

# CONTENTS

<b>List of Figures, Tables and Plates</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>General Acknowledgements</b>	<b>xx</b>
<b>Technical Notes</b>	<b>xx</b>
<i>Spelling convention of Dghwede words</i>	<i>xx</i>
<i>About maps and illustrations</i>	<i>xx</i>
<b>Preface (with maps of the region)</b>	<b>xxi</b>

## **GENERAL INTRODUCTION** **25**

<i>Recent times of devastation</i>	25
<i>Contradicting circumstances</i>	27
<i>A summary of devastation</i>	29
<i>The hills remain unsafe</i>	30
<i>The presumed impact on the environment</i>	31
<i>The latest developments</i>	31

## **For the survivors of today and the historians of tomorrow** **33**

<i>A history in fragments from the grassroots</i>	35
<i>Azaghvana – 'I say'</i>	36
<i>A comprehensive summary of the three parts</i>	41
<i>Why we use the ethnonym Dghwede</i>	47

## **P A R T O N E**

### **THE GWOZA HILLS BEFORE BOKO HARAM**

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Chapter 1.1 The Gwoza hills between 1994 and 2009</b>	<b>51</b>
Going around the foothills	51
Visit to Dghwede and Gvoko	56
Mountains versus plain	59
Christianity and Islam	61
Rise of Islamic conversion in the hills from 2005 onwards	62
<b>Chapter 1.2 Mapping ethnographic complexities</b>	<b>63</b>
Survey circumstances and acknowledgements	63
The administrative background structure of Gwoza LGA in 1994	63
The boundaries of villages and wards	64
Language distribution based on village and ward boundaries	66
Ethnicity based on village and ward boundaries	68
Working out population estimates based on ethnolinguistic belonging	70
Localised issues of population density and resulting conflict areas	71
<b>Conclusion and orientational map of the wider region</b>	<b>72</b>

## PART TWO

### KEY SOURCES TOWARDS A SHARED SUBREGIONAL PAST

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Chapter 2.1 Between the pre-colonial Wandala and the DGB sites</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	77
<b>The role of Kirawa in early written sources</b>	78
<b>The contemporaneity of the DGB sites</b>	80
<b>Mentions of hill areas by Leo Africanus</b>	86
<b>Tribute arrangements and the link to slave raiding in the hills</b>	88
<i>The threat of pre-colonial slave raiding according to Dghwede oral accounts</i>	90
<i>The pre-colonial boundary between Fulbe and Wandala according to oral accounts</i>	93
<b>The roots of the sun and the moon legend</b>	94
<i>The ethnoarchaeological potential of the tale</i>	94
<b>Katala-Wandala of the hills</b>	97
<b>Conclusion</b>	99
<b>Chapter 2.2 Unsettling colonial years</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	101
<b>Coming under German and British rule</b>	102
<i>Readjustments under British Mandateship</i>	103
<b>The Dghwede version of Hamman Yaji's arrest and death</b>	105
<b>Mountain versus Plain: pagan reorganisation and the issue of self-governance</b>	109
<i>The issue of 'Pagan Reorganisation'</i>	110
<i>Western education for the development of a new colonial local elite</i>	111
<b>The failure of the 1950s resettlement scheme</b>	112
<i>The file 'Gwoza Terracing' – Stanhope White and the stone wall terraces of Ghwa'a</i>	113
<i>Limankara and Disa become the newly planned resettlement area</i>	114
<b>The killing of Iwan Buba – the 'Gwoza Affair'</b>	116
<i>Tada Nzige's oral account of the 'Gwoza Affair'</i>	121
<b>The process of Christianity</b>	126
<b>Two Plebiscites on the route to independence</b>	129
<b>Conclusion</b>	131

## PART THREE

### DGHWEDE ORAL HISTORY RETOLD

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>Chapter 3.1 Names and places</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	139
<b>Two colonial sources</b>	140
<i>Moisel's (1913) view of the Gwoza hills</i>	140
<i>Dghwede settlement units according to captain Lewis (1925)</i>	144

