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DE FORMATION DOCTORALE
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TOWARD INTEGRATING TRADITIONAL RULERSHIP INTO MODERN GOVERNANCE IN THE BAMENDA GRASSFIELDS, CA 1800-2013

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To my parents,
Nchotu Marius Che and Sylvia Sirri

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is about the ways colonial and post-colonial administrations in Cameroon have involved traditional rulers of the Bamenda Grassfields in the administrative and governance processes. Specifically, it examines the methods and strategies used by consecutive administrations to integrate traditional rulership into modern administration and governance and the responses of traditional rulers to the overtures and opportunities offered in the process. Focusing specifically on the Bamenda Grassfields, the study lays emphasis on the changes and transformations which have taken place in traditional rulership in the area of study with undeniable consequences and implications for contemporary governance. The study takes issue with the characterization of what is often described as modern governance to suggest the relativity in the use of the vocabulary perceived as traditional or modern. The basic argument is that the reference to modernity is very relative and refers more understandably to time periods and contexts, because there is always something of the traditional in the modern, something of the past in the contemporary. Articulations about modernity are pointers to the desire by administrators to improve, upgrade and or modify current and existing methods and strategies to meet with the challenges and needs imposed by time and change. Material for the study was obtained from a careful and meticulous search and exploitation of primary, secondary and tertiary sources. The general and wide reading of secondary material pointed to more related and relevant sources which permitted the sorting out and use of sources which are more recent. Such were especially found in dissertations, articles in scholarly journals, research centres and libraries in Buea, Bamenda and Yaounde, and enabled intense discussions and refinement of the conceptual foundations of the study. Of great importance was the exploitation of archival material covering the colonial and post-colonial periods found in archival holdings listed above and others. Oral interviews with knowledgeable historical actors and administrative personnel of the past and present periods were also very useful. The study is structured in a traditionally chronological manner which enhances an easier comprehension of the way the basic vocabulary in the thesis is used. In sum, it contributes to the understanding of how so-called traditional and modern systems of administration can be blended while maintaining and sustaining the value of the chieftaincy institution and traditional administration in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon. Overall the study suggests that the chieftaincy institution and its administrative system is a very resilient feature of Africa's cultural heritage. It can and should be valorized and sustainably used rather than vilified and relegated to become an instrument to be used and abused for selfish motives or on the altar of opportunism.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette thèse explore l'implication des autorités traditionnelles des Bamenda Grassfields (actuellement dans la région du Nord-Ouest du Cameroun) dans les processus administratifs et de gouvernance, tant pendant la période coloniale que post-coloniale. Elle analyse particulièrement les stratégies et les méthodes mises en œuvre par les administrations successives pour intégrer les chefferies traditionnelles dans le cadre de l'administration moderne, ainsi que les réponses des chefs traditionnels aux opportunités et défis soulevés par ces administrations. En se concentrant spécifiquement sur la région des Bamenda Grassfields, cette étude met en lumière les transformations profondes qu'a subies la chefferie traditionnelle et leurs répercussions sur la gouvernance contemporaine. L'argument central de cette recherche est que la notion de modernité est relative et se rapporte davantage à des contextes historiques et géographiques spécifiques. En effet, des éléments traditionnels persistent dans le moderne, tout comme des traces du passé dans le contemporain. Les discours sur la modernité reflètent ainsi le désir des administrateurs de réformer, améliorer et adapter les pratiques existantes pour répondre aux défis sociaux et aux exigences du changement.

Les sources utilisées pour cette thèse proviennent d'une recherche approfondie, combinant des documents primaires, secondaires et tertiaires. L'analyse des sources secondaires a permis d'identifier des travaux récents et pertinents, tels que des thèses, des articles scientifiques et des ressources disponibles dans les centres de recherche et bibliothèques des universités de Buea, Bamenda et Yaoundé, facilitant ainsi l'élargissement des arguments historiques et l'affinement des bases théoriques. L'exploitation des archives, couvrant à la fois la période coloniale et post-coloniale, a été essentielle pour la compréhension du sujet, tout comme les entretiens réalisés avec des acteurs historiques et des responsables administratifs, tant anciens que contemporains.

Structurée de manière chronologique, l'étude permet de mieux saisir l'utilisation du vocabulaire central à la thèse. Elle contribue à l'analyse de la manière dont les systèmes administratifs dits traditionnels et modernes peuvent coexister tout en préservant la valeur et la pertinence de l'institution de la chefferie traditionnelle dans les Bamenda Grassfields. En conclusion, cette recherche montre que l'institution de la chefferie et son système administratif représentent des éléments résilients du patrimoine culturel africain, qui méritent d'être valorisés et utilisés de manière durable, plutôt que d'être dénigrés ou instrumentalisés à des fins opportunistes.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADO:	Assistant District Officer
CDU:	Cameroon Democratic Union
CMA:	Catholic Men Association
CMF:	Christian Men Fellowship
CNF:	Cameroon National Federation
CNU:	Cameroon National Union
COTECC:	Community Technical and Commercial College
CPDM:	Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement
CPP:	Convention People's Party
CYL:	Cameroon Youth League
DO:	Divisional Officer
EAC:	Estates and Agency Company Ltd Tiko
KNC:	Kamerun National Congress
KNDP:	Kamerun National Democratic Party
MINTAT:	Ministry of Territorial Administration
NA:	Native Authority
NAA:	Native Authority Area
NAB:	National Archives Buea
NCTRC:	National Council of Traditional Rulers of Cameroon
NOWEFU:	North West Fon's Union
PM:	Prime Minister
SDF:	Social Democratic Front
SDO:	Senior Divisional Officer
UNDP:	United Nations Development Program
UN ESCAP:	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNIP:	United National Independence Party
RENAMO:	Mozambican National Resistance

GLOSSARY

Common Grassfields Appellations

Abaa Nto 'o

Achan

Acheu

Achum

Anti-njong njong

Bukum beu mbangyieh

Bukum, nda beu nfor, shey, sufia

Kwifor, ngwerong, takumbeng, mbaboo

lum- nyam, Naangwe

Manjong

Mbacha, Mbong ndugu

Mugaka, lamso ngemba

Mukwifor, nfor, fon, mbe, ntok, atangchuo

Nchinda

Nfeu, ndugu

Ngwe-enda

Nikuru

Nteh

ntoh, Muo, wan ntoh

Nungubu

Nwingong

Nyambo

Ta-cheu

Ta-nikuru, Aba e ngha ku

Tekolo

English

Diplomatic bag

Compound

Lineage

Private Quarter of the *Fon*

Thorny tress

Women's council of elders

Council of elders

Regulatory societies

King of ajll animals

Soldiers

Compond head

Languages

Chief/ traditional ruler

Palace atendance

Nuclear family

Extended family

Quarter

Village

Prince and princesses

Python

God

Leopards cup

Lineage head

Quarter head

Without a leg

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Background

Throughout most of Africa, traditional rulers have been a constant and visible component of governance and administration across the ages. By all indications, administration under the control of chiefs is referred to by the generic appellation known as traditional rulership which finds its most vivid expression in the institution of chieftaincy. At the centre of traditional administration is the leader who is generally referred to as the chief or traditional ruler and who is the head of the political, administrative, economic and social organisation of the community. Traditional rulership can therefore be considered to be about an administrative system that is founded or based on chieftaincy being an institution which is recognized by the communities concerned as leaders and rulers even if the attributes of office may vary from one location to another. In other words, traditional rulership is about governance in which chiefs play an important and non-negligible role, where chiefs are the ones “for who and around whom everything turns.”¹

It is well known that the institution of chieftaincy in Africa is as old as the continent itself. In the period before the coming of colonial rule, chiefs occupied very crucial and important positions in their societies.² Although they were at the centre of virtually all activities in their areas of jurisdiction, the content and use of the powers they held did not necessarily make them the sole authorities and inevitable decision makers or takers. In virtually every community where chiefs existed, there were intricate systems of checks and balances which underlay the power they held, and provided for the exercise of power and authority where everyone in the realm felt involved. Early European visitors present in the continent, did not perceive this dimension in the wielding and exercise of traditional rulership and were very often led to consider the place of traditional rulers as being despotic, tyrannical and overbearing. Interestingly colonial authorities considered traditional rulers as very useful actors through whom the wider African communities could be administered. This acceptance of their importance was not a reflection of any interest to maintain, respect or even valorise the African traditional structure of governance. It was a determined effort to use the institution

¹Wim Van Binsbergen, “Nkoya Royal Chiefs and the Kazanga Cultural Association in Western Central Zambia Today. Resilience, Decline or Folklorisation” in Van Rouveroy Van Nieuwaal and Van Dijk R. (eds), *African Chieftaincy in a New Socio-political Landscape* (Hamburg/Munster: LIT Verlag, 1999, p. 88

² Michael Ndobegang, “Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change in Cameroon, 1884-1966”, Ph.D Thesis in History, Boston University, 1985, p. 11

of chieftaincy as a means to an end, to serve the needs of keeping the local populations under control and using their own local leaders as administrative agents.

Recognizing the importance of chiefs in local administration and using them to attain colonial goals required that the institution be tailored to suit the needs and purpose of the colonial administration and not left without appropriate safeguards. As a result, traditional rulers were placed within various colonial frameworks and made to serve whatever roles were assigned them under colonial supervisors and overseers. One thing for sure, colonial authorities needed the services of traditional rulers without giving the latter a free hand in what they did. At any one time what emerged was the desire by various colonial authorities to make chiefs who were traditional administrators before the coming of colonialism, part of the governance machinery and system.

Colonialism sought to and in its own way integrated traditional rulership into the colonial governance system, trying at each step of the way to render it more manageable, malleable and suited for the purpose intended. Whether it was through subtle education or violent repression, traditional rulers under colonial administration were not really kept away.³ This was most visible in areas under British administration. In fact, all through the period of British colonial administration in most of her African possessions, traditional rulership was not allowed its full pre-colonial expression. Instead it underwent various changes, modifications and or alterations and deformations, all in an effort to integrate traditional rulers into “modern” governance.⁴ Note should be taken that apart from the British, other Europeans powers like Germany and France equally made use of traditional rulers in one way or the other during the period of their presence.

This study is an attempt to focus on the ways colonial and post-colonial administrations continued and have continuously sought to integrate traditional rulers as part of the model governance system. Using the Bamenda Grassfields as case study, this study examines the different ways and means which have been used by various colonial and post-independence administrations to make traditional rulership a part of the governance machinery as well as the responses of traditional rulers to such overtures and opportunities. In all, the study focuses on the changes and transformations which have affected traditional rulership in the whole process of trying to use the traditional in the modern, by keeping most or some of the past in the present.

³Wim Van Binsbergen, “Nkoya Royal Chiefs” 1999, p. 88

⁴Walters Samah, “Chiefs (traditional rulers) in Anglophone Cameroon and Modern Governance, 1961-2000” PhD. , Thesis in History, University of Yaounde I, 2006, pp123-124.
File, No 5, 89, vol. 1 1a/1957/1. NAB

Motivation for the Study

With the continuous involvement of modern administrators in chieftaincy affairs, the legitimacy of traditional rulers and their pre-colonial and colonial role in the society (experiences in traditional governance) and the failure of governance among others are some factors which are of interest and motivated a research on this study. As a result of the above, taking into consideration the important role played by traditional rulers in their various polities, the attention of the state is drawn to these categories of persons who are revered. The involvement and interest in traditional administration is seen today through the full participation of top-ranking administrators of the Cameroonian state into traditional administration and most of them are crowned traditional rulers. The administratively crowned traditional rulers went ahead to grouped themselves under the name National Council of Traditional Rulers of Cameroon (NCTRC). Taking into consideration the interest state officials had developed in traditional administration, there is need for a study of this nature in order to investigate the role traditional rulers play in modern administration which has been a call for concern. How important are traditional rulers and what role are they expected to play in modern administration that a national council is created for them is one of the motivating factors for this study. The classification of traditional rulers and the attribution of salaries to these categories of persons by the state is an indication that they are held in high esteem by the state in administrative affairs. The fact that they play an important role in state building is an indication that they are asserts to the state which is a push and motivating factor for a study of this nature.

Despite integration efforts from both the administration and traditional rulers, why have the various mechanisms and processes used by the colonial and post-independence administrations in involving traditional rulers into modern administration not backed by the constitution of Cameroon is a motivating factor for the choice of topic. Is integration a guarantee to development, the enhancement of democratization and an increase in popular political participation in the Bamenda Grassfields in particular and the entire nation in general? This and more are reasons for the choice of topic.

