

A Mandara International Peace Park

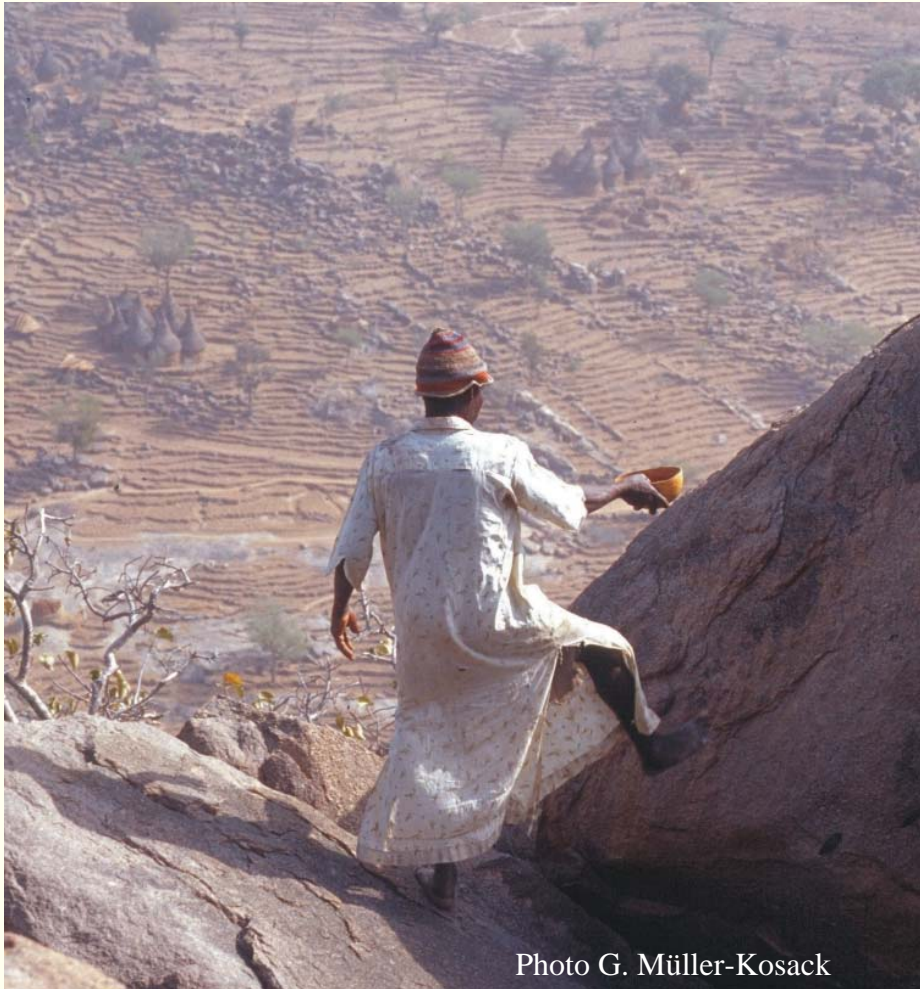


Photo G. Müller-Kosack

A project respectfully submitted
to the governments of
Nigeria and Cameroon

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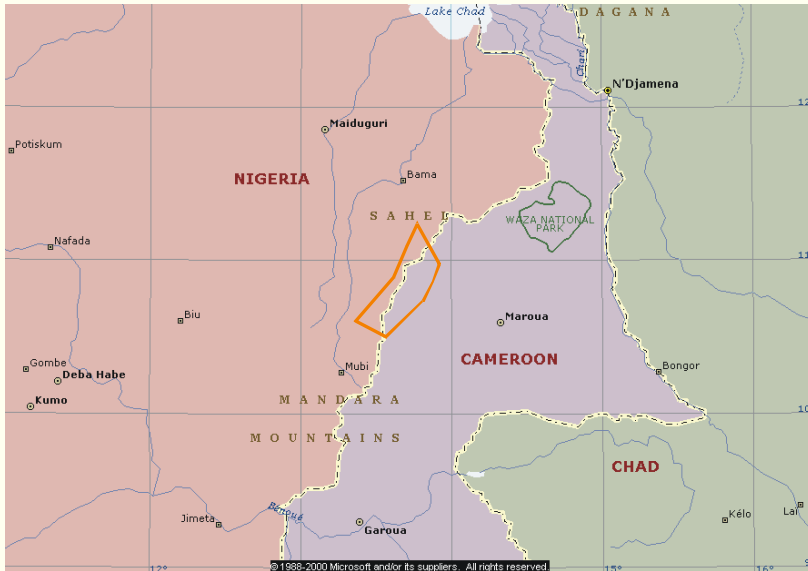
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A project for sustainable development and eco-cultural tourism in the
Mandara Mountains of northeast Nigeria and northern Cameroon

Abstract

The Mandara mountains are the home of numerous ethnic groups who have over the centuries developed forms of agroforestry that have continued to sustain high population densities in the face of raiding and other threats from states based in the surrounding plains. The demonstrable sustainability of the montagnard way of life is unfortunately associated with extreme poverty and an average purchasing power parity (PPP) still less than US\$1 a day.