<b>List of Names and places according to 1994 settlement survey and oral history</b>	<b>146</b>
Goze and Gharghuze	147
Conclusion	148
<b>Chapter 3.2 Warfare and settlement history</b>	<b>151</b>
Introduction	151
War alliances between northern and southern Dghwede	151
The war between Gudule and Vaghagaya and/or Mughuze	153
War with the 'Matakam' (Mafa) and others	154
Conclusion	155
<b>Chapter 3.3 The Tur tradition in its wider subregional context</b>	<b>157</b>
Introduction	157
The Tur tradition deriving from Mbra across the Gwoza hills	158
Migratory traditions and the proximity of the DGB sites	160
The significance of the Godaliy tradition	163
'Johode' as early arrival zone for migrants coming from 'Fitire'	164
Conclusion	166
<b>Chapter 3.4 The Dghwede house of Mbra</b>	<b>169</b>
Introduction	170
Difficulties in compiling a Dghwede lineage tree	171
<i>The three 'brothers' or four 'sons' of Dghwede-Mbra</i>	171
<b>The Mughuze-Ruwa</b>	173
<i>Vaghagaya</i>	175
<i>Pre-Korana lineage groups</i>	179
<i>Kwalika and its possible link to the Dagha of Kadzgwara descent</i>	179
<b>Thakara of Ghwa'a</b>	181
Conclusion	183
<b>Chapter 3.5 About outsiders as founders</b>	<b>185</b>
Introduction	185
Hembe and Mughuze	186
The story of the founding ancestor of the Zelidva	188
Similarities and differences	190
Conclusion	190
<b>Chapter 3.6 Relations and relationships</b>	<b>193</b>
Introduction	193
A provisional list of social relationship terms	195
<b>Clan and lineage groups</b>	196
<i>Exogamous clans and lineages according to Mathews (1934)</i>	197
<i>Exogamy rules</i>	198
<b>Generational grouping and other family connections</b>	200
<b>A Dghwede model of local group formation</b>	203
Conclusion	205

<b>Chapter 3.7 Specialist lineage groups</b>	<b>207</b>
Introduction	207
Alternatives of specialist lineage descent through Wasa and Tasa	208
The Dagha the peacemaker lineage according to Baba Musa	209
Amuda and <i>Cissus quadrangularis</i> as divine food	211
How the Gazhiwe became cornblessers of Dghwede	212
Ritual experts can have specific vulnerabilities	213
Dagha and Gaske past and now	214
Conclusion	215
<b>Chapter 3.8 Interacting with the seasons</b>	<b>217</b>
Introduction	217
The bi-annual calendrical cycle	218
The labour-intensive phases of the agricultural year and the lunar months	222
The seven moon phases and the days of the week	223
Two field accounts about interacting with the seasons	224
<i>Bulama Ngatha's description of the bi-annual calendar</i>	224
<i>Rainmaker Ndruwe Dzuguma about his seasonal activities</i>	229
Rainy and dry season in cultural-historical perspective	232
Locality aspects of the Dghwede ritual cycle	234
Conclusion	235
<b>Chapter 3.9 Distribution and custodianship of local shrines</b>	<b>237</b>
Introduction	237
Types of shrines	238
The meaning of <i>khalale</i> (lineage shrine)	239
<i>Example of the Vaghagaya lineage shrine</i>	240
The sequence goes from the house to the group site	242
List of <i>thaghaya</i> (seventh born) as custodians across Dghwede	243
List of places of ritual function across Dghwede	244
Conclusion	246
<b>Chapter 3.10 Working the terraced land</b>	<b>249</b>
Introduction	249
General model of Dghwede farm layout	249
Terraces and soils	254
Men and women and other arrangements	256
Not only was the making of agricultural tools essential	259
The importance of livestock	261
John Zakariya (2006) about changes in local resource management	264
<i>Livestock keeping past and present</i>	264
<i>Leasing out of land to pay a son's bridewealth</i>	264
<i>Trees could be leased out as well</i>	265
<i>A new system of short-leasing of land in the plains</i>	265
Reversal of significance between the guinea corn and millet years	266
List of useful trees	267
<i>Euphorbia trees as fencing</i>	272

