of Dokan Toro gives details of the Fulani herdsmen. For all the years he has lived with his most cherished identity as a Fulani, *Mai Sunsaye* can tell from nature when it is was time to move South or North. Sitting beside his quiver full of arrows, he smelt the smoke fumes in the air and he knew it was of the burning grass: when the grass begins to burn, it is time for the herdsmen to be moving the cattle southward, to the banks of the great.

Tonah, (2006) asserts that the quest for protection and preservation of secured economic sources of livelihood appears to be the bane for continued conflict between herdsmen and farmers in different places. In West Africa, conflicts between farmers and nomadic cattle herders have been a common feature of economic activities for ages. Fasona and Omojola, (2005) add that the struggle for the use of agricultural land for planting and grazing is becoming fiercer and increasingly widespread in Nigeria, largely due to intensification of production activities that are necessitated by rising human population. Prior to 20th century, cattle rearing was prevalent in the Guinea, Sudan and Sahel Savanna belts where crop production was carried out on small scale only during the short rainy season. This gave cattle herders access to a vast area of grassland. However, the introduction of irrigated farming in the Savanna belt of Nigeria and the increased withering of pasture during dry season has made pasture less available for cattle.

According to Ofuoku and Isife (2009), the herdsmen had to move southward to the coastal zone where rainy season is longer and the soil retains moisture for long in search of greener pasture and fresh water for their cows. Olaniyan, Francis and Okeke-Uzosike (2015) add that as

the herders migrate southward where the grass is much lusher and often intrude into spaces long claimed or cultivated by settled farmers, conflicts usually ensued. Aliyu 2015 says that this conflict is believed to have existed since the beginning of agriculture and either increased or decreased in intensity or frequency depending on economic, environmental and other factors. Adeoye,(2017); Ofem and Inyang,(2014); Olaleye, Odutola, Ojo, Umar and Ndanitsa,(2010) state that in many places, herders have clashed with farmers and their host communities over cattle destruction of crops; farmers' encroachment on grazing reserves and indiscriminate bush burning by nomads which normally leads to loss of crops. Eyekpimi, (2016); Mikailu, (2016) believes that the seeming boldness of the perpetrators and mystery surrounding the real cause has continued to attract mixed perceptions. While many perceive it as mere farming, grazing land and water dispute; others see it as reprisals in defence of livestocks from banditary in farming communities.

In recent times, there have been prevalent cases of herders-farmers clashes in Nigeria. Ofuoku and Isife (2009) notes that in Densina, Adamawa State, 28 people were killed; while about 2,500 farmers were displaced and rendered homeless in a clash between them. In addition, Idowu (2017) submits that the violence has displaced more than 100,000 people in Benue and Enugu States and left them under the care of relatives or in makeshift Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps while many are still struggling to rebuild their lives. However, among the Tiv and other farmers in the North-Central, South-South, Southeast and Northeastern regions, cases of conflicts with herdsmen are endless. The resultant effects are usually loss of lives and crops, destruction of properties, displacement of persons, decline in income/savings; as well as threat to food and national security.

Gabriel and Blackduke (2018) recognize Ekwensi's account of herdsmen and farmers relationship in *Burning Grass* was devoid of conflict but was somewhat symbolic. This is far from many and intense farmer – herder conflicts that are on the rise in Nigeria. The Fulani herdsmen's movement has contributed to conflicts because of encroachment on farms, settlements, cattle rustling and crop damage. In the novel, Cyprian Ekwensi presents the feeling of nostalgia concerning farmers – herder's conflicts that lead to loss of lives and properties, displacement of persons and internal insecurity.

The migration towards the south in search of green grass for grazing results from the extreme weather condition during the harmattan creates great challenge to human beings, cattle and plants for food and grazing. In *Burning Grass* it is noticed that the challenge of rain as seen in the experience of Rikku and Belmuna,

this time too for the harmattan to blow dust into eyes and teeth, to wrinkle the skin. The trees were skeletons bleached in the sun-barren with peeling skins bruised by decades of thirst and hunger (p1).

The Fulani herdsmen face serious risk with their lives; they are confronted with sleepless nights and harassed during the day while also watching over their cattle through day and night. This surprising attitude is typified with the character of Jalla who states

Father, we are men of cattle, our cattle first and since it is our wish to take them to better pastures, all else must succumb to that wish (p.97).

According to Gabriel and Blackduke (2018) the Fulani herdsmen as presented to Ekwensi's creative work face the challenges of wild animals like lions, hyenas, leopards and pythons. To prevent the challenge from these wild animals as well as keep their cattle warm at right, they make up huge fire to keep these animals at bay. According to Ekwensi, the Fulani herdsmen who predominantly come from Northern Nigeria are known for their magic. They use their magic to cope with threats from wild animals and apply their magic for the herdsmen safety. They carry knives, swords, bows and poisoned arrows, daggers and more recently guns.