In this situation, we suggest, Mandara communities' remarkable socio-cultural capital constitutes an investment that can, in conjunction with elements of the natural environment, be mobilized to support low impact eco-cultural tourism. Besides the participation of local and national authorities - we recommend the establishment of an International Peace Park - the involvement of Mandara mountain communities is a necessary and integral part of any such development. This will require a sensitive, anthropologically informed, approach to local communities.



Map 1a. The location of the NW Mandara mountain area of special interest in NE Nigeria and N Cameroon



Map 1 b. The location of the NW Mandara mountain area of special interest in relation to physical features.

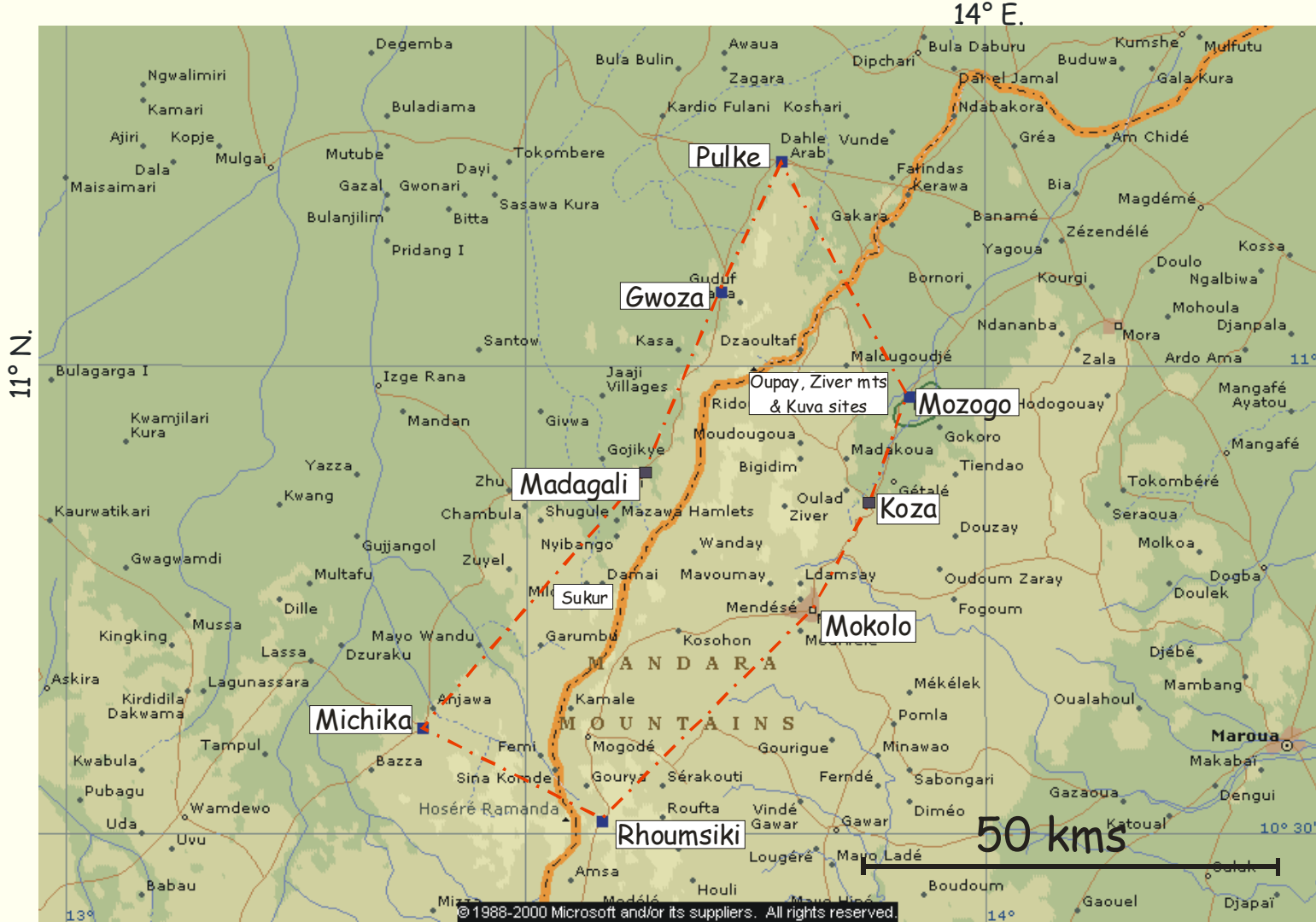


Only a pro-poor approach can render eco-cultural tourism viable since *it is the montagnards' crafts, agriculture and lifeways that constitute the primary resource* capable of attracting national and international tourist clienteles. But montagnard experience of the wider world has since precolonial times been for the most part unpleasant and marked by exploitation. Grassroots involvement, with specific educational and formational goals, is required if tourism is to contribute to sustainable development.