<b>Useful grasses, weeds and vermin</b>	272
<i>Useful grasses</i>	273
<i>A list of weeds</i>	274
<i>A list of vermin in Dghwede</i>	275
<b>Medicine to increase the yield of crops and domestic animals</b>	276
<b>Conclusion</b>	277
<b>Chapter 3.11 The architecture of a traditional house</b>	<b>279</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	279
<b>The landscaped terrain of a settlement</b>	280
<b>Standardised ground plan of a Dghwede house</b>	283
<b>Various views of the functional spaces around the outside of a house</b>	286
<b>Orientation and clustering of traditional Dghwede houses on a hillside in Dzga</b>	288
<b>'Stomach' and 'bed' of <i>thala</i> between central passageway and front wall</b>	290
<b>The foundation stones of the upper passageway, child's room and kitchens</b>	294
<b>The lower and the upper room complex with animal sheds attached</b>	298
<b>The backyard and the miniature ancestor rooms</b>	303
<b>Conclusion</b>	304
<b>Chapter 3.12 Ritual aspects of the house as a place of worship</b>	<b>307</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	307
<b>3D ground plan of a traditional house</b>	308
<b>The three ancestor stones are found in every traditional house</b>	311
<b>Pots and people in the context of <i>har ghwe</i> and <i>har jije</i></b>	315
<b>Why ritual beer pots (<i>tughdhe</i>) had small apertures</b>	320
<b>Types of ritual pots found in a traditional Dghwede house</b>	322
<b>The ritual significance of the loft (<i>gude</i>) above the lower room of the first wife</b>	329
<b><i>Har gwazgafte</i> – slaughtering a he-goat for divinity before threshing guinea corn</b>	330
<b>About the use of rainstones</b>	335
<b>Conclusion</b>	338
<b>Chapter 3.13 The Dghwede bull festival (<i>har daghile</i>)</b>	<b>341</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	341
<b>The ritual place of <i>thagla</i> (harvest festival)</b>	344
<b>Bull festival among Dghwede neighbours and its wider subregional complexities</b>	346
<b>Legend of how Gudule was banned from rainmaking and its ritual implications</b>	349
<b>Typical performance elements of the bull festival in Gudule</b>	352
<b>How the bull festival travelled in Dghwede and beyond</b>	356
<b>Conclusion</b>	359
<b>Chapter 3.14 Becoming an accomplished male (<i>dzum zugune</i>)</b>	<b>361</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	361
<b>The four stages of <i>dzum zugune</i> – a reconstructed field summary from 1996</b>	363
<b>Documentation of places and material culture linked to <i>dzum zugune</i></b>	366

<i>Illustration of dress and body adornment plus other items used for dzum zugune</i>	368
<b>Discussion of dress codes and other performance elements of dzum zugune</b>	384
<i>Discussion of the first stage (ngwa hamtiwe)</i>	385
<i>Discussion of the second stage (ngwa garda and ngwa kwalanglanga)</i>	386
<i>Discussion of the third stage (ngwa yiye)</i>	389
<i>Discussion of the fourth and final stage (bak zalika)</i>	392
<b>Open questions arising from our oral sources in relation to the role of Gudule</b>	393
<b>Comparison of the equivalent of dzum zugune among the Dghwede neighbours</b>	397
<b>From traditional to modern – socio-economic changes and crisis management</b>	401
<b>Conclusion</b>	405
<b>Chapter 3.15 Dghwede ideas around existential personhood</b>	<b>409</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	409
<b>Reconstructing Dghwede ideas around the structure of the mind</b>	410
<b>Vulnerability to witchcraft and sorcery in the light of opposing character traits</b>	413
<b>The transformational aspect of existential personhood beyond humans</b>	418
<b>Proclaiming innocence by individuals accused of sorcery or witchcraft in the past</b>	419
<b>Conclusion</b>	421
<b>Chapter 3.16 Localised flat-earth worldview and cosmology</b>	<b>423</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	423
<b>This world (<i>luwa</i>) as a mountainous disc with a hard sky above (<i>ghaluwa</i>)</b>	424
<b>Tale of how stones stopped being main source of food after arrival of guinea corn</b>	429
<b>Dghwede ideas around the concept of a Supreme Being (<i>gwazgafte</i>)</b>	433
<b>Conclusion</b>	435
<b>Chapter 3.17 The importance of Durghwe as a mountain shrine</b>	<b>439</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	439
<b>Photographs I took to document the various aspects of Durghwe</b>	440
<b>A cartographic reconstruction of its possible visibility by Barth in June 1851</b>	443
<b>Zakariya Kwire and dada Dga of Ghwa'a explain</b>	448
<b>The cosmological architecture of Durghwe</b>	452
<b>Conclusion</b>	455
<b>Chapter 3.18 The significance of the seventh and the eighth-born child</b>	<b>457</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	457
<b>The Dghwede naming tradition</b>	458
<b>The seventh born and the system of inheritance</b>	461
<b>The ritual responsibilities of the seventh born</b>	464
<b>From infanticide to adoption</b>	465
<b>The lucky and the unlucky ones</b>	467