Every herdsman acquires skills that are very useful for their primary occupation. This is highlighted by the activities of Jalla:

The cattle moved. The wide span of their sweeping horns clacked against one another. Their humps danced. This was always the most difficult part of it, arousing then from their lethargy and getting them moving. Once they understood what was afoot, it was not so difficult. However, the smaller ones would always be in the way. Jalla lashed out with his whip. Kai! He made clucking noise with his tongue, bullying this, calling out to that one by name. Good herdsmen must know each one of his cattle by name, colour and habits (p.25).

Cattle herding is a difficult task. It experience and special skill which is acquired over a long period. This is why Gabriel and Blackduke (2018) note that the traditional Fulani pastoralists introduce their children into the occupation from childhood.

Nkemdiche (2018) states that cattle rustling are one of the challenges of the pastoral culture and tradition of the Fulani people. In *Burning Grass*, Ekwensi states that inorder to replenish stocks after losing herds to drought and other forces cattle rustling take place. For instance, Sunsaye's family loses their cattle to Ardo and his men who is his greatest rival for the chieftaincy of Dokan Toro. Ardo inflicts Sunsaye with the wandering disease called Sokugo by the Fulani. This made Ardo and his men to steal Sunsaye's cattle and burning of his huts.

Again, two other characters, Rikku and Belmuna were attacked by cattle rustlers on their way to Ligu's camp at Kontago. They lost some cattle and hoped to recover them the next morning. Stealing of cattle was common in *Burning Grass* and it is still a common social vice that occurs among human groups currently.

Burning Grass exposed the Fulani herdsmen as apprehensive and suspicious of government officials who collected tax on cattle rearing. In Ekwensi's creative fiction, herdsmen revised various means to evade tax. This is exemplified when Jalla told Rikku:

We shall split the hard in two

Jalla suggested. This was a ploy to evade tax collection.

Rikku you will go with some cattle to Ligu's camp (p.52).

Those challenges associated with cattle herding is still present and are experienced by the Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria.

Herdsmen and Farmers Conflicts

There are various reasons which has led to the conflict between herdsmen and farmers in Nigeria. These are thus:

Damaging or Grazing on Farmlands

Destruction of farmlands and crops by herdsmen is one of the major causes of conflict between herdsmen and farmers. Commenting on this Adebayo and Olaniyi, (2008) note that grazing on crops is most prominent in causing conflict between farmers and herdsmen. In a related study Adeoye (2017) posits that the deliberate grazing on farmlands, encroachment on grazing reserves, water holes and cattle paths; indiscriminate bush burning by herders as notable causes of conflict between the groups Nigeria. Again Adelakun, Aduro-gbangba and Akinbile (2015) note that in southwest Nigeria about 34.2% of the farmers and 6.7% of the pastoralists indicated that crop damage always triggers conflict between them. These explain the level of damage caused by grazing on farmlands.

In *Burning Grass*, conflict and rivalry is the order of the day as it can be related to the case of Mai Sunsaye and Ardo. The conflict between the two leads to Mai Sunsaye's wandering and the decimation of his home. Rivalry and conflict led to the death of Mai Sunsaye's son and that of Kantuma.

Climatic Change

The issue of climate change is another factor that has given rise to constant clash and conflict between herdsmen and farmers. The encroaching desert to the traditional abode of the pastoralists in the Sahel region has been identified as a factor contributing the continued clash. Herders migrate southward where they believe that the grass is much lusher and often intrude into spaces long claimed or cultivated by settled farmers. For instance, in Nasarawa State, Okoli and Atehe (2014) state that the situation has been exacerbated by the phenomenon of climate change, whose dynamics tend to have been aggravating natural resource conflicts across the region Nwosu (2017) observes that climate change and desert encroachment have made southward movements inevitable and confrontations with southern farming communities more frequent. This has significantly affected the psyche of Nigeria as a nation.

Long-Standing Disagreements

Commenting further on the herdsmen-farmers conflict, Burton (2016) notes that many of the recent attacks perpetrated by the Fulani herdsmen have stemmed from long-standing disagreements with host communities. Mayah, Tukur and Adebayo (2016) in their submission report that a Fulani leader alleged that the massacre of Agatu people by Fulani herdsmen was a reprisal attack against the killing of their prominent son by the people of Agatu in April 2013 who stole his cows. Burton, (2016) further notes that most significantly in the middle-belt, the conflict was found to have stemmed from a long history of feud over farm lands and herding. Preexisting communal conflicts have increased the level of violence as herdsmen turned militants in the face of urbanization, desertification and the indifference of the Nigerian government to their plight.