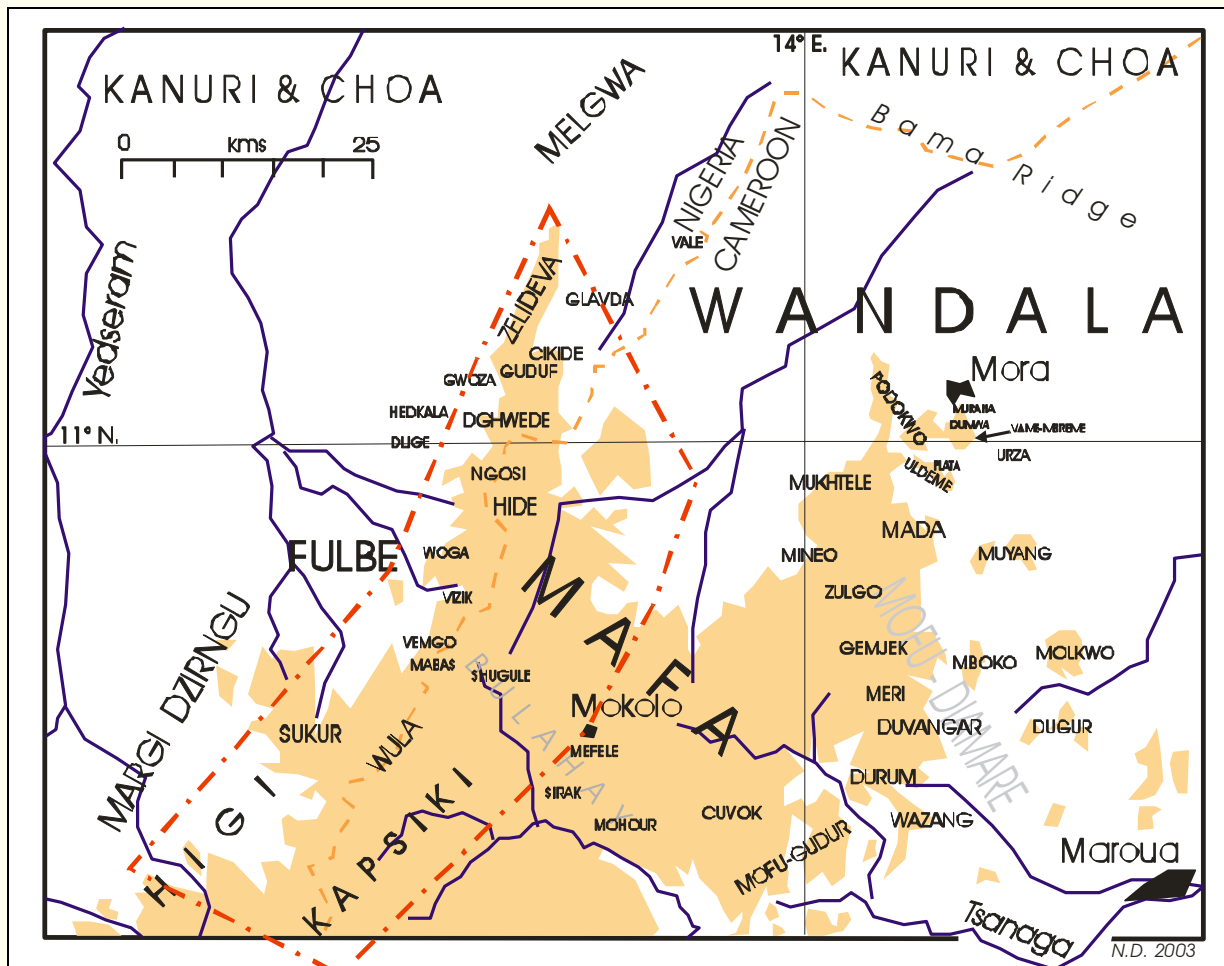
The region and its cultures

The Mandara Mountains are a rugged, low altitude, mountain range that straddles the international boundary between northeastern Nigeria and northern Cameroon. Here we look south from Mt Oupay through light harmattan dust towards Mt Tamde and the Sukur plateau. On a clear day one can see the peaks of Rhoumsiki.





We are concerned here primarily with the northern and western portion of the Mandara mountains, bordering the plains of Borno and Lake Chad, and particularly with the area that contains the range's highest peaks and finest sites. This lies within an area delimited by the towns of Pulke, Gwoza, Madagali and Michika in Nigeria and, in Cameroon, Mozogo, Koza, Mokolo and the village of Rhoumsiki. (The map shows the international boundary before recent minor adjustments.)