## Preface

*Azaghvana* means 'I say!' in the Dghwede language, and this statement in the way it was expressed was also used to refer to the Dghwede as distinct ethnolinguistic group. The subtitle 'A fragmentary history of the Dghwede of the Mandara Mountains' implies that we are putting our Dghwede protagonists at the centre of the ethnographic narrative while writing their history from the grassroots, and at the same time our aim is to embed their oral historical perspective into the wider subregion of the northwestern Mandara Mountains. My ethnographic work began in 1981 among the Mafa on the Cameroonian side of the wider subregion, and in 1994 I started working in the Gwoza hills and lived among the Dghwede, but withdrew in 2010 because terrorists of Boko Haram had invaded their mountain homeland. This led to the death of many and destroyed their collective memories as montagnards. Between 2012 and 2016 many of my Dghwede friends fled the mountains and adjacent plains. They now live in refugee camps or are trying to rebuild their lives elsewhere, while the Gwoza hills remain too unsafe to return and conditions of life there have changed beyond recognition.

It was due to witnessing the destruction of the Dghwede culture before my eyes that I decided to write this book from a personal perspective. I had already made several attempts to write about the Dghwede and what I knew about the ethnography of the Gwoza hills in general, but I felt a growing sense of dissatisfaction in not putting my Dghwede friends at the centre of it. There was also the critique I have harboured for quite some time about ethnographic writing in general, which is in my view the increasing tendency of ethnographers to enjoy writing for each other more than translating and discussing the oral testimonies of their protagonists. This led me to imagine how the Dghwede as survivors and future historians of their past would want me to write. In the course of my quest for such proclaimed authenticity I felt increasingly inadequate but decided to see it through. The result is this fragmentary narrative which also aims to fill a regional gap, and my only defence is that I have been doing cross-border fieldwork in the area for several decades.

In 2003 I published *The Way of the Beer*, a work about the Cameroonian side of the mountains, which is a re-enactment of history through rituals carried out among the Mafa who are also terrace farmers of the Mandara Mountains. The Mafa are the immediate neighbours of the Dghwede and I was very interested in how their ritual culture could be read as oral history. In 1994 I was awarded a grant by the German Research Foundation (DFG) to begin ethnographic work in the Gwoza hills, because as a result of colonial history they had been neglected by ethnographers. In Part One we present a summary of the ethnographic survey I made at that time, and introduce the reader to how I experienced the Gwoza hills before the occupation of Boko Haram. In Part Two we learn that the Dghwede massif, with Ghwa'a at its centre, was once an early arrival zone from where other groups evolved. The pre-colonial past of the Gwoza hills also includes Kirawa as the first capital of the Wandala, but we also consider the stone ruins of the DGB site in the Mafa area to be part of the wider subregion. In the chapter on colonial history we present the Gwoza hills as an Unsettled District under British indirect rule, where a conflict emerged between the Dghwede and the new colonial elite in Gwoza town who wanted to bring about their downhill migration.

Part Three presents Dghwede oral culture by contextualising fragments of their history with what we learned in Part One and Part Two, and also by ethnographically connecting the Gwoza hills with the rest of the Mandara Mountains. We achieve this by contextualising Ghwa'a, as early arrival zone from Tur, with similar south-to-north migratory traditions of the wider subregion, which includes migratory traditions of the Mafa from the DGB area. Throughout Part Three we present the interconnected ethnographic fragments from Dghwede with the aim of forming a shared history from the grassroots, and critically underpin the perspective of our oral protagonists with paleoclimatic and other early key sources. By examining our source material along the lines of a narrative of a pre-Copernican worldview we reconstruct the Dghwede way of life as a sophisticated historical achievement in which

sustainable food production was central. The terrace farming strategies of this key group of the semi-arid most northern part of the Mandara Mountains were indeed unique.