It is relevant to note that the bargaining power of traditional rulers might influence the decisions made by the administration. If the role, authority and bargaining power of traditional rulers influence the decisions of the administration, what are the results, gains or benefits to the traditional ruler and his society is a call for concern which is a push factor for the choice of topic. An instant where the mobilization of citizens by a traditional ruler influences or might had influence the decision of the administration as seen in 1997 in the

South West region of Cameroon. Chiefs from the south west in a conference calls on their subjects to support the ruling administration in the following words:

*Our choice is clear as was stated in the General Assembly meeting in Kumba on 8 March 1997. We called on all South Westerners and all their friends of voting age without exception to register and vote massively for the candidates of the CPDM party of President Paul Biya at the forth coming parliamentary elections*⁵

Be it by fate or as a result of this call which gave victory to that party, a son of the soil (South Westerner) was appointed the prime minister after the election. Judging from the above call and the subsequent reaction of the head of state (appointed a traditional ruler as prime minister) its relevant to carry out a study so as to examine if traditional rulers influence the decisions of the administration in its choice for administrators or such calls coincide with the decisions of the executive is a pushing force for the choice of topic. The victory of the ruling party in that election could be linked to the call of the traditional rulers which came with other favours. This and many others account for the choice of topic and act as a motivating factor to investigate other efforts put in, in order to facilitate the integration of traditional rulers into modern governance.

Political entities in the Bamenda Grassfields from time immemorial are characterized by traditional institutions under the administration of traditional rulers. The major characteristic of these political entities was that, they were all dynasties and the leaders (traditional rulers) had an influence in the day to day functioning of the society. That is, he is the political, economic, socio-cultural and traditional administrator of the society. In other words, traditional rulers have a powerful influence in all domains in their respective polities as well as in foreign policy. The coming of colonial and post-colonial administration later witnessed a change in their role as administrators of their respective polities. Even with the change, what has become of traditional rulers in administration as was the case before the advent of colonialism? Through this study, an indept analysis would be made to ascertain the level of involvement of traditional rulers into modern administration.

Definition of Useful Terms

In order to provide a better focus for this study, some key words used in the study needs to be explained. They include; tradition, traditional rulers, traditional leaders, traditional rulership, chiefs, modern, modern governance, good governance, integration among others.

⁵ For more information, see "South West Chiefs' Conference on the Plight of South West Province", in *"The Pilot Magazine"*, May 1997, p. 8.

Tradition

Tradition is commonly regarded as the basis of any traditional authority. According to the Concise Oxford English Dictionary, tradition is a long-established custom or belief passed on from one generation to another.⁶ British philosopher H.B. Acton defines tradition as “a belief or practice transmitted from one generation to another and accepted as authoritative, or referred to, without argument”.⁷ For his part, Samuel Fleischacker defines tradition as “a set of customs passed down over the generations, and a set of beliefs and values endorsing those customs”.⁸ Harvard educated Ghanaian Philosopher, Kwame Gyekye, recognizes the value of tradition, but argues that in practice, tradition is often questioned and modified by its adherents over time, so that it remains dynamic. In line with his view, Gyekye presents another definition of tradition as “any cultural product that was created or pursued, in whole or in part, by past generations and that, having been accepted and preserved, in whole or in part, by successive generations, has been maintained to the present”.⁹ He sees tradition from the same perspective as Christian Keulder, a great scholar

To Christian Keulder an author and a research specialist in Namibia and southern African, tradition commonly refers to that which is “old.”¹⁰ Here, Keulder sees tradition as an old instrument handed down from one generation to another. However, many scholars today have drawn attention to the existence of what they have termed *invented traditions*.¹¹ To them, invented traditions are those traditions that may have existed for a long time but have undergone a lot of modifications and changes or may simply have been crafted or forged along the way due to expediency. Scholars like Hobsbawm and Ranger hold that:

*... set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historical past... Rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which “old” traditions have been designed, producing new ones to which they are not applicable...*¹²

⁶ Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, International Student’s Edition, Oxford University Press, 8th Edition, 2010.

⁷ For details consult H.B. Acton, “Tradition and Some Other Forms of Order”, Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, n.s., Vol 53, 1952-53, p2

⁸ Samuel Fleischacker, “The Ethics of Culture”, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994, p.45

⁹ Kwame Gyekye, “Tradition and Modernity”, *Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*, p.221

¹⁰ Christian Keulder., *Traditional Leaders: State, Society and Democracy*, p.151

¹¹ E. Hobsbawm, and T Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge, University Press, 1994

¹² Ibid

Judging from the above, tradition is considered to be flexible or “adjustable” or “inventable”; an instrument that can be adjusted to suit some current purposes or situations. Colonizers adjusted certain traditions to suit their whims and caprices. In other instances, it was the Africans who became pliable enough to give credence to invented models for obvious reasons.

Max Weber on his part sees tradition as: “... the authority of the ‘eternal yesterday’, of the mores sanctified through the unimaginably ancient recognition and habitual orientation to conform.” This is “traditional” domination exercised by the patriarch and the primordial prince of yore.¹³ From this definition, tradition is seen as an aspect of the people’s way of life handed down from one generation to another, be it with or without the involvement of traditional rulers in the administrative system of governance. In the above definitions lie the key to understanding what tradition is, the place of tradition in modern administration and how the tradition of a people influences administrative procedures.

Traditional

“Traditional” is an adjective which describes or refers to the beliefs, customs or ways of life of a particular group of people that may not have changed for a long time. The term “traditional” has a historical meaning, sometimes dating back to pre-colonial times. Furthermore, by referring to “traditional,” we assume that there is a distinction between tradition and modernity. According to Gyekye, “it may be said that from the point of view of a deep and fundamental conception of tradition, every society in our modern world is “traditional” inasmuch as it maintains and cherishes values, practices, outlooks, and institutions bequeathed to it by previous generations”.¹⁴ In our context, traditional is seen as that which forms part of the people’s ways of life, it is what a people do or are used to doing, or the way they have been used to doing things. Taking into consideration the people of pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfields, how did their way of life in the past influence modern administration since along the way tradition change or altered, as a result of both internal and external factors from within or without the society which affects the tradition of the people. Once there is the existence of a tradition, there should be somebody who heads that tradition, who incarnates it, calls it the “repository” of the tradition. This is the traditional ruler.

¹³Max Weber in *Essays in Sociology* cited in H. Gerth, & C Mills., (eds.) New York: Cambridge University Press, 1946, p.78.

¹⁴ Ibid, p217

Traditional Ruler

Traditional rulers are guardians, custodians and the instruments for the preservation of tradition and traditional norms. They are respected in various communities from generation to generation. These norms could be outlooks on life, ways of relating or of resolving disputes, institutions and many others. As such traditional leaders are an important channel through which political, economic, social and cultural change can be realized. Although a lot has happened which have negatively played on the power and authority of traditional rulers, they have served as important agents in the administration of colonial and post-colonial government in Africa.

A Nigerian author and labour activist Aborisade holds that a “traditional ruler is the head of a people’s tradition and for the time being the holder of the highest traditional authority in his land and recognized by the government of that state”.¹⁵

Bendel State Law defines traditional ruler as: “the traditional head of an ethnic unit or clan who is for the time being the holder of the highest traditional authority within the ethnic unit or clan and whose title is recognized as traditional ruler... by the Government of the state”¹⁶ From the various definitions, one could conclude that a traditional ruler is the head of a clan who commands political, economic, legislative and spiritual functions guided and protected by other traditional institutions and practices. Since traditional rulers are considered as the holders of the highest traditional authority, there is need to make them part of the governing body to facilitate administrative procedures. This might be among the reasons for integration efforts.

Adewumi and Egwurube see traditional rulers as “... individuals occupying communal political leadership positions sanctified by cultural mores and values, and enjoying the legitimacy of particular communities to direct their affairs”¹⁷. They hold that these rulers oversee and remain like the compass of the culture and way of life of peoples as well as their moral and social values. This definition is a clear indication of the role played by traditional rulers in our societies and this study seeks to investigate the transformations that this style of leadership and governance mode had undergone as a result of the constraints of so-called modern governance.

¹⁵Aborisade O. (Ed) *Local Government and Traditional Rulers in Nigerian*, Ife University, 1985, p.7.

¹⁶Oba of Benin, “The Roles of Traditional Rulers in Local Government” in Oladimeji Aborisade (ed), *Local Government and the Traditional Rulers in Nigeria*, (Ife: University of Ife Press, 1985), p. VII, cited in Amaazee V. Bong’s *Traditional Rulers (chiefs) and Politics in Cameroon History*, PreeseUniversitaires de Yaounde, Octobre 2002, p8

¹⁷J B Adewumi, & J. Egwurube. “Role of Traditional Rulers in Historical Perspective.” in Aborisade, Oladimeji (Ed.). *Local Government and the traditional rulers in Nigeria*. Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press, 1985, p.20

Max Weber perceives traditional authority from the perspective of legitimacy; whereby the acceptance of the right to rule is based on tradition or custom.¹⁸ To scholars like Buba Misawa and Adjaye J.K., traditional authority is synonymous with traditional rulership¹⁹ meanwhile anthropologically traditional authority is defined as those political, socio-political and politico-religious structures that are rooted in the pre-colonial period, rather than in the creations of the colonial and post-colonial states.²⁰ There exist different forms of traditional authorities.

According to authors like E. Aggrey-Darkoh and Bossman E. Asare, traditional rulers/authorities are the leaders of traditional communities.²¹ The term “traditional” refers to historic roots of leadership, which legitimizes the execution of power. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, traditional authorities or leaders were used principally to describe chiefs, their reign and their ancestors. As to what concerns traditional authorities or leaders, they are those who manage the day to day functioning of their traditional community.²² The term traditional authority/leader is defined anthropologically as;

*“ces structures politiques, sociopolitiques et politico-religieuses qui ont leurs racines dans la période pré-coloniale, plutôt que dans les créations des Etats coloniaux et postcoloniaux. Au regard de ces considerations essentielles, les autorités traditionnelles peuvent comprendre les rois, d'autres aristocrates occupant des postes officiels les chefs des famills élargies, et les détenteurs de postes officiels dans les administrations politiques décentralisées, dans la mesure où leurs fonctions remontent aux Etats et autres entités politiques précoloniaux”*²³

It should be emphasized that there is a difference between modern governance authorities and traditional authorities. Traditional authorities are the leaders of traditional communities. There are many existing forms of traditional authorities. In Europe, the rule of kings and nobles was

¹⁸I.Owusu-Mensah, “Politics, Chieftaincy and Customary Law in Ghana’s Fourth Republic”, *Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol.6, No.7, 2014, p.262

¹⁹J.K. Adjaye, and B. Misawa, “Chieftaincy at the Confluence of Tradition and Modernity: Transforming African Rulership in Ghana and Nigeria”, *International Third World Studies Journal and Review*, Volume XVII, 2006, p.34

²⁰C. Cheka, “Traditional Authority at the Crossroad of Governance in Republican Cameroon”, *African Development*, Vol 33, No, 2008, p.68.

²¹E. Aggrey-Darkoh, and B. E. Asare, “Understanding the Nexus between Traditional and Modern Political Orders in Ghana”, *Archives of Current Research International*, Vol.3, No.1, 2016, p.3.

²²Ray, Donald; “Rural Local Governance and Traditional Leadership in Africa and the Afro-Caribbean: Policy and Research Implications from Africa to the Americas and Australia”. in D. I. Ray and P. S. Reddy, eds., *Grass-roots Governance? Chiefs in Africa and the Afro- Caribbean*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003 cited in George Lutz and Zolf Linder’s *Structures Traditionnelles dans la Gouvernance Locale pour le Développement Local*, Berne Suisse, May 2004, p.15

²³Ibid, p.16

the dominant governing force for a long time until it was gradually replaced by democratic structures. In Africa, Asia, and Latin America, traditional authorities are mostly referred to as chiefs and elders. This is because the word chief signifies a leader or head. Authorities of modern governance are elected or appointed while a traditional authority is by succession according to the tradition and custom of the people of the Bamenda Grassfield. This is why they play a great role in the day-to-day administration of their polities in collaboration with “modern” administrators. Though of recent, there has been a lot of interference on the part of the administration over the choice of a traditional ruler to ascend the throne, note should be taken that no matter the procedure used in ascending the traditional throne, the traditional ruler has an account to render to the people or the administration²⁴ since they are the representative of the people and as such act on their behalf.