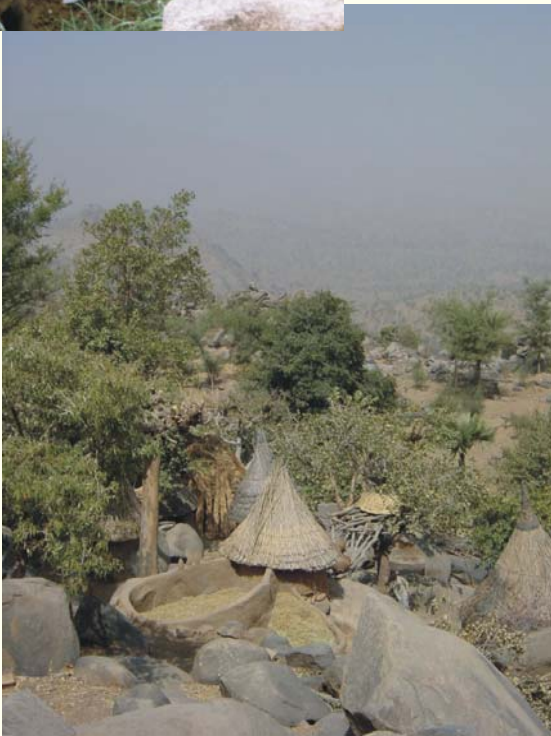
Ethnic groups of the Mandara mountains and surrounding plains.

Over many centuries the region's numerous ethnic groups have dealt with Sudanic states of the plains. They have survived raiding and trading, a jihad, German, French and British colonization and administration, and eventual incorporation into the independent nations of Cameroon and Nigeria. Despite locust-caused famines, at times brutal policies of taxation and resettlement, limited transport, health, and education infrastructure, and the impacts of Islam and Christianity, these communities have maintained themselves and, over the decades, increased their numbers — to a far greater extent than their standard of living. They provide excellent models of sustainability under objectively adverse circumstances.



A remarkable agricultural system

In a boulder-strewn and often spectacular mountain landscape, sandy granitic soils, relatively higher rainfall, and cooler temperatures have been expertly exploited by the montagnards who have transformed their rocky environment by ubiquitous terracing of slopes on which they cultivate a richly elaborated range of sorghums and millets, besides legumes, tubers, and other crops of both African and exotic origins. Even in the most densely populated regions where fields rarely lie fallow and chemical fertilizers are virtually unused, 'The mountain farmers have perfected an effective agricultural system which is suited to their specific environment, maintains soil fertility and would seem difficult to do better'.* When rainfall is normal, they cover their own food requirements and earn modest incomes. Combined with the raising of livestock - focusing on bulls and small stock necessarily contained half the year in stalls - management of trees and shrubs that approaches gardening, and limited cash-cropping of cotton and peanuts, this system maintains densities that can reach 200 inhabitants/km² at production energy costs of less than a quarter those of Euro-American agribusiness.



* Hallaire, A. 1991. *Paysans montagnards du Nord-Cameroun: les monts Mandara*, p. 238. Paris: Éditions de l'ORSTOM.



The beauty and interest of cultural landscapes produced by centuries of montagnard effort have been recognized by UNESCO which in 1999 listed Sukur as Nigeria's first World Heritage site. Sukur, an ancient center of the iron trade, is located just across the border from the spectacular volcanic plugs in Kapsiki territory around Rhoumsiki. The scenery is magnificent, and while mammalian wildlife is limited, there is a rich avifauna and a fascinating botany.

The house of the chief of Sukur.

Rhoumsiki





A potter uses a forming technique unique to Africa.

Lively crafts

Montagnard agroforestry is sustained by vigorous local crafts, and among the Mafa and several other societies, there are caste specialists. While the smelting of iron ore in a unique form of furnace is nowadays undertaken only in the form of re-enactments, smiths produce a full range of tools, weapons and ornaments. Brass casting is practiced by Kapsiki. Potters, often the wives of smiths, manufacture high quality terracotta wares for utilitarian, social and ritual purposes. Cook pots, beer jugs, brewing vats, and other types of pots are produced for local use, and sold in regional markets and beyond. Many types of craft products including basketry, made by women or men depending upon ethnic affiliation, are produced in every household, and while the mud domes of traditional rooms are often formed by experts, most of the remarkable compound architecture is built by family members.