Fresh Water Scarcity

Audu, (2013) in another development argues that availability of water that is a major resource needed for agriculture is decreasing because of changes in global climate conditions. Farmers and pastoralists who are the main agricultural practitioners in Nigeria depend on water resources to sustain their vocations. Current access to water and grazing land have become seriously competitive which has led to violent conflicts on a regular basis between farmers and herdsmen.

Oli, Ibekwe and Nwankwo (2018) note that fresh water scarcity and insufficient rainfall are causes of social and economic ruins that have left the pastoralists at the mercy of sedentary farmers' communities.

Poor Access to Farm or Grazing Fields

In his own observation, Yahaya (2008) states that the herdsmen often leaves a large number of cattle in the care of children who do not know the consequences destruction of crops in the farmland.

In spite of the risk to their lives, sleepless in the night, harassed in day time the children watch the cattle through the night. This behaviour is not surprising because the Fulani herdsmen believe as Jalla said

Father we are men of cattle our cattle come first, and since it is our wish to take them to better pastures, all else must succumb to that wish (p.97).

This explains that most farmers are usually left their harvested crops on their farm unprotected while others' having poor yield which intentionally leaves them un-harvested for cattle to graze so that they could claim heavy compensation. This implicates Nigerian government in the accusation. Burton (2016) is of the opinion that government's silence on the need for increased grazing space has helped the conflict. He furher argues that the request is not new, as the Fulani herdsmen have previously called on the government to rectify the situation. He maintains that there has been little action on the part of the government to resolve these challenges. This is politicized for selfish reasons. This have created restlessness and impatience that has led to violent clashes.

Disobedience to Traditional Authorities

According to Ofem and Inyang (2014), the constant collection and demand for local crop and livestock (poultry) farmers from the host communities and refusal to pay by herdsmen results to conflict. This is often perceived as disregard and disrespect to the traditional authorities. As Ofuoku and Isife (2009) equally note, one of the major causes of the conflict in some states and communities is the disregard for the host traditional values and customs by the herdsmen.

This is likened to the nomadic Fulani in Ekwensi's *Burning Grass* who manipulate the colonial officers that come to count their cattle for taxation purposes, but these Fulani's do not contend with them, rather they deal with other Nigerians who are not Fulani. The Fulani herdsmen were apprehensive of government officials who collected tax paid for cattle rearing.

Population explosion in Urban Areas

The increase in erosion as observed by Burton (2016) affects farm and grass lands mostly needed by farmers for planting and herdsmen for grazing. This deprives the pastoralists of valuable grassland, that force them to attempt to expand their "grass kingdom". Ofem and Inyang, (2014) affirm that other issues identified were indiscriminate bush burning, sexual harassment of women by nomads, harassment of nomads by host youth, theft of cattle, cattle rustling and indiscriminate defecation by cattle along the road.

Gabriel and Blackduke, (2018) assert that cattle rustling affects pastoral culture and tradition. An example from *Burning Grass* highlights Sunsaye's family, their loss of cattle to Ardo and his men as a great revenge. *Burning Grass further* highlights that Ardo was Sunsaye's greatest rival for the chieftaincy of Dokan Toro. With the action of Ardo at night after he had struck Mai Sunsaye with wandering disease called Sokugo by the Fulani, he went with a group of men and stole Sunsaye's cattle and burnt his huts. Actions of this nature explains some of the issues mentioned by Cyprian Ekwensi in the *Burning Grass* as actions which lead to conflict between herdsmen and farmers.

RUGA Settlement and the Future of Nigeria

The major challenge of Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria is because of climate change, desertification and droughts in the Northern part of Nigeria. The incredible shrinking of Lake Chad Basin in the North East of Nigeria has drastically affected feeding and drinking sources for cattle. This has created pressure and prompted a southward migration of Fulani herdsmen for grazing. The problem of terrorist herdsmen roaming the Nigerian environment armed with sophisticated weapons, killing, raping and maiming citizens in the Middle Belt, South East and South West has become a great challenge.

The word Ruga means Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) settlement. It is a settlement where herders are found, particularly Fulani. Ruga Settlement is mend to settle migrant pastoral families simply means rural settlement in which animal farmers, not just cattle herders, will be settled in an organized place with provision of necessary and adequate basic amenities such as schools, hospitals, road networks, vet clinics, markets and manufacturing entities that will process and add value to meats and animal products. Ruga Settlement is to settle transient peaceful families essentially implies rustic settlement in which creature ranchers, not simply dairy cattle herders, will be settled in a sorted out.