Traditional Rulership

Traditional rulership or call it traditional governance is about or refers to the system of governing people under the leadership and administration headed by traditional authorities. The political, economic, social and cultural life of the people is animated by the chief which is an epitome of traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield in collaboration with other traditional institutions under his command. Traditional rulers are the monarchs and aristocracies of Africa who have pre-colonial roots and their African language titles are often translated into English as “chief”, “traditional leaders”, “traditional authorities”, “kings”, “natural rulers”

Chiefs

The term chief indicates a leader or ruler of a people or the head of an organization having the highest rank or authority. It is worth mentioning that, the term “chief” did not exist in the socio-political lexicon of pre-colonial African societies.²⁵ It was coined and used administratively by the European colonizers to designate African indigenous rulers and collaborators.²⁶ Each society had its own term for the occupant of the royal office. For instance, *fon*, *nfor*, *mfaw*, *Mbaatum* or a variation of that name is used in the Bamenda

²⁴George Lutz and Zolf Linder’s *Structures Traditionnelles dans la Gouvernance Locale pour le Développement Local*, Berne Suisse, May 2004, p.15

²⁵ W.T. Samah., “Invention of Tradition” Chieftaincy, Adaptation and Change in the Forest Region of Cameroon” *La Chefferie “Traditionnelle” dans les sociétés de la grande zone forestière du Sud-Cameroun* (1850-2010) (Ed) R. Kpwang Kpwang, Paris, Harmattan, 2011, p.71

²⁶ M. Crowder, I Obaro (Eds)., *West African Chiefs: Their Changing Status under Colonial Rule and Independence*, New York, Africana Publishing, 1970, pp. 9-10

Grassfield. With colonial intrusion, the appellation of traditional rulers was later denaturalized, thus traditional rulers came to be addressed simply as chiefs.²⁷

A chief is anthropologically defined as including those political, socio-political and politico-religious structures that are rooted in the pre-colonial period.²⁸ Understood from this perspective, traditional leaders/ruler include kings, other aristocrats holding offices, heads of extended families, and office holders in decentralized polities, as long as their offices are rooted in pre-colonial states and other political entities.²⁹ In the Cameroonian context and in accordance with decree 77/245 of July 15, 1977, chieftaincy is defined as;

*La chefferie traditionnelle renvoie aux sociétés du Centre, du Sud et de l'Est où le chef traditionnel installé par la colonisation est un patriarche respecté, mais qui n'inspire pas la crainte. Elle renvoie aussi aux lamidats du grand Nord où les chefs peuls, les lamibé demeurent des potentats féodaux. Cette institution fait aussi incontestablement référence aux chefferies de Grassfields dont la particularité tient à ce qu'elles aient une légitimité rituelle accentuée et trouve ses origines dans l'époque précoloniale.*³⁰

The 1977 decree cited above centered on the reorganization of chieftaincy and traditional authority in Cameroon, three classes of chiefs exist.³¹ The first category corresponds roughly to an entire administrative unit, the second comprises an ethnic group (or several villages) and the third to a specific village or neighbourhood. That is, first, second and third-class chiefs.³²

The chieftaincy Act of 2008 Act 759, of the Ghanaian society defines a chief as “a person who hails from appropriate family and lineage, has been validly nominated, elected or selected and enthroned or installed as a chief or king in accordance with the relevant customary law and usage”.³³ The Act further sets minimum qualification for a chief; among which the candidate must be a person who has never been convicted of high treason or for an offence dealing with the security of the state, fraud, dishonesty or moral turpitude.³⁴ These qualifications in the Ghanaian context are more or less linked to the notion of “modern” leaders as oppose to traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield whose accession or right to

²⁷ Samah., “Invention of Tradition”, p. 71

²⁸ D. I. Ray and G. Eizlini., “Chieftaincy, Sovereignty and Legitimacy and Development: A Pilot Newspaper Survey of the Role of Chiefs in Three Aspects of Development”, Unpublished paper, pp5

²⁹ D. Ray., “Ghana: Traditional Leadership and Rural Local Governances”, *Grassroots governance? Chiefs in Africa and the Afro-Caribbeans*, edited by Calgary, Calgary University Press, 2003

³⁰ I. Mouiche., *Autorités Traditionnelles et Démocratisation au Cameroun: Entre centralité de l'Etat et logiques de terroir*, Munster, Lit Verlag, 2005, pp. 13-14.

³¹ For details, see Cameroon tribune No 79 of February 1977.

³² A. Rochegude and C. Plancon, “Decentralisation, Foncier et Acteurs Locaux” *Foncier et Développement*, May 5th, 2009, p.8.

³³ I. Owusu-Mensah, “Politics, Chieftaincy and Customary Law in Ghana’s Fourth Republic”, *Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol.6, No.7, 2014, p.262

³⁴ Ibid

succession to the throne is determined by the late chief. An important aspect in the chieftaincy institution is the nature of accession to the position of chief. The nature of right to succession is based on what E.S.D. Fomin describes as the leopard knife or better stills the leopard skin principle.³⁵

As part of the administrative structure, willingly or not, traditional rulers took on a dual role: one with relation to the central state and another with regard to their local community. This gave chiefs the opportunity to be part of national and local elite administrators, impacted either by wealth, strive to remain in office or both. As mentioned before, the word chief was a European invention in order to discredit and make African traditional rulers inferior to their European kings and queens.³⁶ In other words, they did not want the people of Africa to see their chieftaincy institution as an equal to the House of Lords in Britain. Thus, traditional leaders include kings, nobility holding offices, heads of extended families, and the office holders of decentralized polities whose offices are rooted in the pre-colonial states and other pre-colonial entities. So, in the course of this study, the above appellations (chief, traditional ruler, traditional authority among others) are used interchangeably but they signify the same authority.

Apart from the general characteristics of the chieftaincy institution in the Bamenda Grassfields, two types of chieftaincy institutions based on chiefs exist in Africa in general and Cameroon in particular; “*Les sociétés anétatiques*”³⁷ or “*decentralized societies*” and centralized chieftaincy as presented by Fortes M. and Evans P.³⁸ The non-centralized society designates those chieftaincy institutions where political units coincide with very small kin groups. Examples of such societies in Cameroon are found in the center, south, east regions and the costal zones. On the other hand, centralized political systems are those societies in which there is a chief, *Fon* or king whose authority is recognized throughout the territory under his jurisdiction. Such territories have a clear boundary, and the ruler’s authority is supported by well-developed administrative machinery and clearly defined administrative, political, socio-cultural and judicial institutions for the day to day running of the chiefdom and adjudication of disputes.³⁹ Centralized political systems are found in the Bamenda Grassfield, out study area.

³⁵E.S.D. Fomin, Leopard - knife rulers of Nweh Country: Case Study of Traditional Governance in Africa.

³⁶W.T.T. Samah, “Invention of Tradition: Chieftaincy, 2011, p.71.

³⁷J. Owona, *Les Systèmes Politiques Précoloniaux au Cameroun*, Paris, Harmattan, 2015, pp.8-9.

³⁸M. Fortes, and E.E. Evans Pritchard., (ed). *African Political systems*, Oxford University Press, 1967. p.5.

³⁹M. Fortes and E.E. Pritchard, *African Political Systems*, p.123.

Most chieftaincies in the Bamenda Grassland and the northern regions of Cameroon are made up of centralized chieftaincy institutions. They are highly centralized and have kings, lamidos or chiefs who exercise considerable jurisdiction over wide areas. Their areas of jurisdiction have clear-cut boundaries within which the traditional ruler (chief or *lamido*) operate. They have well-developed administrative, legislative and judicial institutions for the governance of the territories. Such societies have elements of Austinian state. That is, a politically sovereign state backed by well-organized law, enforcement agencies and habitually obeyed the citizenry not out of fear but out of duty as an inhabitant of that area.⁴⁰ Any insubordination to the rules and regulations put in place are sanctioned seriously by the institutions put in place.

Modern

The word “modern” as used in this study is a relative term. According to the Cambridge dictionary, modern is an adjective which indicates how something is designed.⁴¹ The Oxford Advanced Learners dictionary says modern indicates the present time or recent times especially the period of history.⁴² In relation to this study, modern is understood in context and time. This term is historically contextualized taking into consideration the level of modernity that existed during the period when issues patterning to that era were done. This study takes into consideration the level of modernity in administrative governance during the colonial and post-independence era and the involvement of chiefs in the so-called modern form of governance. We consider the ideas and their level of implementation as modern ways of doing things in existence during that period.

The key to understanding “modern” lies in the fact that each epoch deals with or updates and upgrades the method of administration and its outcomes by taking or adding new and seemingly more innovative and effective ways of administration. To be precised, the Germans decided to build or set up their administration using traditional rulers but at the same time discarding or outlawing what to them were “repugnant” aspects of German administration. Going by the term, the German administration in context was modern, and going forward, each epoch identified its actions of administration and governance as modern. This means that, there is therefore a little of the old and the new in the modern. Modern therefore is highly contextualized and to a large extent defined by time and interest.

⁴⁰ Aggrey-Darkoh, and Asare, “Understanding the Nexus between Traditional and Modern Political Orders”. p.9.

⁴¹ Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, Third Edition, Cambridge University Press, 2008. p917

⁴² Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, International Student’s Edition, Oxford University Press, 8th Edition, 2010, p.952

Contextually, “modern” stands for the adaptation of chiefs to the different systems of governance introduced at a particular period by the colonial and post-colonial governments. As such, the term “modern as use in this study is understood in context and time.

Governance

The World Bank report of 1992 defines governance as “the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development”⁴³, a view similar to that of the United Nations Development Program For its part, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific refer to governance as the process of decision making and implementation.⁴⁴ In its 1997 report the UNDP says governance;

“comprises of a set of institutions, mechanisms and processes through which citizens and their groups can articulate their interests and needs, mediate their differences and exercise their rights and obligations at the local level. It requires partnership between local governmental institutions, civil society organizations and private sector for participatory, transparent, accountable and equitable service delivery and local development. It necessitates empowering local governments with authority and resources and building their capacity to function as participatory institutions that are responsive and accountable to the concerns and needs of all citizens. At the same time, it is concerned with strengthening of grass roots democracy and empowering citizens, communities and their organizations such as ... and NGOs to participate as equal partners in local governance and local development process.”⁴⁵

This definition does not specify the type of leadership needed for governance. So, it can be democratically elected rulers as well as other forms of leadership such as traditional authorities. But regardless of the type of leadership, several things must be in place among which is interaction for a good and complete governance. The set of values, policies and institutions use in the management of the economic, political and social affairs of the people through interactions had contributed in bringing traditional rulers closer to modern administration since they are part of the partnership that leads to developing the society. Contextually, governance is seen as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of the life of a people in the political, economic and social domains. This study focuses on efforts aim at making traditional rulers part of decision makers in modern administration and implementation in their respective communities.

⁴³ World Bank, *Governance and Development*, Washington, DC; 1992.

⁴⁴ UN ESCAP, 2004, *What Is Good Governance?*

⁴⁵ <http://www.undp.org/governance/local.htm>

Churchill Ewumbue-Monono, an author and a Cameroonian senior career diplomat sees governance as a combination of institutions, laws, procedures and norms, which allows people to express their concern and fight for their interest within a predictable and relatively equitable context.⁴⁶ Monono goes further to say good governance is when there is effective participatory, transparency, accountability and the equitable distribution and promotion of the rule of law.⁴⁷ J. Bossuyt describes good governance as;

*is... rule of law with a really independent judiciary; a system of open political competition, allowing for alternation; effective participation of the various actors in decision-making; public accountability; transparency; respect for human rights, including freedom of association, and a free press and other media.*⁴⁸

In the same light as Bossuyt, John Healey an Irish writer and Mark Robinson an American politician in a 1992 publication gives a similar definition of good governance. John Gregory Dunn, an American writer adds that; good governance implies a high level of re-organization, effectiveness, but certainly does not imply the choice of a particular ideological model of state organization.⁴⁹

Judging from the above presentations; governance can be described as the manner in which power is exercised and dispensed by public authorities. It includes issues dealing with participation, feedback, accountability, in short methods and agencies of management. Be there from the government, civil society or private sectors, what is important and should be noted about governance is that, there should be interaction among the different groups. It should be noted that African traditional rulers had their own view or perspective of governance which of course was traditional governance with interaction as one of its principals. How effective will interaction among the different groups contribute in the processes, mechanisms and rules put in place to facilitate integration is part of what this study seeks to examine.

⁴⁶Churchill, E-Monono, Indigenous Minorities and the future of Good governance: An inquiry into the politics of local governance in the local council of Fako division, 1866-2001, (Buea CEREDDA, 2001, cited in Samah's Chiefs (traditional rulers) in Anglophone Cameroon, p.8.

⁴⁷Ibid p. 8, UNDP, *Governance for Sustainable Human Development*, 1997.

⁴⁸Jean Bossuyt., "Democracy in sub-Saharan Africa: the search for a new constitutional set-up." Presented at the ASC-Seminar, Leiden, September 24, 1993

⁴⁹John Dunn, "The politics of representation and good governance in post-colonial Africa." Pp. 158-174 in Patrick Chabal (ed.), *Political Domination in Africa: Reflections on the Limits of Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986

Integration

“Integration” is defined as a combination of two or more things in order to become more effective.⁵⁰ The law dictionary defines integration as the embodiment of a complete and final agreement between parties that are incorporated as equal into society or an organization of individual of different groups.⁵¹ The medical dictionary on its parts sees integration as the combining and coordination of separate parts or elements into a unified whole.⁵² That is the process where by the different parts of an organism are made a functional and structural whole especially through the activity of the nervous system and the hormones. These two definitions suggest that integration entails the fusing of two or more things to suit the purpose intended by those who wield power. Contextually, “integration” is the practice of uniting people, institutions or systems from different races or background in an attempt to update and upgrades one system or gives equal rights or some degree of duties and responsibilities for better administration. This study looks at integration as the way by which aspects of the past that are deemed necessary and useful are carried on whereas seemingly outdated or irrelevant ones are discarded. The choice of what to discard or take on is in the interest and orientation of the ruler or in our context those who wield power. In other words it’s a strive by modern administrators be it pre-colonial or colonial to blend what is considered old and outdated with what each epoch or administration considers as modern in terms of governance.

Objectives of the Study

This study is about the changes and transformations that have characterized and affected indigenous traditional institutions notably traditional chieftaincy in the Bamenda Grassfields. Attention is given to traditional administration of various polities in the Bamenda Grassfield by traditional rulers. How did political, economic and the socio-cultural organization of chiefdom facilitated the smooth administration of the different chiefdom by traditional rulers. What were the contributions of the chieftaincy institution in effective administration?