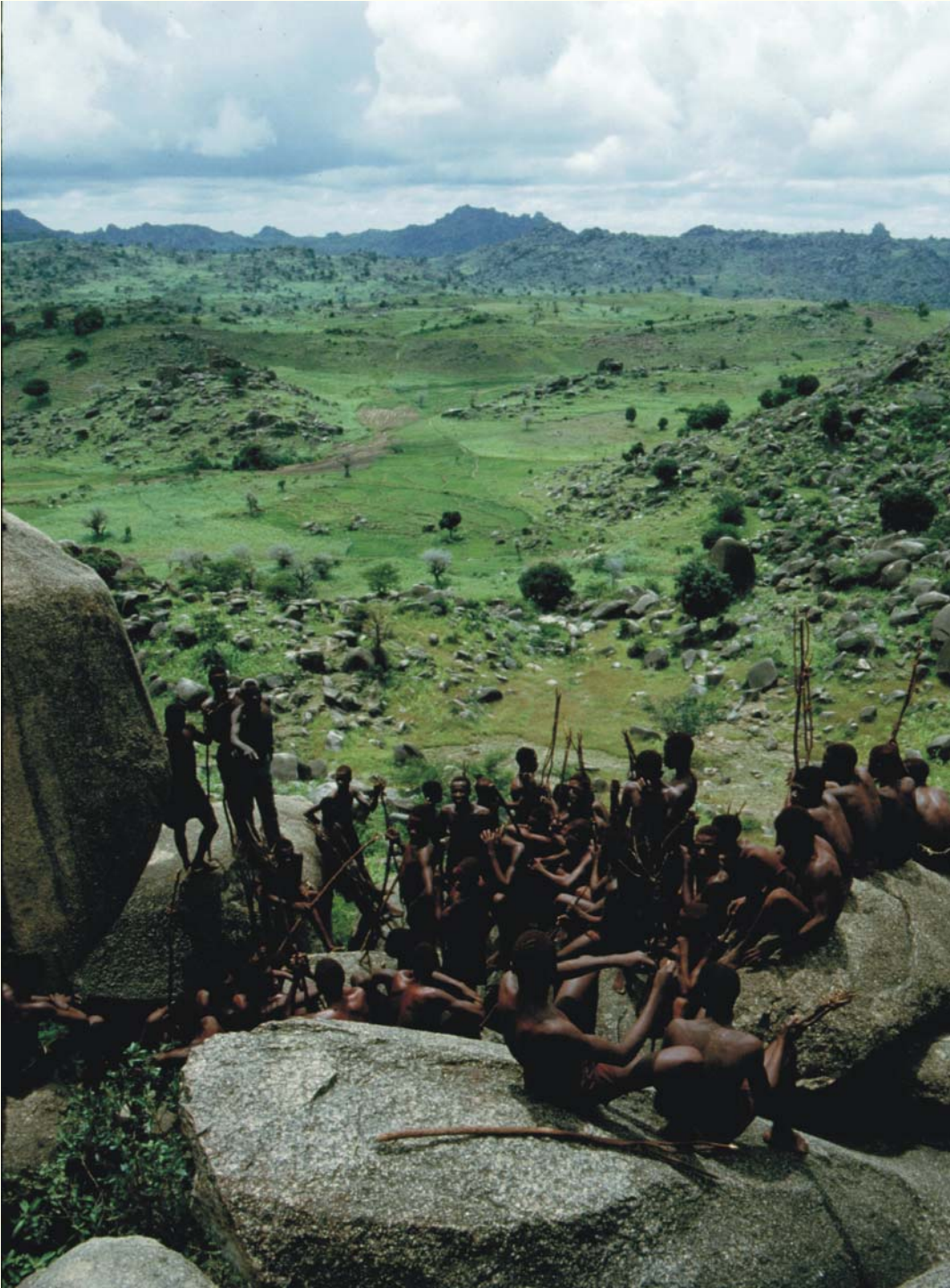


Smiths at work in a Mandara forge using a stone hammer to beat out iron.



Vigorous cultural life

This thriving material culture is complemented by an equally flourishing cultural life that looks back to prehistoric roots in the Neolithic and Iron Age of Central Africa. About five hundred years ago remarkable stone-built monuments were being constructed near Koza on the flanks of the Oupay massif, at 1449 m. the highest point of the mountain chain. Recent research suggests that they may have served as rain shrines.



These and later integrative institutions did not inhibit the development of a kaleidoscopic array of local cultures. Amongst other manifestations, including a remarkable musical tradition, these maintain varied and often photogenic ceremonial cycles - bull and harvest festivals, the initiation of young men, and the like - while jealously retaining a degree of independence despite the partial integration of traditional structures of authority into the modern states.

Initiates at Sukur, 1992



Tourism today and its potential for tomorrow

By judicious choice of connecting flights to Maroua (Cameroon) and Yola or Maiduguri (Nigeria), travelers can reach the proposed park from London and Paris in a day. At present, international tourism in the Nigerian side is virtually non-existent. Although Sukur is now receiving more visitors, tourists are few and far between. On the Diamaré plain in Cameroon, Maroua offers a limited tourism infrastructure, but its hotels and guides cater much more to visitors to Waza National Park and to big game hunters than to hikers and others who might enjoy the Mandara mountains. While bus tours occasionally pass through Mokolo and stop off for half an hour at the Djingliya artisanal cooperative, the contribution of tourism to the local economy is best gauged by the fact that the latest statistics on "tourism" in Cameroon available on the web relate to 1995 when under a quarter of a million non-residents visited the country for an average of 2.06 days. In other words most foreign visitors were not in the country long enough to visit the Mandara mountains. The tourists who in any one year visit Rhoumsiki, the most "developed" tourist site in the mountains number only in the low hundreds. Far fewer participate in locally advertised treks through the Mandara mountains. This is hardly surprising since information available from travel agents is sparse and phenomenally inaccurate.



The Mandara region on the World Wide Web

Despite a wealth of geographical, anthropological and other data on the Mandara mountains and its peoples, as seen for example on the www.mandaras.info web site, much of the information intended for tourists is muddled, misleading, and perpetrates the worst stereotypes of a pristine Africa existing out of time.

Dance to celebrate the initiates, Sukur.