Perhaps one of the most unique features of Dghwedè terrace culture of the past is revealed in our reconstruction of adult initiation, a tradition that had ended by the late 1930s. It shows how important it was to have a system of emergency food storage ritually embedded in the culture and that it was dependent on alliances formed along kindred ties. Another aspect is the complexity of cyclical rituals linked to the seasons, which was a consequence of the high population density necessary for the labour-intensive farming system. We will show how the chemical fertiliser promoted during colonial times to replace the traditional animal manure eventually led to a reduction of ritual density. Guinea corn (sorghum), alternating with millet and beans as part of the subsistence economy of crop rotation, had the greatest cosmological significance, but the guinea-corn year lost its bi-annual ritual importance and farming for a modern market economy increasingly took over.

The terrace fields connected to the farmsteads had been manured with animal dung over the generations, a practice deeply embedded in their cosmological way of thinking. This was manifested for instance in the rainmaking and cornblessing rituals as 'blessings from above and below this world', and every guinea-corn year the travelling bull festival also ritually renewed the peaceful unity of Dghwedè. Dghwedè cosmology was very localised however, and the family ancestors who had kept the land fertile and passed on their practice were imagined to also exist locally in multiple mirror worlds below this world. We will see how the Dghwedè concept of socio-economic reproduction can be connected to their cosmographic view of the world which also had a gender aspect, and this will be illustrated in the vernacular stone architecture we have reconstructed in great detail. The Dghwedè also believed in the communal reincarnation of twins, and there were rituals in which twins were brought into the house after birth by their former parents who had been identified by means of divination.

Mountain tops visible from afar were important cosmographic manifestations, and we will describe the role of Durghwe, the most northerly rain shrine of the Mandara Mountains, which was ritually linked to Ghwa'a as the early arrival zone from Tur. Its three rock pillars were seen as three granaries and each pillar was said to represent one of the three neighbouring ethnic groups. Durghwe also played a regional role in crisis situations, and in late pre-colonial times the Dghwedè of Ghwa'a held the custodianship for such regional demands. We will also show that in pre-colonial times ethnicity was most likely not the main factor behind the idea of Dghwedè belonging. This was connected with the high population density needed for the continuation of terrace farming, which led to frequent population pressure and changes in terms of local group formation. We suggest that the locality aspect of the dense ritual culture might have led to kindred alliances across neighbourhoods, and that perhaps a shared language played a stronger cohesive role than clan and lineage membership.

There are many more complexities of Dghwedè culture we will describe, explore and illustrate, by relying primarily on the interpretation of our oral protagonists rather than on preconceived ethnographic theory. However we will use my ethnographic research among the Mafa of Gouzda and Moskota for comparison, to contrast some of the Dghwedè cultural variations. We will also point out the many shortcomings in my own ethnographic research, the full extent of which I did not realise a couple of years ago when I started to write this book. This means that writing it has also been a learning process for myself as area specialist of the northwestern Mandara Mountains, and by openly admitting this I encourage the reader to be critical of my interpretations and conclusions. I nevertheless hope that I have managed to present this fragmentary history of Dghwedè culture as a valuable contribution, for the Dghwedè themselves and also to fill a gap in wider regional knowledge. The Gwoza hills have been neglected by ethnographers for far too long, and reconstructing the past Dghwedè way of life from oral testimonies will not only serve Dghwedè survivors but also future historians who are interested in the Mandara Mountains in their geographical entirety.