The study is about the transformation of traditional rulers to act as part of modern administration, their responses to the different processes, mechanisms and rules put in with the coming of the Germans are equally underscore in this study. The study has as aim to show the changes in the use of traditional rulers in administration at each time by the different

⁵⁰ Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, Third Edition, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 751

⁵¹ <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>

⁵² Ibid

colonial administrations. It has as objectives to show the restructuring or improve performance thereby, eliminating short comings or increase efficiency in line with the demands or needs of the German administration. How did colonial encounter strengthen or discourage efforts aim at the integration of traditional rulers into governance which was considered modern at the time? What obtains (the place of traditional rulers) of the Bamenda Grassfields under the administration of the Germans? Did the role traditional rulers play in German colonial Bamenda had an influence in efforts at making them part of the modern governance system?

What has been the impact on traditional rulers, their people and the administration in the socio-political and economic domain as a result of the coming of the British with integration efforts? This study has an objective to explore how traditional rulers influence events within the central administration, be it for their benefit or for general interest during the colonial and post-independence administration. The continuous drive toward the use of traditional rulers as auxiliaries and its effects on society is one of the aims of this study. Is the drive toward the integration of traditional rulers into modern governance an added contribution to state-building, reconstruction, development, the expansion of public service, management of resource-based conflicts and good governance? Are efforts towards integration an assurance to better administrative services to the population? How valid is the assertion claiming the undemocratic doctrine of traditional rulers is as a result of pre-colonial traditional administration? These and more are worth considering as some of the aspects that provoked this study.

The study analyses how the post-independent state relates with traditional authorities showing the continuities or discontinuities with the past in the present. Although the Cameroonian post-independent state adopted Western ways of governance, it is said that traditional rulers have largely abandoned traditional norms of administering their different polities to embrace “modernity”. A series of decrees, bills, reports and orders were signed and enacted by both the colonial and post- independent administration as efforts aim at making traditional rulers auxiliaries of the administration. Apart from these decrees, bills and orders, what other mechanisms were put in place to bring traditional rulers closer to modern administration is worth noting and describing in this study.

The study aims to examine and expose areas where the power of traditional rulers is greatly felt and the effects of their being made part of modern administration. How legitimate and legal are the powers of traditional authorities in relation to modern laws of administration. What criterion is used in measuring the strength of traditional rulers be it within or out of the

administration. Efforts toward integrating chiefs are instrument of social control and or an instrument to simply relieve the state of unwanted responsibilities is of significance and one of the pushing forces to this study. How have resources, incentives and rules in use influenced traditional rulers and the move toward making them instruments for governance. Generally, the study aims to examine the changes and transformations which have affected traditional rulers in an effort by successive administrations, to bring and make traditional rulers a more effective arm of “modern” administration.

Scope and Delimitation

The Bamenda Grassfield, our principal area of study, is part of what makes up Cameroon. The Bamenda Grassfield is located on the West Coast of Africa with Nigeria to the west, Adamawa to the east, Equatorial Guinea to the south as well as the West and South West Regions. It is located slightly north of the equator and occupies a surface area of 475,440 square kilometers. Cameroon is situated between two great river basins; Niger and Congo basins and shares the physical and cultural characteristics of both great river basins.⁵³ Cameroon embraces several of the cultural groups according to which African peoples have been classed⁵⁴ reasons why it has a variety of cultural grouping sprade all over the land⁵⁵ with the Bamenda Grassfield having both the centralized and decentralized groups.

The Bamenda Grassfield our main focus is a region in Cameroon located 366 kilometres north-west of the Cameroonian capital (Yaounde) with an estimated population of about 2 million people.⁵⁶ It has Bamenda as its head quater and is known or characterized by cool temperatures, heavy rainfall, savanna vegetation and scenic hilly location. The region lies along the Cameroon line and consists of mountain ranges and volcanoes made of crystalline and igneous rock. It borders the south Cameroon plateau to the southeast, the adamawa plateau to the northeast and the Cameroon coastal plain to the south.⁵⁷ Parts of the region are under the authority of traditional rulers with more than 120 chiefdoms scatter all over the seven divisions. The foundation of most if not all traditional societies in this area stems from migration, conquest and formation of *fondoms* and chiefdoms. In the process or course of the

⁵³ John Mukum Mbaku., *Culture and Customs of Cameroon*, Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 2005, p.1

⁵⁴ Tambi Eyongetah and Robert Brain, *A History of Cameroon*, London, Longman, 1974, pp.19-20

⁵⁵ “Centre de gravité du continent noir–, le Cameroon peut être considéré comme une Afrique en réduction et son étude est particulièrement bénéfique pour qui veut s’initier aux problèmes Africains.” Cited in Nzalie Joseph’s ‘*Structure of Succession Law in Cameroon: Finding a Balance Between the Needs and Interests of Different Family Members*’ Ph. D thesis, University of Birmingham, 2008, p. 16

⁵⁶ En.m.Wikipedia.org

⁵⁷ Ibid

formation of *fondoms* and chiefdoms, traditional rulers were at the apex of each society and had important roles to play. Considering the role these categories of persons play in their polities, it is necessary to situate and present the area of study. (See map1)

The North West Region covers most of what is called the Bamenda Grassfields which is one of the ten regions that make up the Republic of Cameroon. It was Baptisted the North West Province by the presidential Decree No 72/349 of 24 July 1972, following the administrative reorganization of the United Republic of Cameroon. The Bamenda Grassfield which is shaped in the form of a rough diamond⁵⁸ has seven out of the fifty-eight administrative divisions of Cameroon. These divisions are sub divided into thirty-four subdivisions. The seven administrative divisions include; Boyo, Bui, Donga-Mantung, Menchum, Mezam, Momo, and Ngoketunjia. (Map 2)

The North West Region by extension together with part of the Western Region of Cameroon came to be known as the “Grassfields” or the Grasslands at the dawn of European penetration. The name "Grassfields" is derived therefore from the vegetation as a result of its broad and grassy landscape.⁵⁹ Dankler, a German explorer describes it as "a sea of grass which stretches for hundreds of kilometers providing one of the most magnificent panoramas on earth"⁶⁰

The study is situated within a chronological line around the 19th century which marks the start of this study. This period falls within the migratory and the formation of *fondoms*/chiefdoms in various settlements under the authority of traditional rulers.⁶¹ The settlement preceded the creation of the governance system to regulate and manage society. Herbert S Llewellys maintains that, the problem of the origin of African kingdoms is closely linked to the general theoretical problem of state formation and governance.⁶² With the migration and formation of states, there was need for leaders to coordinate the day to daily affairs of the people. Those who led the people by virtue of birth or otherwise, became the touch bearers of their communities.

⁵⁸ C.T. Jumbam., “The Fulani Impact in theBamenda Grassfields, 1916-2008: A Historical Investigation” Ph. D Thesis in History, University of Yaoundé 1, 2012, p.23

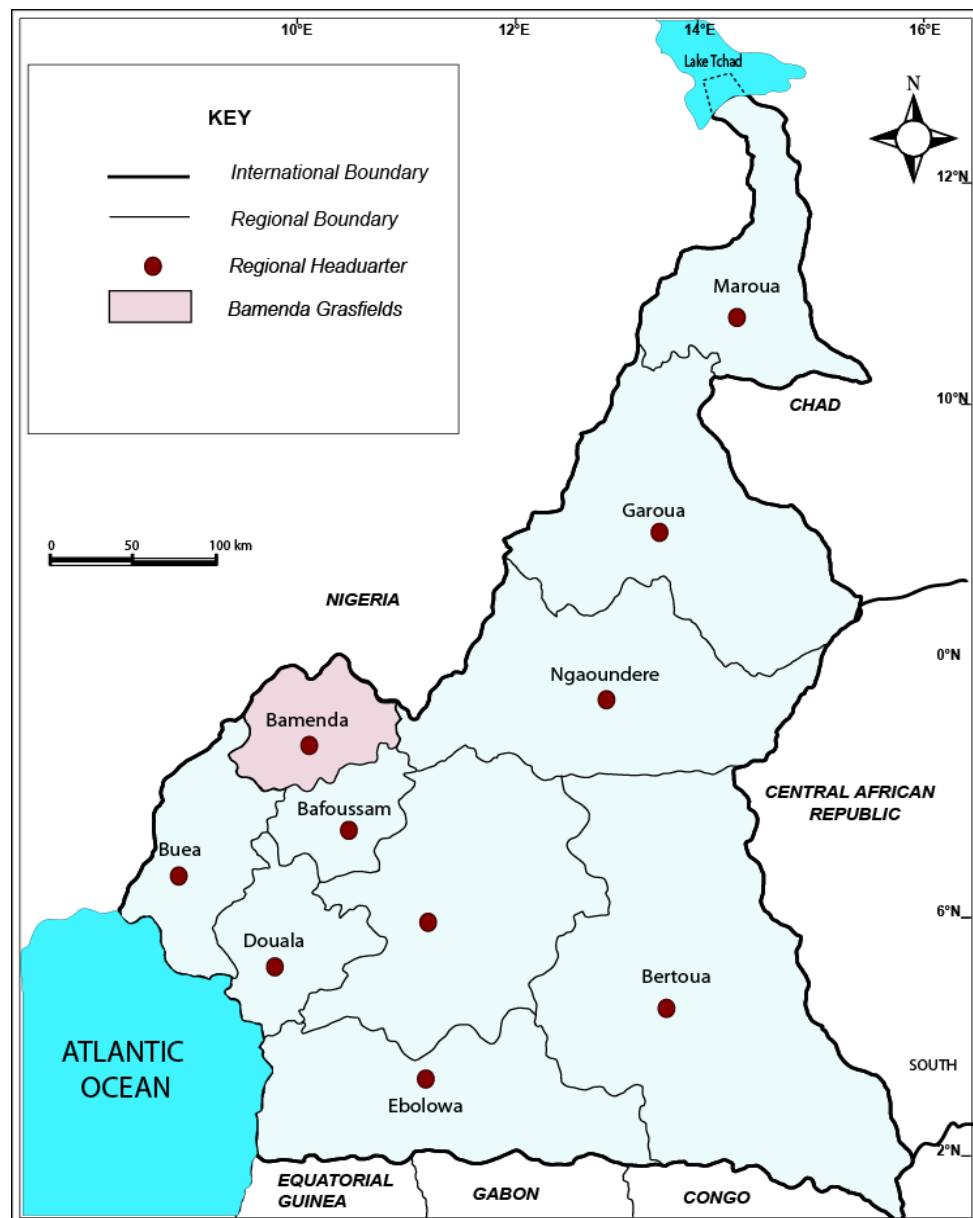
⁵⁹ P.N. Nkwi, German Presence in the Grassfields

⁶⁰ *Der Stern von Afrikawas* the Journal in which The German Catholic missionaries published their reports and achievements in the colonies. Sited in Paul NchojiNkwi’s *The German Presence in the Western Grassfields 1891-1913: A German Colonial Account*, African Studies Centre, Leiden, in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education, Computer Services and Scientific Research. Yaoundé, Cameroon, Leiden, the Netherlands Research Report No. 37, 1989

⁶¹ O. Roland and Fage., *Africa; A Short History of Africa*, Penguin Books Ltd, Harmordszorth, Middlesex, 1962, pp, 95-100.