According to columbusguides.com 'the village of Rhumsiki ... features a maze of paths linking the small farms known as the Kapsiki: the Kirdi live here, whose customs and folklore have changed little for centuries.' Farfungplaces.com tells us 'There are 120 tribes or so in this northeastern region. At one time they were part of Old Sudan, then they migrated to Nigeria, then over into Cameroon.' Under the heading 'Rhumsiki is a village,' jat.esmartweb.com informs us that '.. most people here are Muslims. Cameroon law presently allows each man to have four wives at one time. For Muslims, this is quite a restriction to impose'

Clearly any attempt to develop eco-cultural tourism in the Mandara region will require the education of international tour guide firms besides the formation of the host communities.



Developing tourism

The development of a form of eco-cultural tourism that can help sustain Mandara mountain communities requires international, trans-national, national, and local action and initiatives.

Young women with calabash hats at Tourou market, Cameroon

We will deal with each of these, focusing on the local situation with which we are most familiar and best qualified as anthropologists to comment since we have worked in the region since 1984. Above all there must be local action and initiatives. In what follows we focus on the question of how montagnard communities can become effective hosts in a small scale tourist industry.



The *Gloriosa superba* lily



Varieties of sorghum, the staple crop

International aspects

Most importantly, Nigeria and Cameroon have accepted the World Court decision relating to their disputed boundary and a Nigeria-Cameroon Mixed Commission has peacefully and cooperatively implemented the ruling. Both countries deserve the world's respect for this triumph of good sense and diplomacy.

In 1999 Sukur was declared an UNESCO World Heritage Site under the category of 'Cultural Landscape'. More recently the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) has been involved with the Cameroonian Ministry of Culture in the conservation of the Kuva monuments in the context of its Africa 2009 program.

There could be no better time to create and dedicate a joint International Peace Park.



The Prefect of Mokolo installs the Mayor of Mozogo. Such ceremonies are attended by Nigerian counterparts.

Trans-national aspects

The establishment of a trans-border Mandara mountain park would facilitate the development of tourism to the benefit of both nations. 'Several transboundary parks are specifically designated as Peace Parks, intended to provide a peaceful solution to a conflict or potential conflict or contribute to the rehabilitation of an area after a conflict. There has been a dramatic increase in transboundary parks in recent years ...'*

Visa requirements for both Nigeria and Cameroon currently make it hard for tourists who are not part of organized groups to enter their countries, and it is difficult to cross the international frontier. A trans-border park within which visitors from either country could freely circulate would transform tourism in this area.

Even during the former trans-national dispute, there was active and friendly interaction across the frontier at all levels, from administrators attending each others' national holidays to formal and informal trade and social interactions. These provide the context of cooperation needed for the development of an attractive eco-cultural tourism package.

* Ali, A. 2002. A Siachen Peace Park: the solution to a half-century of international conflict? Mountain Research and Development 22(4): 316-319.



A new museum built by Adamawa State authorities at Madagali

National aspects

There already exist in both countries the administrative institutions at the national, state/provincial, and local government levels required to develop and implement policies regarding tourism. These include amongst others: the Nigerian Commission on Museums and Monuments, Arts Councils, Tourism Boards, and Community Associations. Their disparate and piecemeal activities will need to be integrated and reoriented in order stimulate and to facilitate initiatives generated at the local level.

Local initiatives

There already exist in the region a vast variety of institutions and individuals whose dispersed activities could productively be mobilized and integrated into a broader program of the kind we advocate. Here we can only point to a small sample of these, both positive and negative.

The Sukur Development Association was founded in 1976 and in 1992 established the Sukur 'Mini' Museum with support of the Adamawa State Arts Council. The 'museum' was a large room with a mud domed roof. Traditional objects - costume, implements, weapons, ceramics - were initially on display. However fears for their security caused the owners to remove them. The museum then became the temporary home of anthropologists and other visitors, Nigerian and expatriate. A second structure was built in 1996 with traditional 'furnishings' incorporated - a grinding stand, hearth - with the prospect of objects being hung on the walls. A local man employed by the Arts Council of Adamawa State as 'interpreter/guardian' later attended a course on museum management at the National Museum at Jos. He now works in Sukur for the National Museums of Nigeria. The site was declared a State Monument in 1997 before becoming a UNESCO World Heritage in 1999.

This event subsequently led to the quite inappropriate suggestion that a '100-bedroom countryside resort could be put in place to serve as the main recreational facility ... [with] helicopters and airstrip provision for fast tourist shuttles and trans-country air transportation ...'* While thankfully none of these 'improvements' has materialized, in February of 2003 the Sukur Yawal festival 'attracted prominent sons and daughters, government officials, experts from UNDP and visitors from far and near.' **

*Ofulue, G. 9 September 2000. Sukur: Nigeria's own wonder world. *Punch* 17(1019):22.

**Adzu, B. 15 March 2003. Evoking tradition at Sukur: the Yawal Sakun Festival. *Weekly Trust* (<http://mtrustonline.com/sukur1532003.htm>).