The perennial herders/farmers conflicts, which has led to bloodletting in many parts of the country. The envisage establishment of Ruga Settlements in 94 locations in Adamawa, Benue, Ebonyi, Edo, Kaduna, Nassarawa, Oyo, Plateau, Taraba, Ekiti, Niger and Zamfara states have created uneasy condition. This is expected to cost N179 billion in 10 years with N70 slated to be spent in the first three years, according to the National Livestock Transformation Plan. The "Ruga Settlement" idea was an initiative of the National Economic Council (NEC) presented under the National Livestock Transformation Plan (2018-2027).

As a result of herders-farmers' conflict, the federal government feels the need to settle Fulani herds-men. The government wants to put them in a place to be

developed as a settlement, where they will be provided with water for the animals and pasture. Herdsmen face major challenges and are at crossroads due to declining availability of pasture, overgrazing, and expanding fatal conflicts between pastoralists and crop farmers.

According to National President of Miyetti Allah KautelHore socio-cultural organization, Alhaji Abdullahi Bodejo, the Fulani herders can relocate to Sambisa forest.

"The Fulani are ready to stay anywhere there is bush but number one is that there must be water which their cows can drink and there must be grasses for their cows to eat. If Sambisa has all those facilities, you do not need to introduce it to the Fulani; they would go there and herd their cows.

METHODOLOGY

The paper adopted a text centred methodology. This results from a valid unit textual analysis. The sampling method used comprises the selection of sample excerpts from the *Burning Grass.* The text is made up of the cultural and social realities of Nigeria. This comprises the sensitive and comprehensive image of Nigerian cultural representation, identity and social environment. The excerpts describes the interpretation of the findings inferred from the description as is seen in Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistic Model which reflects the usage of language by individual. This model of Halliday captures use of language and its social functions. The use of language in the text captures the actual realities of the Nigerian society as presented by Cyprian Ekwensi.

RESULTS

The result of the study showed that Cyprian Ekwensi in the *Burning Grass* presented the ways of life by the Fulani nomad, struggles and hardship. It highlights their diverse cultural values and corruption. The result further identifies the super natural powers which indicates one self depending on the usage of superstition. The paper further shows that supernatural acts thrives on individuals depending on people's state of mind.

The paper indicated the character and characteristics of people and custom. It portrays the Fulani customs in relation to cattle rearing. The paper submits the findings about the conflict over values and elimination of contenders as a result of disagreement occurring as a result of divergent interests.

DISCUSSION

The findings in the *Burning Grass* indicates the nature of the pastorial Fulani culture. This is indicated by the character of Mai Sunsaye and his family. Examination of the *Burning Grass* exposed the level of hardship, torment by supernatural forces as explained by experiences. The discussion of the expresses the Fulani man and woman as constantly on the move in search of food. The writing of the paper captures narrative nature of the text as a historical occurrence. This contains the actual mistrial realities. This are identifiable as a result of experiences, occurrences, existences and manifestations of life.

CONCLUSION

Burning Grass is a fictional work, which revolves around the movement of the Fulani and their cattle. The novel exposed the hardship, torment by supernatural means and conflicts experienced in the nomadic practices identified in the novel. The novel highlights the totality of the Fulani people and their cattle, migration and the search for appropriate environment for grazing. The novel presents the spirituality of the Fulani people as a factor of their culture hence every successful man in such society "shar ro" must have chars and badhuhu. The pastoral and nomadic nature of the Fulani society is presented and shown through the character of Mai Sunsaye. Mai Sunsaye is shown as a man who takes his family over everything and who has extreme love for Rikku and his wife Shaitu. Ardo on the other hand, is a man who has complete hatred for Mai Sunsaye and his family. The sore point of the Fulani culture is their believe that their cattle has more value above every other thing. Cyprian Ekwensi was a visionary fictional writer. His works are for the masses. It was for everyone and has no targeted audience. The masses love good stories which improves their literacy. The vision of Cyprian Ekwensi is his perception of African literature. This captures literacy based on characters and psychology.

RECOMMENDATIONS

– Because of the increase in conflicts between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers in recent time it is recommended that there should be rules to resolve migration related conflicts.
– There should be procedures for obtaining permission to more cattle and compensation for damaged crops and livestock.
– Special grasses could be grown in specified localities for herdsmen who should be encouraged to put their cattle in ranches.
– Government should create cattle grazing fields in the six geo-political zones in Nigeria and out-law open grazing of cattle. The National and State legislative

should be consulted and enabling laws passed for this to have a constitutional backing.

– There should be adequate orientation and education for herdsmen on the sanctity of human lives. Proper communication medium should be used to convey grievances from both parties instead of resorting to conflict.

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