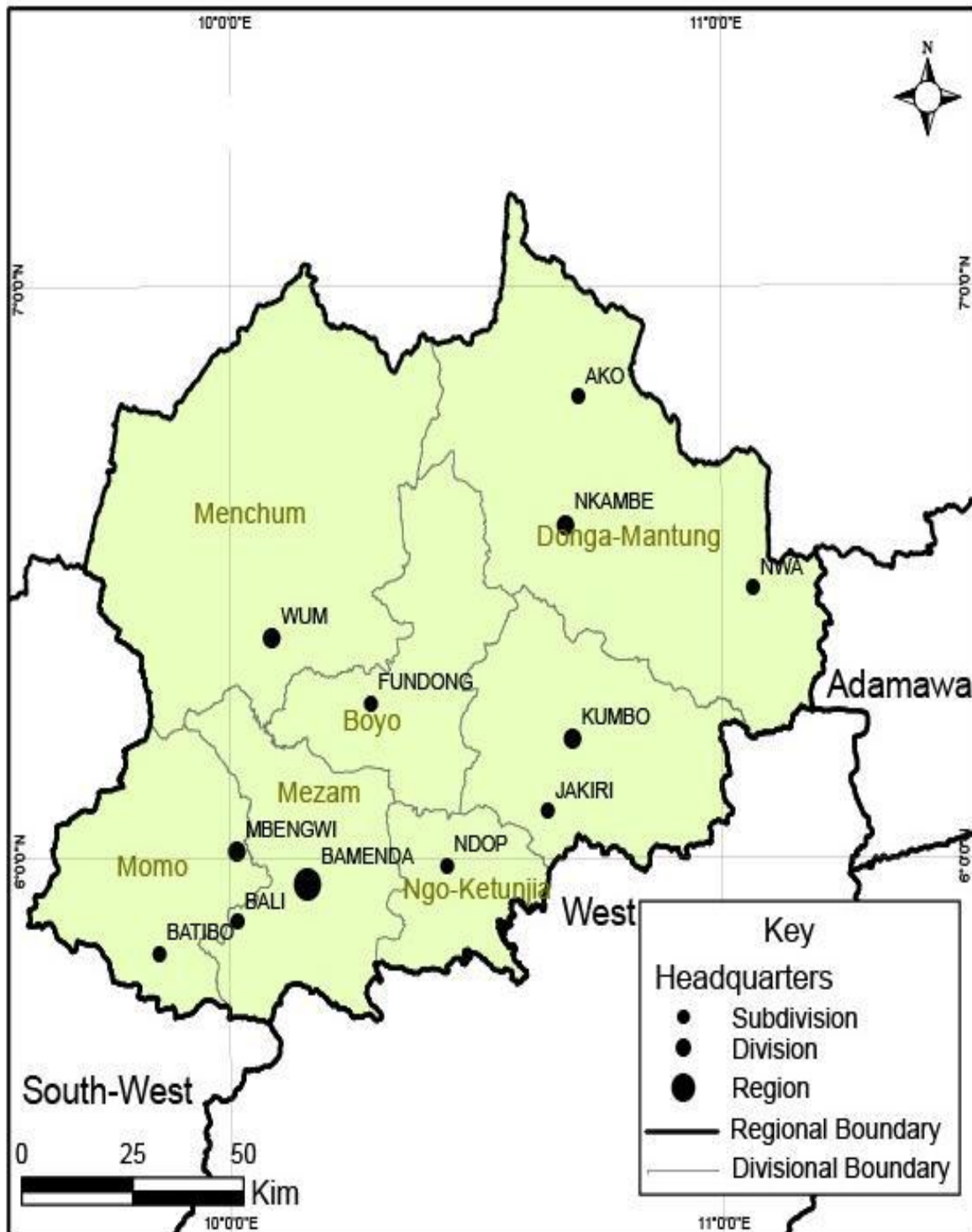
⁶² Ibid

Map 1: The Location of Bamenda Grassfields in Cameroon



Source: Macmillan School Atlas of Cameroon, Malaysia, Macmillan Publisher limited 2005, p.9.

Map 2: Administrative Divisions of the North West Region (Bamenda Grassfields)



Source: Map of the Republic of Cameroon, August 2018

They manage the day to day administration of their various polities as traditional administrators with little or no intervention from external forces. The study limits itself to 2013 which corresponds to the year the Electoral College was convened and elections into the senate called. Note before now, the senate has been in existence on paper before the convening of the Electoral College⁶³. Through decree No 20112/056 of 27th February 2013, 14th April set aside as the election date for the senate to go into operation. Our interest here lies in the fact that each region has to be represented in the senate by at least a traditional ruler, appointed among the 30 members permitted by law by the head of state. What is the interest of the state in making these citatory of person part of law makers and administrators of the state through the senate?

As administrators, is it an effort to “modernize” (integrate) the traditional system of administration as had been in use before colonialism? Although still informal, this can be seen as a mechanism aim at making traditional rulers a part of “modern” administration. The case of *fon* Galega of Bali stands out as a pointer and door opener for other traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield who became a part of the new administrative management. In that new or call it modern administration, political, economic and socio-cultural norms and objectives are affected and altered. In many ways and with time, traditional rulership would become part of a new dynamic/dispensation. This is the idea of integrating traditional rulership into modern administration and governance. That is making chiefs to be part of a new, call it “modern” ways of doing things, or carrying out administrative functions. In this new way or method, traditional rulers would become part of the colonial state (no longer the traditional state) and after independence; chiefs would become part of the post-independence administrative machinery.

Literature Review

The way traditional rulers have been used in administration and governance by colonial and post independence administrations in Africa has been the subject of so many studies. These studies have approached the question from so many angles and perspectives. There are those studies which have focused on the role played by traditional rulers in colonial administration from the perspective of the colonial policies that were applied. The opening question would deal with the way traditional rulers were used in systems of Indirect or Direct

⁶³The senate was created in 1996 as a result of the amendment of the constitution of 1996

Rule. Other studies have focused on the way chiefs were used not by making colonial policies to be the fundamental consideration, but insisting on what differences emerged in the long run. Still others have tried to go beyond just looking at chiefs as mere puppets who were used by colonialist to achieve their goals. In this way, the literature focuses on the way traditional rulers exploited the colonial presence to advance their interest, whether such were economic, social or political.

This study exploits pre-existing approaches but fine-tunes them to demonstrate how the major concern of each colonial power was to work towards improving the performance of traditional rulers so as to bring them into line with what they perceived as modern administration. The novelty of this approach is that whether it was during the colonial period or as has obtained since independence, the desire of each administration has been to “upgrade” the nature of traditional rulership and make it a part of contemporary governance. It suggests therefore that what traditional rulers have gone through in matters of participation and governance has been a process of making them more aligned to modern practices and challenges in administration and governance. In the post independence period, contemporary politicians have increasingly realized that traditional rulers are virtually indispensable in the search for the conception, definition and effective execution of a grassroots or participatory downwards-up development agenda. The search for strategies that enhance a sort of partnership between politicians and traditional rulers has made it even more urgent that traditional rulership that is the incorporation of the administration centered on or around traditional rulers should be developed. That way, traditional rulership is integrated into modern governance. This orientation in the literature has also caught the attention of scholars and is visible in the existing scholarship. From describing them as being at the crossroads of governance,⁶⁴ there have been discussions about the manipulative role of current day political leaders.

Eldridge Mohammadou gives an outline of the origin of the founders of the dynasties and the palace institutions of the different Tikar-speaking groups found in the Grassland.⁶⁵ He presents an account of their departure and subsequent settlement in the different areas in the grassland. To the author most *fondoms* in the Bamenda Grassfields originated from inter-group conflicts for supremacy among others. It is important to note that in the course of

⁶⁴ Cosmas Cheka, “Traditonal Authority at the Crossroads of Governance in Republican Cameroon in Africa Development”, Vol. XXXIII, No 2, 2008, p. 76

⁶⁵ E. Mohammadou, *Traditions d'Origine des Peuples du Centre et de l'Ouest du Cameroun*, Tokyo : ILCAA, 1986.

migrating; they either dropped or picked up some aspects that facilitated their movement and incorporation with other groups they came in contact with. For instance, the Tikar kingdoms of the middle Mbam arose from invasions of Bare-Chamba in the second half of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century.⁶⁶ It should be said that majority of the chiefdoms found in the Bamenda Grassfield originated from Tikar kingdoms. Eldridge's work is important to this study as it enable us to trace the migratory route of most chiefdoms in the Bamenda Grassfields

The short comings, imperfections and inadequacies of traditional institutions should be attributed to the limitations of the human foresight, intelligence and experience.⁶⁷ As a result of these limitations, Kwame says, it is difficult for generations to see far into the future which explained why tradition is seen as static and the inability to embrace changes. Accepting changes as a result of colonial intrusion meant introducing new concepts into the customs and tradition of the people with far reaching consequence which is what this study seeks to x-ray especially in chapter five. In a co-authored study, Nkwi and J.P. Warnier argues that traditional rulers have lost most of pre-colonial and post-colonial sources of power and if they do not remain at their rightful place in Cameroon, they may face serious troubles and for them to survive, they need to accept and play the role assigned to them by the ruling class⁶⁸ Before colonialism, traditional rulers were the divine symbol of their people's health and welfare, acted as head of the traditional government, chief executive, chief judge, army chief of staff and the high priest of his community.⁶⁹ Judging from the past, it is but normal that attention be given to the role traditional rulers can play which might create values, practices and beliefs which will be free from bias hence, improve the administrative setup of governance. While giving attention to the positive role traditional rulers can play as part of the administering body, their contributions in fragilising administrative procedures should equally be noted as seen in this study.

Ndabaningi Sithole suggests that traditional institutions had authority and legitimacy that post-colonial African governments are yet to attain. He says that; "The king is the People. To respect the king is to respect one's self. He who despises our king despises us. He who praises our king praises us. The king is us."⁷⁰ One of the effective means to capture the minds of African peoples is through their traditional institutions headed by the chief hence

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Gyekye Kwame, "Tradition and Modernity", *Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*, P.222

⁶⁸ P..N. Nkwi and J.P. Warnier., *Elements for a History of the Western Grassfields*, Yaounde, SOPECAM, 1982, p.16.

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ N Sithole, *African Nationalism*, Cape Town, 1959, pp97-97

integration. This is so because the people believe that “the king is the people; the king is us” and administration is for the people. Bringing in traditional rulers as part of modern governance is an assurance of effective corporations and better administration between traditional rulers, the people and the administration. Checks should be put in place by the state to curb excesses from chiefs in the process since traditionally there is a binding contract between the chief and his people done during the enthronement rituals.

This ritual calls for reciprocal respect of the chief and vice versa. Working with or through traditional rulers is an assurance of total and effective collaboration. The British colonial administration understood this strategy and that explain why they co-opted strong chiefs through the system of indirect rule though for their own interest to manage the affairs of the colony. But it must be mentioned that, this policy went a long way to preserve some degree of respect for traditional rulers, prepare them for the future and promoted their influence and inteferance in administrative procedures.

To disregard or trample on traditional institutions and their leaders is to antagonize the people and attract opposition as seen in the Ndebele maxim above. The Ndebele maxim is further confirmed by the Basotho in Lesotho, “A chief is a chief by the people.”⁷¹ The Lovedu in Transvaal of South Africa holds, “Chieftaincy is People.”⁷² From the above, it is clear traditional rulers have a great role to play in the life of their people. Must this role be played only when they are integrated into the modern system of governance and how effective will be the role of these rulers if given the opportunity since in most cases self-interest reign? This and more form part of what this study seeks to examine and add to existing literature. If chieftaincy is people, does it mean working with chief is having control over the people?

Modern governance today entails the use of concepts like democracy, accountability, freedom of expression among others. Do traditional rulers practice these concepts in order to be included or involved in modern governance? Some scholars have written about the democratic elements of traditional African societies. Adolphe Cureau, a French scholar, writing about the people of Central Africa said: “over the free citizens, the chief’s authority is as valid only insofar as it’s the mouth piece of the majority interests, lacking which character its falls to the ground”.⁷³ This can be contrary especially to the views of societies that were less decentralized in the Bamenda Grassfields though some traces of this could equally be

⁷¹ Jack Donnelly, “Cultural Relativism and Universal Human Rights”, *Human Right Quarterly* 6, No.4, November 1984, pp 413-414.

⁷² Forde Daryll, ed, *African Worlds*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1954, p78.

⁷³ L Adolphe. Cureau, “Savage Man in Central African: A Study of Primitive Races in the French Congo”, Trans. E. Andrews, London: T. Fisher Union, 1915, p.277.

seen in centralized traditional societies. In the same light, responsibility is described by British Anthropologists Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, as:

*the structure of an African state implies that kings and chiefs rule by consent. A ruler's subjects are as fully aware of the duties he owes to them as they are of duties they owe him, and are able to exert pressure to make him discharge his duties.*⁷⁴

During the investiture of chiefs, an oath of injunction is made between the chief and the people which is an indicative of responsibility than accountability. Though debatable, it is clear that dethronement of most traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfields are as a result of lack of responsibilities, non-democratic principles and no freedom of expression. In other words, the integration of traditional rulers in modern governance is also subjected to progressive attitudes being manifested by incumbent traditional rulers or else they are subject to be sidelined if not eliminated as was the case of Fon Doh Gah Gwanyi III, of Balikumbat. This is to show that aspects of modern governance are found both in modern and traditional systems of administration which when blended, can lead to better governance. Is this a motivation to make traditional rulers part of the “modern” or a means to an end? This study seeks to expose efforts by both parties to make chiefs part of modern administration despite their short comings.

P.N. Nkwi presents a detailed study on the pre-colonial inter-*Fondom* relation in the Grassfields of Cameroon in what he describes as “Traditional Diplomacy”.⁷⁵ The author sheds light on how the exchange of gifts between traditional rulers, marriage alliances and visits constituted the core of pre-colonial inter-fondom diplomacy aimed at preserving the customs and traditions of their people and to maintain peace among chiefdoms. According to Nkwi, the degree of friendship between Grassfields chiefs was to the extent that some chiefs confined their wills to trusted fellow chiefs to avoid diluting the culture and tradition as a result of external forces and its consequences. How external influence contributes in consolidating collaboration and integration efforts among traditional rulers and modern administration is what this study seeks to add to what has been documented. On our part, we shall go further to show how and why diplomatic relations among chiefdoms was destroyed with the coming of colonialism and the effects on integration efforts.

⁷⁴ Meyer Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard, “*African Political Systems*”, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1940, p2

⁷⁵P. N. Nkwi., *Traditional Diplomacy. A Study of Inter-Fondom Relation in the Western Grassfields, North West Province*, Yaoundé, Department of Sociology, University of Yaoundé, 1987.