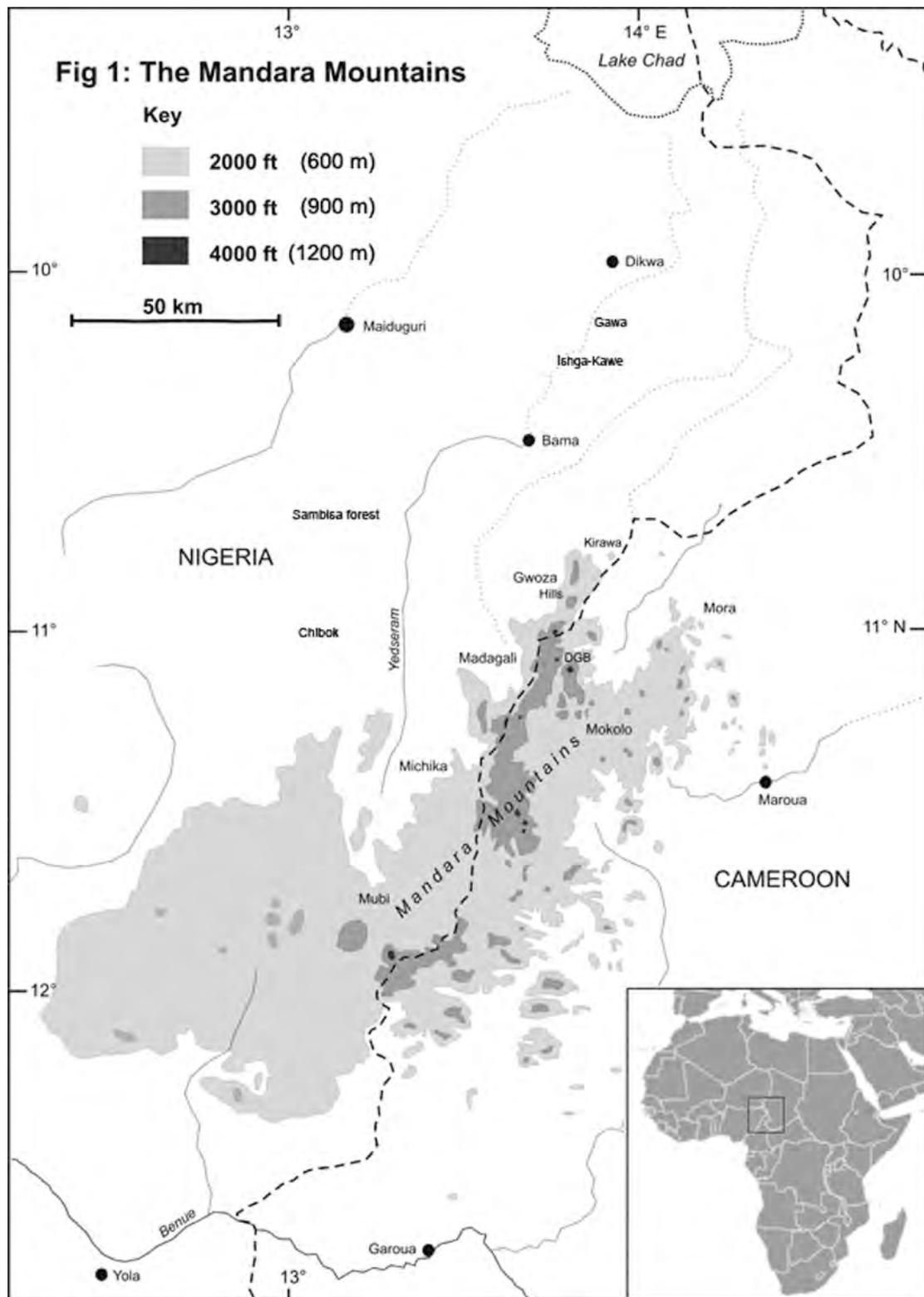


Figure 1 gives an overview of the wider region, showing the Mandara Mountains situated between the Benue river in the south and Lake Chad in the north. We recognise the international border cutting across the mountains, separating northeastern Nigeria from the far north of Cameroon. We can see how the Gwoza hills are sandwiched between the DGB stone ruins and Kirawa, the former ancient capital of the Wandala state. We see the main massif of the Mandara Mountains running from north to south on the Cameroonian side, while the Gwoza hills form the top end of that massif, reaching like a peninsular into the semi-arid northern plain in the direction of the increasingly shrinking southern shores of Lake Chad.