**Re-enactment
of the
traditional
smelting of
iron.**

In Cameroon tourism has been longer but scarcely better established. Van Beek* describes how in 1970 German, French and Italian travel agencies offered tours through the Mandara mountains as 'the touristic highpoint of a trip in Cameroon'. Such tours were monopolized by Norcamtours, a government agency. A hotel was built at Rumsiki where tourists could visit the chief, a smith's forge, consult a diviner, and 'take pictures of women at the village well'. When the visitors complained that the locals wore clothes, Norcamtours solved the problem by advising them to 'take off their modern clothes, and emerge in traditional (un)dress'. A few people, mostly smiths, diviners and young men who acted as guides, made some money from these exchanges. Since 1970 Rhoumsiki is said to have the distinction of being 'the only village that we have visited in Cameroon that has special "staged" demonstrations for tourists. ... All were created for the "show" to raise funds for the village.' Rhoumsiki remains a tourist destination, and a local entrepreneur has built up a reputable tour company which now operates throughout Cameroon.

* van Beek, W.E.A. 1986. L'état, ce n'est pas nous: cultural proletarianization in Cameroon. In *State and local community in Africa*, W. van Binsbergen, F. Reyntjens, and G. Hesselings (eds.), p.81. Brussels: CEDAF/ASDOC.



Mafa basketry

Potters prepare to
fire their wares



The 'route touristique' through the Cameroon Mandara includes a visit to Mabas (iron smelting furnaces, charming houses and a fine view over to Nigeria) and a stop at a privately run Campement (motel) in Mokolo, the craft shop/artisanat at Djingliya (simple accommodation available) run under the auspices of the Catholic mission. Local women also make baskets, pottery and other craft products some of a non-traditional "tourist art" nature. At Mozogo the Gokoro park offers the chance to explore a rare example of Sudanian forest with an especially rich bird life.



A private exhibition by the side of the track between Mokolo and Koza.



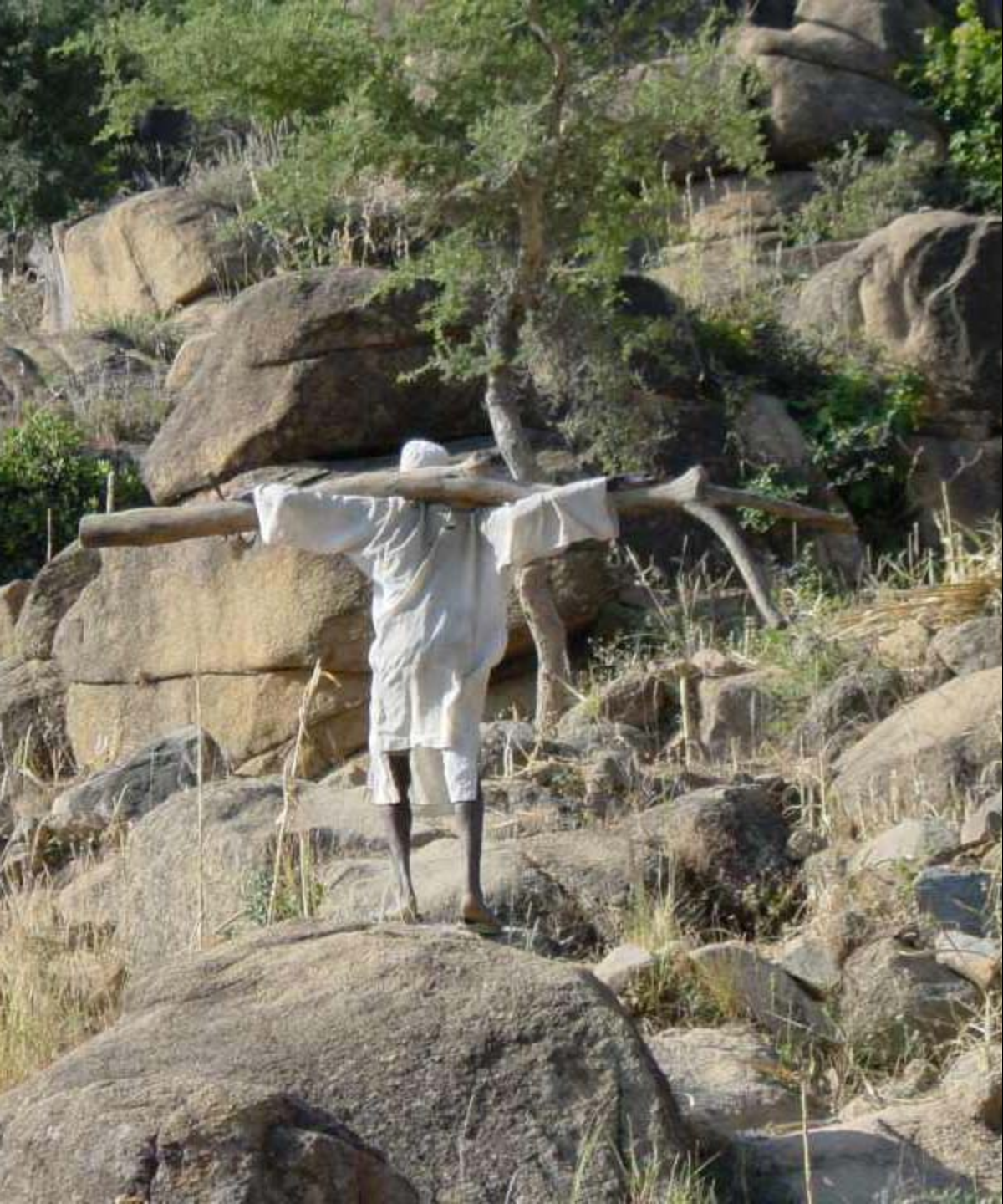
Other initiatives have been taken independently by communities and even by individuals. The people of the Ziver massif, once hostile to outsiders, now bring soft drinks and bottled beer from Mokolo to sell to thirsty trekkers. However visitors must engage local guides in order to avoid sacred sites and the wrath of locals— sometimes enforced by bows and arrows. Near Mokolo, on the main road from Maroua, Dokwaza, an enterprising master smith, built a 'traditional' Mafa furnace and performed 'mini-smelts' for tourists.