In another study, Nkwi ponders on the presence of the Germans in the Bamenda Grassfields. He describes the penetration and establishment of the Germans and the reaction of chiefs⁷⁶ which led the subjugation and dethronement of some chiefs. The coming of the colonialist introduced new elements which did not help in strengthening the traditional system of administration that was practiced in pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield. In fact some chiefs who were in conflict with Bali Nyonga were poorly treated. Abumbi II of Bafut was dethroned, exiled and his kingdom reduced to flames. To add to Nkwi's work, this study contributes and presents the effects of the presence of the Germans in the Bamenda Grassfield in the whole process of trying to use traditional rulers in modern and its effects. In other words, it suggests colonial rule as being one of the factors responsible for the abuse of traditional rulers and their authority yet these rulers are willing to collaborate.

Chieftaincy conflicts in the post independent Cameroon are very difficult to handle without making reference to the colonial period. This is because it was a transition between chieftaincy succession practice before colonial rule and what happened with the end of colonial rule. Michael Ndobegang examines the position of chiefs in the grassfield region of Cameroon from the 19th century through the colonial and post-colonial state. He describes how chiefs from this part of the country use their power and authority not only to satisfy the colonial administration but equally used their authority to manipulate resources at their disposal to their advantage with the backing of the colonial administration. Ndobegang describes the struggles put in by chiefs to protect and secure their place in the post-colonial administration and maintain relationship with the educated elite. He presents the adaptability of traditional rulers to suit the situation at that moment or period at hand.⁷⁷ He equally presents how traditional rulers did everything within their powers to make sure they continuously remain at the top in all spheres in their various polities. This was in a bid to make their presence felt by the society which forms part of this study. This goes to strengthen the argument that efforts were being made by the administration and traditional rulers to integrate traditional rulers. Also, Ndobegang's study area is part of the scope of this study. It equally presents traditional rulers as traditional administrators who can do anything economically within their powers to satisfy colonial interest in order to increase the desire of the administration to make them part of modern administration judging from how useful they were to the colonial administration.

⁷⁶ P.N. Nkwi, *The German Presence in the Western Grassfields, 1891-1913, A German Colonial Account*, Leiden, African Studies Centre, 1987, p. 100

⁷⁷ Ndobegang "Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change", , pp 213-215

Atanda Philip examines the nature and effects of the British colonial policy in West African kingdoms, notably Benin and how it created administrative problems to the British.⁷⁸ The British adapted indigenous institutions for administrative purposes because they had a shortage in the number of administrators needed to administer their different colonies. As a result, the Oba of Benin and other chiefs (traditional rulers) had to be brought in to assist the British in administrative matters for continuity. With extensive powers and economic privileges under the policy of indirect rule, traditional rulers had little or no control as long as colonial demands were met. The misuse of power for their own interest under colonial rule motivated and increased their zeal to be fully involved, and be part of modern governance in post-colonial Bamenda Grassfields so as to continuously enjoy administrative favours. The works of Ndobegang and Atanda present efforts made by traditional rulers to remain as part of the colonial administration in order to protect their own interest while living up to the expectations of the colonial powers. This study will not only limit itself to chief's protection of their interest but an extra mile is made to show the contributions of other forces as well as factors, be they colonial or post-colonial administration in making traditional rulers part of modern governance in the Bamenda Grassfields.

Amaazee states that the *fons* of Bali, Nso, Bum, Kom and Bafut in the Bamenda Division and the *fon* of Bangwa in Mamfe Division became Native Authorities (NA) with courts and councils. The aim was to make paramount *fons* the *dejure* and *defacto* rulers over their people.⁷⁹ The recognition of some traditional rulers as paramount confirms the position they enjoy and brought in new mechanisms of political empowerment which was not fully welcomed by some chiefs because they had to pay allegiance to the paramount. This came as a result of the power and influence the colonial administration gave some traditional rulers. In a related study, Fuhnwi demonstrates the mode of relation that exists between the *fons* and their people as a result of the meddling of the colonial and post-colonial administrations which resulted to the classification of traditional rulers.⁸⁰ This study taking into consideration previous studies adds that, effort at integrating traditional rulers did not go without resistances which had wild effect.

Chiabi presents the role of traditional rulers as leaders over large *fondoms* who commanded a lot of power and influence. They controlled and received tributes from

⁷⁸ Philip Atanda., *Benin Under British Administration: The Impact of Colonial Rule on an African Kingdom 1897-1938*, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey, Humanities Press Inc., 1979.

⁷⁹ V.B. Amaazee., *Traditional Rulers (fons) and Politics in Cameroon History*, Yaounde Presse Universitaires, 2002

⁸⁰ Ngwa's "Paramountcy and the Control of Land", 2013, pp 13-14

conquered chiefs under their jurisdictions. Changes were inevitable with the coming of colonial rule as some traditional ruler lose their status as a result of their opinion, position and support to colonial and post-colonial rule.⁸¹In other words, those who refused to toe the line and work in collaboration with the colonialist were demoted, deposed or exiled. The case of chief Asonganyi and Abumbi are good examples.⁸²He goes further to say “chiefs played an integral part of the machinery of administration” they worked corporately with the British as “a single government in which the traditional rulers had clearly defined duties and acknowledge status equal to British officials”.⁸³This created a lot of disagreement between chiefs especially among those who had lose their status or saw their status reduced.To build up their lost reputations and make their voices heard and even louder, traditional rulers had to look for other avenues through which their actions and presence could be felt in administrative procedures. This study seeks to know and present the different mechanisms put in place by traditional rulers to make sure their voices are heard continuously in colonial and post-colonial Bamenda Grassfield.

On his part, Walters T. Samah sees traditional rulers as the highest authority with political, economic, socio-cultural and spiritual duties and obligations in their *fondoms*. Calamities befall anyone who goes contrary to the laws of this institution headed by the *fon*.⁸⁴He presents the role of traditional rulers in governance in Anglophone Cameroon. Sama says traditional rulers were strengthened through sanctions given to anyone who goes contrary to the laws of the chieftaincy institution. How have traditional rulers managed to use the challenges encounter with the coming of colonialism and post-independent administration as a tool to maintain their positions in modern governance in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroons is what this study adds to existing literature.

In his book, Walter Rodney contends that, the greatest impact of the colonial experience in Africa was that, it disrupted the evolution of these societies and transformed them from self-sustaining and self-reinforcing socio-cultural systems to appendages of the least economy though these traditional systems had not developed internal capacities to fully embrace capitalism.⁸⁵It should be noted these traditional systems are or were governed by

⁸¹ Chiabi., “Chieftaincy: Traditional Rulers in National Politics”, in *Annals of the Faculty of Arts, letters and Social Sciences*, Vol No 1 and 2m January-July 1990, University of Yaounde, pp 24-28.

⁸²These two traditional rulers resisted German occupation of their territory and caused a lot of casualties on the Germans. At the end, both were captures or say surrendered themselves to the German administration and Abumbi and Assonganyi were exiled to the Bota Island and Garoua respectively.

⁸³ Chiabi., “Chieftaincy: Traditional Rulers in National Politics”, p. 26

⁸⁴ Samah, “Chiefs (Traditional Rulers) in Anglophone Cameroon”, pp 35-47

⁸⁵ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Under Developed Africa*, Nairobi, East African Educational Publishers limited, 1972.

traditional rulers. As such, traditional rulers had struggled to adapt to the different and changing systems put in place both by the colonial and post-colonial administrations in order to enhance and facilitate modern governance. How has the disruption and evolution of the traditional systems promoted the different mechanisms, rules and processes used by both traditional rulers, colonial and post-colonial administrations to make traditional rulers part of the governance machinery is/are what we add to the work of Rodney in this study.

Robert K. Kpwang notes that the “denaturalization” of traditional authority by colonial powers in Cameroon has serious impact on the institution.⁸⁶ In fact the arrival of colonial administrators marked the inauguration of the practice of whimsy choices in the selection of traditional authorities in some areas in Cameroon, notable in the South Region of Cameroon. Traditional rulers were imposed new roles and functions which the traditional rulers had to respect or face the rod. This made traditional rulers to act according to the wishes of the colonial administration and not as stipulated by customs and tradition of the people under their jurisdiction. Philip-Blaise Essomba confirms that traditional rulers were taken hostage as they were obliged to apply strictly what colonial instructions prescribed.⁸⁷ The obligatory use of colonial instructions explains the role traditional rulers play in colonial and post-independence administration. Through this study, an analysis of how the forcful use of traditional rulers ignited their interest and quest to legally be made part of the administering body.

In another study, Hubert Deschamps, a former French colonial administrator, presents the reasons the British administration used traditional rulers in administration. In his study entitled “Et Maintenant Lord Lugard”, he argued that the use of chiefs was as a result of need and not to protect chieftaincy institutions.⁸⁸ Since their interest was not to protect chiefs but to use them as a means to an end, this has led to a decline in the power of African traditional rulers because all what the British did was to protect their interest and not to protect African traditional rulers through the policy of indirect rule. This is because some chiefs were used as errand boys. How did the protection of British colonial interest by traditional rulers through indirect rule pushed, motivated or facilitated efforts put in by the colonialist and traditional

⁸⁶ R.K. Kpwang, *La Chefferie “Traditionnelle” dans les sociétés de la grande zone forestière du Sud-Cameroun (1850-2010)*, Cameroun, l’Harmattan, 2011, p.50

⁸⁷ P-B Essomba, “les Mouvements Migratoire et la Problématique de la Chefferie Traditionnelle au Sud-Cameroun sous la Colonisation Allemande (1884-1916)”, in *La Chefferie “Traditionnelle” dans les sociétés de la grande zone forestière du Sud-Cameroun (1850-2010)*, Cameroun, R.K. Kpwang (Ed), Yaounde, l’Harmattan, 2011, p.123.

⁸⁸ Hubert Deschamps, “Et Maintenant Lord Lugard” *Africa* 33, 1963, cited in Ndobegang’s “Grassfield Chiefs and Political change”, p 18

rulers to be integrated as part of the governance machinery in the Grassfields of Bamenda is a contribution this study will add to existing literature?

Jean Pierre Fogui focuses on conflicts between traditional rulers and modern leaders during the colonial and post-colonial period.⁸⁹ He presents two major areas of conflicts that have affected the chieftaincy institution in Cameroon. The first being between traditional rulers and the modern elite while the second is between traditional rulers and their subjects. He presents the struggle between the *Fon* (who is paramount) and other chiefs when it comes to authority likewise with the colonial and post-colonial administration. In the course of this study, an examination is made to show how the conflicting relations between chiefs and their people contributed to the process and efforts aim at integrating traditional rulers by the different colonial and post-colonial administrations.

In line with Jean-Pierre Fogui, Evariste Fopoussi Fotso using the kingdom of Bandjoun as an example presents how the Cameroonian State has undermined traditional rulers since independence. He says the post-colonial government maintains traditional rulers not for the purpose of using them as partners for the development of the state but as stools that will help them remain in power as long as they want.⁹⁰ He describes the relation that exists between traditional rulers and the administration as one between an employer and his employee. He adds that the survival of traditional rulers in colonial and post-colonial Cameroon depends on the state.⁹¹ The legality of a traditional ruler in Cameroon is confirmed by the minister of territorial administration in the name of the state. His work falls in line with that of Léon Kaptue who points a finger at the post-colonial state for transforming traditional rulers into administrative chiefs.⁹² He describes the dilemma of post-colonial traditional rulers in Cameroon as people who have been placed between the hammer and the anvil. How has the relation which Fotso describes as that between the boss and his servant influence efforts at making traditional rulers part of modern governance? Has the servant grown to the ranks of a master or is fighting tooth and nail to take the position of the master in modern administration.

In the same line of discussion like Kaptue, but with focus on chiefdoms in the North West our area of study, Nantang Ben Jua analyses how the state battered and reduced

⁸⁹ Fogui, "autorité Traditionnelle et Intégration Politique au Cameroun", p 19

⁹⁰ Evariste Fopoussi Fotso, *Faut-il brûler les chefferies traditionnelles ?* Yaounde : SOPECAM, 1991

⁹¹ Ibid, pp 62-64

⁹² Léon Kaptue, "Pris entre le marteau et enclume, pouvoir traditionnel choisit-il de se prostituer au Cameroun : endoscopie de la situation de 1884 à 1992" Paper presented during the International Colloquium on "Rois et chefs" dans les états Africains de la veille des indépendance à la fin du xxe siècle", Paris 8, 9, 10 novembre 1999, p. 9.

chieftaincy through manipulation and “indirect rule”, to political clients⁹³. In his presentation, he sees traditional rulers in post-independent administration as parasites of the post-colonial administration of Cameroon. Jua says in the North West Province, the “people could reject the authority of a chief who still commands the government’s stamp of legitimacy”⁹⁴

Corroborating the argument of Nantang B. Jua, Leon Kaptue argues that not only has the chieftaincy institution in Cameroon seen itself being suppressed by post-independence administrators but chiefs as the incarnation of the chieftaincy institution found themselves between the hammer and the anvil.⁹⁵ The advent of the modern state and the involvement of traditional rulers in partisan politics worsened their situation because traditional rulers had to choose between the ruling party and the opposition. Chiefs that sided with the state were literally dethroned by their people against the wish of the administration and this generated serious chieftaincy conflict. The cases of Bali Kumbat, Ndop are some examples worth noting. How has the politics of “scratch my back and I scratch yours” affected the integration process especially in post-colonial Bamenda Grassfield is what we seek to analyse.

Adig Azang presents the changing dynamics of colonial labour in the Bamenda Grassfields. He examines the various methods used by the Germans from 1889-1916 and the British from 1916 to 1961 to recruit labour from the Bamenda Grassfields. His study presents the mode, pattern, connection and antagonism established between the colonial authorities and the indigenous people represented by traditional rulers who did a lot to protect their interest. Traditional rulers did their best to protect their interest and that of their people, be it through resistances, submission for fear of the unknown.

Adig goes further to say because of fear of losing his *fondom* which he had fought many bitter wars to build to the white man in exchange of intangible friendship, Galega had to comply through a written treaty with Zintgraff. To guarantee further protection, Galega had to stand by this treaty, fulfilling all its terms and conditions among which to provide favourable condition of trade, labour recruitment for roads, rail way, plantation as well as to provide porters. So, efforts at becoming part of modern administration were not the wishes of traditional rulers but as a means to remain in power.⁹⁶ Greed among other factors on the part of chiefs has expose the chieftaincy institution in a bid to have a voice in administrative matters is an addition to existing literatue.

⁹³Nantang Ben Jua, “Indirect Rule in Colonial and Postcolonial Cameroon”, *Paideuma* 41 (1995):43

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.45

⁹⁵ Kaptué, “Pris entre le Marteau et enclume” 1999. pp. 6-13.

¹³²Foupossi, „*Faut-il brûler les chefferies*, , 1991

⁹⁶Adig Azang M., “The Dynamics of Colonial Labour in the Bamenda Grassfields, 1889-1961”, PhD Thesis in History, University of Yaounde I, October 2012, pp 98-100.

In a related study, Konings handles the aspect of dual authority in the control of labour. This study demonstrates that chiefs in the Bamenda Grassfields have continued to play an important intermediary role between capital and labour. This seems to be particularly because capitalism has not yet penetrated deeply in this area and chieftaincy still occupies a powerful and sacred position in the society. In these circumstances, estate management has tended to rely on the local chief for both the supply of land and labour and control over workers at the workplace.⁹⁷ He focuses on the authority of traditional rulers who maintain their role as custodians, distributors and redistributors of land and valuable asserts to labour control in their polities. On the one hand, the colonial administration control labour in the Bamenda Grassfields⁹⁸. The control of labour in plantation by the colonial administration and the role of traditional rulers as custodians of the land hosting these plantations placed chiefs in a precarious situation. Konings cites the example of the Ndu community under the authority of Chief William and the establishment of the Estates and Agency Company Ltd (EAC). Koning's study presents aspects of living together under two authorities which is a source of contradictions and challenging whether to adhere to capitalist work norms or to traditional norms; both options surrounded with sanctions from the respective authorities. In this study, how has the aspect of living together under two divergent authorities enhance or facilitate the integration process of traditional rulers into modern administration is what has been added to existing literature.

As seen before, integration contextually is the bringing together of two systems of administration to update the other for better administration. But for such adaptation to empower rather than enslave traditional rulers, its content and pace of operation must be controlled by communities and traditional rulers as principal stakeholders.⁹⁹ Are traditional rulers to be empowered only through their integration into modern governance as part of the administrative mechanisms? Such is the question which Tache and Irwin deal with. They hold that modernization of customary institution is equated with "Westernization". They use the constitutions of Uganda, Ethiopia and Kenya of 1995, 1994 and 2010 respectively to back their opinion.¹⁰⁰ Is integration and adaptation of traditional rulers to the fast-changing world caused by the introduction of Western culture in the traditional setting, is a contribution we

⁹⁷Koning Piet., *Chieftaincy, Labour Control and Capitalist Development in Cameroon*, *Journal of Legal Pluralism*, 1996, pp 341-342

⁹⁸Ibid p.337

⁹⁹BokuTache and Ben Irwin, Traditional Institutions, Multiple Stakeholders and Modern Perspectives in Common Property: Accompanying Change within Borana Pastoral System. *Securing the Commons*, No.4.11ED, April 2003.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid

shall add through this study since they had and still continue to influence the rural population in political, economic and socio-cultural domain.

J. Senyonjo in his study addresses four main issues among others. He handles the question of the inconsistency of traditional institutions with modern governance. What drives the traditional phobia among some people? What do we think should be the proper role of traditional rulers and are they incompatible with modern governance? He argues that, traditional leaders have a great role to play in the creation of a strong and united nation.¹⁰¹ This is because, traditional rulers are known to occupy very important positions in their various *fondoms*, enjoy both sacred and secular authority. They incarnate the central ruling traditional authority in their respective areas of jurisdiction.¹⁰² This can be seen in the actions of most traditional leaders in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon, calling for a strong, united and indivisible Cameroon as a result of the Anglophone crisis that went viral in 2017.

Claude Tardits in his work highlighted the structure of traditional political institutions at the point of their encounter with the colonial administration.¹⁰³ He presents how Africans moulded their traditional system of governance typical of their custom and tradition with focus on the centrality and paramountcy of chiefs in their polities. As the paramount, the political, economic and socio-cultural activities in his polity lay within his area of competency and he is responsible and accountable for the wellbeing of his people. Metaphorically, Jean Pierre Warnier an anthropologist as seen above confirms that the chief is like a “container¹⁰⁴” that holds his subjects together. As the protector of his people, how did traditional rulers manage external or call it modern pressure especially with the liberalisation of the political landscape in the 1990s and still act as a “good container” for all his subjects is of interest to this study.

According to Senyonjo, traditional institutions can form an effective bridge between tradition and modern political and social norms, which facilitate and make easy and effective the task of nation building. Like Senyonjo, this study seeks to x-ray the efforts of the colonial and contemporary administrations to effectively manage their regions with the help of traditional rulers. Though Senyonjo handles issues in Uganda, our study will look into the various processes and setbacks in making traditional rulers part of the administration in the Bamenda Grassfields taking into consideration the merits and demerit from both the

¹⁰¹ Senyonjo, Traditional leaders, p. 1

¹⁰² Nkwi and Warnier, *Elements for a History*, p 16.

¹⁰³ C. Tardits (ed.), *The Contribution of Ethnological Research to the History of Cameroon Culture*, Paris, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1981, p. 106

¹⁰⁴ J.P. Warnier, “The king as a Container in the Cameroon Grassfields”, *Paideuma*, 1993, pp. 19-33

administration and to traditional rulers. Looking at the case of Uganda as presented by Senyonjo, how can integration leads to a better and efficient system of governance in our area of study and the entire nation in general. Why is the modern state bend on making chiefs part of the governance machine?

Owusu holds that the revival of traditional institutions and bringing them closer to the administration is seen as addressing national unity, mobilization and welfare of society, preservation of local language and culture under serious assault from external forces.¹⁰⁵ It equally goes to enhance greater participation in national development. As such, traditional institutions have a more natural sense of self-belonging and power in the resolution of conflict. Owusu presents the merits of bringing traditional rulers closer to modern administration. This must be a concern to the researcher to study why despite the effective role chiefs play in the resolution of conflicts, the state insist on making them auxiliaries.

Furthermore, focusing on the evolution of the chieftaincy institution in Africa, T.Von Trotha gives a synopsis of how chieftaincy evolved from the colonial to the post-colonial period.¹⁰⁶ To Trotha, the relationship between the chief and the colonial and post-colonial state has evolved into one where the chief acts as an intermediary between the state and the people, which the author refers to as “intermediary domination”.¹⁰⁷ This reflects an antagonistic relationship between the state and the people whereby the use of chiefs as instrument of manipulation reflects the intentions of state power to organize and directly control chiefs which to the people is disrespectful to their culture and tradition of the people handed down to them. Given that traditional rulers are aware of the implication of the disrespect for their custom and tradition but still embrace interference and willingly play along is a pointer to either pressure or interest which is of interest to this researcher.

Abwa Daniel holds that the impact of colonialism on traditional institution in most African societies, largely transformed the form and content of chieftaincy as well as the relations between chiefs and their communities.¹⁰⁸ Colonialism changed the standing of pre-colonial traditional leaders in strong centralized states who were accountable to the king-makers and other elites as oppose to chiefs backed by the colonial authority with little or no

¹⁰⁵ Maxwell, Owusu, “Domesticating Democracy: Culture, Civil Society and Constitutionalism” 1997, p 128

¹⁰⁶T. Von Trotha, “From Administrative to Civil Chieftaincy: Some Problems and Prospects of African Chieftaincy”, *Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*, 37-38, 1996, p.89.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸D. Abwa, “The French Administrative System in the Lamidate of Ngaoundere, 1915 – 1954”, *Introduction to the History of Cameroon Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, M. Njeuma, (Ed), New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1989, pp. 137-169.

accountability mechanism toward his subjects put in place. In order to continuously benefit from those who secure the chiefly positions for them, traditional rulers had to dance according to the tune of the music played by their protector which of course plays positively to efforts at integrating traditional rulers.

Conclusively, these sources reviewed here have in one way or the other dealt with duties and responsibilities of traditional rulers in the society. They have helped us to demonstrate the different mechanisms, rules and processes used by colonial and post-colonial administrations to bring traditional rulers into what may be described as modern governance in the Bamenda Grassfields. Since most of the books consulted do not directly or adequately handle efforts at making traditional rulers part of modern governance, a study of this nature is necessary taking into consideration primary, secondary (sources) and oral interviews for it to materialize. We hope that the findings from this study will ignite the interest of other researchers in the subject or related subject. This would enhance not only scholarship but contribute to social peace, harmony and better administration of the state in general and the Bamenda Grassfield in particular whose traditional rulers play a great role in the day to day life of the people.

Statement of the Problem

The study investigates into the Bamenda Grassfield indigenous administrative systems of administration, which for a long time like many African traditional institutions been labeled as rather obsolete, primitive, unproductive and irrelevant that needs transformation, especially where western ideas and politico-administrative and governance architecture are portrayed as superior to indigenous systems of administration. With this assertion, efforts have been made by successive administrations to integrate traditional rulers into the supposedly superior modern administration. This thesis sustains that African scholars and governments in general have the moral and cultural obligation to portray and valorize a better picture of indigenous administrative structures under the command of traditional rulers. The tendency is that, some intellectuals in association with Eurocentric architects of the colonial enterprise portray that, African traditional rulers in general and the Bamenda Grassfield in particular had no administration worthy of the name. This assertion of course needs to be deconstructed by opposing this propagandist believes with compelling facts and examples. There is need to demonstrate the resilience and robustness of the pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield governance apparatus entirely under the command of traditional rulers. With this believe couple with the role traditional rulers play in the day to day affairs of their various

polities, efforts are made by successive administrations to integrate traditional rulers into “modern governance”. This study supports the need for a deeper understanding, valorization and appropriation of the Bamenda Grassfield indigenous governance, administration and management systems under the authority of traditional rulers.

Traditional rulers in Africa have played important roles in the lives of their people and politics across the ages. This explains why they are held in high esteem which has earned them different appellations such as “*maître de la terre*”¹⁰⁹ (masters of the land) among others as a result of their importance, influence and role they play in the life of the people. As a result of the duties and responsibilities given to traditional rulers, they are expected to serve the interest of the population or their communities. As its main theme, this study focuses on the way colonial and post- colonial administrations have continuously sought to make traditional rulers part of modern governance not forgetting the role of traditional rulers in pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield.

This thesis is built on the premise that whether it was during the colonial or post-independence period, there has been a visible and sustained effort by successive regimes to include chiefs as part of administration and governance. The word “modern” is used as a relative and comparative terms and suggest/implies that the colonial regime worked to ensure that traditional rulers were fashioned or made to become a part of the colonial administration and governance. Colonial-style administration was labeled “modern” to distinguish it from the “pre-colonial”. In the same way, the post-colonial government have continued to make chiefs to function and be used (involved or integrated or made or accepted) as part of the post-colonial administration. To do so, visible and clear adjustments have continued to be made in order to enable or permit traditional rulers to respond to the needs of the post-colonial or better still, modern administration and governance. Thus, the word modern is used inasmuch as the same way to suggest that the contemporary is different and may be better suited to the needs of the period than the past.

As our research question, what are the historical factors/determinants that have fashioned traditional governance from colonial times to the post independent era in Cameroon in general and the Bamenda Grassfield in particular. Articulation in the study centers on the roles traditional rulers have played in the administration of their polities; and what changes and or adjustments has been done to enable them fulfill such perceived or designed rules? The

¹⁰⁹A. N. Njoya, “Njimoluh Seïdou and Mbombo-Njoya dans l’action politique au Cameroun (1984-1998)”, in C. H. Perrot and Francois-Xavier Fauvelle-Aymar (eds), *le Retour des Rois : les autorités Traditionnelles et l’état en Afrique Contemporaine* (Paris Karthala, 2003), p. 308.

central premise is that notwithstanding what functions or roles traditional rulers played in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods, the intention and action of the powers that be has been geared towards integrating them, or make them part of modern administration and governance.