A dense network of ways - hiking trails already and often superbly constructed - remains to be discovered ...



... and there are many other examples ... but nothing that links these initiatives in a larger framework.



The necessity of a 'pro-poor' approach to tourism

In order for eco-cultural tourism to succeed, enabling montagnards to remain in their mountains while enjoying a better and sustainable standard of living, a 'pro-poor' approach is essential.* Pro-poor tourism is tourism that generates net benefits for the poor. Benefits may be economic, but they may also be social, environmental or cultural. This approach has much in common with other alternative forms of tourism: sustainable tourism, eco-tourism and community-based tourism, and fair, just, equitable tourism. The differences are to be found in the emphasis on countries of the South, on the poor rather than on the environment, and on their desire for access to opportunities beyond those of the local community.

* Ashley C., D. Roe and H. Goodwin. 2001. Pro-poor tourism strategies: making tourism work for the poor. A review of experience, p. 2. Pro-Poor Tourism Report No. 1. Overseas Development Institute.



A meeting with ward heads and elders to discuss archaeological research at Kuva

Members of the National Assembly and other notables visit the Kuva monument

A set of six principles characteristic of pro-poor tourism has been identified by Ashley. We address the two that are most critical to the current discussion, *participation* and *holistic livelihood*, and suggest how they might be realized in the Mandara mountains. Through *participation* 'poor people must participate in tourism decisions if their livelihood priorities are to be reflected in the way tourism is developed. Education and mobilization of village communities is essential and must be tackled with sensitivity to cultural norms.' Thus for example an initial meeting with chiefs, ward heads and elders is a prerequisite to any and all forms of cooperation. Montagnard communities have suffered a long history of exploitation and are sensibly skeptical of proposals from beyond their hills.



Cantonal and other chiefs are all part of the planning and decision making process



Simple resthouses fulfill the needs of visitors

Holistic livelihoods means that 'the range of livelihood concerns of the poor — economic, social and environmental, short-term and long-term — needs to be recognized. Focusing on cash or jobs is inadequate.' The founding of the Sukur Museum was a local initiative of the Sukur Development Association. This comprises men and women living at Sukur who continue to live by farming, as well as Sukur practicing a variety of jobs and professions in nearby towns and in cities elsewhere in Nigeria. There may be differences of opinion about what is best for Sukur, but the wishes of those living at Sukur generally have priority. In Cameroon every jurisdiction, rural and urban, has locally elected councilors. Consequently, elders living on the mountain slopes as well as educated younger people living in new settlements below may come together to discuss tourism strategies acceptable to all concerned. These will include respect for and protection of traditional ways and sacred sites, the formation of local guides, masons and conservators, the upgrading of 'campements' and rest houses, and other supplemental forms of local employment for men, women and children. None of this can be achieved in a heavy-handed, top-down manner.

Sukur children and their school



A pro-poor approach to tourism has the potential to enable montagnards to continue to live in the mountains, rather than relocating to the hot and less salubrious plains to be nearer roads, schools and health centers, or to the towns in the region. This 'descent from the hills' began forcibly in colonial times and has continued since independence in 1960. Such downward migration has environmental as well as social consequences: 'Quand les gens descendent, la terre les suit' ('When the people move down, the soil follows.'). But resettlement is slowed or even reversed by the building of health care centers and primary schools in hard-to-reach mountain villages, and the construction of dirt roads accessible by motorbikes and 4x4 vehicles, all already in progress in some areas. The well established system of terrace agriculture can be augmented with income generated from an approach to tourism that enables and requires peasants and artisans to become teachers of sustainability, and of traditional skills and knowledge. **For indeed the North and the West have much to learn from these inhabitants of the South.**



Acknowledgements

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Additional photographs by Gerhard Müller-Kosack, Frank Kense and Branwen Hennig.

Maps used with permission from Microsoft Corporation as made available through Microsoft® Encarta® 2003.

Sources on the cultures of the Mandara Mountains

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