What form(s) of government were in existence in the Bamenda Grassfield *fondoms*, how was it exercised and by who. What become of the various forms of government under colonial rule and its impacts on traditional governance? What were the different mechanisms, rules and process used by various colonial and post-colonial administrations to make traditional rulers part of the administrative system of governance? What role did traditional rulers play before, during and after colonialism in the administration of their polities? What have been the responses of traditional rulers to such overtures and opportunities? How did traditional authorities prepare for these roles? What were the aims of the colonial and post-colonial administrations or governments in using traditional authorities/rulers in administration and governance? What adjustments and, or changes did the colonial and post-colonial governments make in order to use (integrate) traditional rules in administration.

Some secondary questions which need to be addressed in the course of this study are;

1. Did the various *fondoms* that make up the Bamenda Grassfield have a form of government, who was in charge of what? What roles did they play in the period before colonial rule?
2. How were traditional rulers prepared/ trained for their role as part of modern administration? What mechanisms existed to check excesses by traditional rulers in the execution of their duties?
3. How did the colonial and by extension the post-colonial administration use/involve traditional rulers in administration and governance during colonial rule?
4. What adjustments and or changes were carried out in the roles/duties of traditional rulers and the way they have to carry out their role/duties in the new dispensation? How were such changes or adjustments carried out?
5. What has been the effects on such changes in the role/importance of traditional rulers in modern societies

To support the main focus of our study, a political scientist says a citizen in Cameroon be it out of fear or willingness in one case or the other, subject his/herself to two types of orders: modern and traditional.¹¹⁰ As such, for the society to function effectively they should

¹¹⁰ Cosmas Cheka, Traditional Authority at the Crossroads of Governance in Republican Cameroon in *Africa Development*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 2, 2008, p. 76.

be a blend of the modern and the traditional “orders” (traditional rulers being part of administration) for better administration. How has the blending of these two systems contribute in bringing traditional rulers closer to the administrative system of modern governance is what this work seeks to investigate. To understand the role each person (administrators and traditional rulers) plays in the life of any society, it is important to acknowledge that states have an impact on societies, and vice versa. The society has rules and regulations put in place by both modern and customary laws represented by the administrators and traditional rulers respectively.

Justification of the Study

Although there exist abundant literature, talking on chieftaincy institution in the Bamenda Grassfields, very few studies have focused on efforts at integrating traditional rulers as part of “modern” governance in Cameroon in general and the Bamenda Grassfield in particular. As a matter of fact, available literature on chieftaincy institution does not provide sufficient indications for policy designers to adequately handle the role play by traditional rulers in modern administration. A mixed up of roles and functions and the quest for personal interest had pushed traditional rulers to a tide corner in administrative affairs in the Bamenda Grassfield, a position they held for years before the coming of colonialism. In other words, modern politicking and immediate financial and material gains are gradually becoming the order of the day which has played on traditional institution. Legitimately or legally installed chiefs find it difficult to effectively play their roles as custodians of customs and tradition and at the same time as auxiliaries of the modern administration with the backing of modern administration. As such, traditional rulers are trap between traditional and “modern” systems of administration.

Significance of the Study

One of the fundamental aspects of research suggests that results of the research should be capable of contributing significantly towards the amelioration of existent and incomplete knowledge on a specific question. Not only adding to existing knowledge, but also research results could contribute in ameliorating the wellbeing of the society and foster development. As such, it is on submission that this study examines the significance at two major levels, at the scientific and practical level. Academically, this study is a modest and innovative contribution to the existent literature of chieftaincy history in Cameroon. It presents the past in its own unique way and establishes in a chronological manner, the changes witnessed by

traditional rulers in the effort to make them part of modern administration since the establishment of colonial and post- colonial administration.

The study is classified under the discipline of history of political history using traditional rulers to explain efforts at making traditional rulers part of modern administration. Traditional rulers by design have a responsibility to the people and vice versa. The integration of traditional rulers into modern administration could lead to disrespect of culture and tradition which can provoke a conflict as a result of external influence. The integration of traditional rulers into modern administration can act as a breeding ground for disagreements which if not well managed can escalate into a full blown-off conflict resulting from the disrespect of norms and values of traditional institutions in favour of “modern” system of administration. Practically, this study is susceptible of contributing towards a better policy formulation by decision makers in Cameroon. This is because chieftaincy as an institution has played an important role in the socio-political and economic development of some African countries notably Ghana and South Africa, so why not Cameroon.

This study is an alert to the scientific community and policy makers to note the magnitude and dangers of the non-respect for traditional rulers and their institutions which are highly respected by the people. In the process of integrating traditional rulers, failure to give them the respect as demanded by the customs and tradition of the people, the effects can be catastrophic. With the coming of colonialism, traditional rulers were classified and sub chiefs were bound to pay tributes to paramount traditional rulers which became a cause for alarm leading to tribal differences and court cases.¹¹¹ Putting in place a sound and credible policy for the integration of traditional rulers in administration taking into consideration the value the people attach to their chiefs would be a good idea. This is because traditional rulers are already considered auxiliaries of the administration. In addition, because chiefs greatly assist the state to foster development in their communities, maintain social peace at grassroots levels and equally contribute in easing the decentralization process, it is important a frame work be put in place that permits the constitution of Cameroon to back traditional rulers since they are already part of decision makers in decentralization. So, it is important this study which dwells on effort aim at integrating traditional rulers into modern governance for better administration be carried out.

¹¹¹ Ngwa., “Paramountcy and Land Control, pp. 14-15

Research Methodology

Four things historians are to take into consideration when writing history are description, narration, exposition and argument.¹¹² This study takes into account the four suggestions above. It describes the area of study and who traditional rulers are. It equally narrates the role, duties and responsibilities of traditional rulers in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence period. In the course of narrating, the study exposes efforts made by traditional rulers, colonial and post-colonial administrations to integrate traditional rulers as part of the model “modern” system of administration. Lastly, this researcher takes a position in the argument sustain in this study taking into consideration the views of previous researchers.

In this study, the chronological and thematic approaches are used in analyzing data collected. Data needed for this study, as well as the different methods used in collecting data from its different sources is described. The historical methodology is used to obtain facts from varied sources as described by Melville Jean Herskovits. Herskovits holds that, a historical research piece should be based on written history, archeological sources, oral tradition which is handed down from one generation to another and ethnology.¹¹³ The four historical methods can be grouped into primary and secondary sources (presented below) as generally referred to in historical research. This study elaborates on the procedure, methods use in collecting data and how the data collected is applied to solve the research problem which focus on the effort traditional rulers, colonial and post-colonial administrations have continuously sought to make traditional rulers part of the model governance mechanism term “modern” administration. Also, problems encountered in applying these methods are equally handled.

Data Collection

The researcher applies different methods in order to collect data in the course of this study. In order to realise this work, the qualitative research technique which are complemented with oral interviews is use. The selection of informants is based on gender considerations, age variations, profession and place of residence. An attempt is made to interview as many persons as possible but all those interviewed are not included in our sources because some informants wanted to remain anonymous. The categories of persons interviewed include title holders, elites, farmers, traditionalists and civil administrators. This is because these persons are in one way or the other involve in administrative affairs. It

¹¹²R. A. Marius, *A Short Guide to Writing About History*, 7th Edition Longman, Pearson Education, 2010.

¹¹³M.J. Herkovits, “Anthropology and Africa: A Wider Perspective” *Africa*, 1967, XXIX, pp225-257, quoted by Youchawo, “Les Tikar du Cameroun: Essai de études historiques des origines à 1961”, 2014, p.11.

equally helps us get the views of a cross section of the population concerning issues relating to traditional rulers and modern administration as handled in this thesis. This researcher equally applies the method of direct observation.

Sources of Data

For a scientific work of this nature to be realised, information is gotten from various sources. The sources vary in nature and form and are classified under two main categories: primary and secondary sources. These sources are used to examine and analyse the different mechanisms, rules and processes put in place by colonial and post-colonial administrations to continuously integrate and make traditional rulers a part of the governance machinery. It however cuts across auxiliary sciences like Anthropology, Sociology, Geography, political science not forgetting history.

Primary Sources

Primary sources consulted gives “first hand” knowledge on the role of traditional rulers in administration and efforts of other actors essential to the study. Primary sources may be eye witness accounts, letters, diaries, speeches, interviews, periodical literature and newspapers of the time which are consulted by the researcher. As a major primary source, the researcher conducted a wide range of interviews within and out of our study area both to individual informants and to groups of informants and equally visited archival centers. Information collected from these sources permitted the researcher to analyze, evaluate and interpret the various opinions gotten on effort at integrating traditional rulers as part of modern governance during the colonial and post-colonial era. Most of the primary sources were collected from palaces, private homes, streets, bars, offices, private and public archives, notably the Buea National Archives, Yaounde and Bamenda Regional Archives among others.

Secondary Sources

A secondary source in history which may contain pictures, quotes or graphics interprets and analyzes primary sources. Some types of secondary source include: Textbooks; journal articles; papers recommendation and reports, newspapers, laws, ordinances, decrees, court judgements, internet sources, criticisms, commentaries, encyclopedias, dissertation, thesis, magazines and a host of others. All these sources are collected/obtained from academic institutions among others the University of Yaounde I central, faculty and departmental

libraries, Bamenda and Buea University libraries, University of Douala and the Protestant University of Central Africa libraries, the Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovations, Ministry of Territorial Administration, the British Council of Bamenda and Yaounde, Foundation Paul Ango Ella and the Institute of International Relations of Cameroon. Information gotten from these academic institutions constitutes both published and unpublished works. Thus, with primary and secondary sources, a historical study on efforts toward integrating traditional rulership into modern governance in the Bamenda Grassfields is examined. Information obtained from primary and secondary sources helped the researcher to better appreciate governance in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Bamenda Grassfield by traditional rulers and efforts at bringing them into modern governance.

In the course of this study, some instruments were used to facilitate the collection of data which permitted respondents to answer to whatever length they could especially during interviews. Interviews were undertaken in order to sample the perspectives of traditional practitioners, stake holders and others in order to know their opinion on issues link to efforts at integrating traditional rulers as part of modern administration. Tape recorders facilitated the use of interpreters in cases where the local language is used in answering to some of the questions that were asked during field work. In areas where the researcher did not understand the language of the locals, an interpreter and a tape recorder were used. Through the interpreter, we spoke and recorded what was said and requested the services of the second interpreter to compare the information received.

Difficulties Encountered

Researching and writing this study was not an easy task due to a number of difficulties the researcher was confronted with. The multitude of *fondoms* in our study area made it very difficult for the researcher to visit all of them. This is because, there exist a multitude of traditional *fondoms* and chiefdoms varying from first to third class spread out on a total surface of 17.300km². According to the 2014 national institute of statistics report in Cameroon, there are about 117 *fondoms* existing in the Bamenda Grassfield under the authority of traditional rulers held in high esteem. They play a great role in the administration of their different polities. The area has five paramount or first class *fondoms*, 122 second class *fondoms* and a multitude of third-class *chiefdoms*. In fact, there exist more than five chiefdoms in each sub division. This shows the importance attached to traditional rulers who manage the chiefdoms administratively and other wise. It was very difficult and impossible for the researcher to visit all these chiefdoms because of the remote areas of some of the chiefdoms couple with bad

roads and poor transportation facilities. This affected the quality since all targeted areas could not be visited.

The sensitive nature of the study which deals with traditional rulers who are reserved persons in the society and much is not to be spoken about them is one of the difficulties we had. As such, informants gave out information with a lot of passiveness and reservations. Also, issues concerning traditional rulers are not discussed publicly especially by women which plays positively or negatively on the gender of our informants. The researcher had to use tact and diplomacy to overcome such difficulties. We installed confidence in these informants by raising other subjects that were not linked to the subject of our discussion. In addition to the problem of informants, was the nature of most national, regional, divisional and palace archives the researcher consulted. Most of these documentary centers were not organized and the nature of preservation of precious historical data were half ruined and covered with dust and parts of them eaten up by rats and other insects. Worst still some precious pages of available documents were slashed off by some ill-intentioned persons.

Chieftaincy crises that exist among traditional rulers in various *fondoms* equally play negatively to this research. This is because some informants gave out information that exonerated some chiefdom and portray the neighbouring chiefdom as the aggressor in issues related to efforts at integrating traditional rulers as part of modern administration. This was common especially when the issue on the table brought tension among chiefdoms. The people knew and saw their chiefs as sacred persons who are not supposed to interact publicly with the outside world. As such, discussing on an issue which warrants them to expose the sacredness of the chiefs is out of place. This was common in the Bafut *fondom* where chiefs of the *Ntare* zone shifted their plight and challenges in administration to the central traditional authority (the paramount *fon*) and vice versa.

The crisis in the English-speaking zones of the country slowed down the progress of the study. In most cases, the researcher was seen as a spy who wants to identify traditional rulers in support of separation. The above retarded the progress of the study. For fear of the unknown, all areas previewed could not be visited. All of these greatly slowed the progress of the research. However, in spite of these drawbacks, there was a burning desire and determination to see this project realized. This desire acted as a force to overcome both foreseeable and unforeseeable difficulties in the course of the research. In fact, this researcher was much more delightful, energized and motivated to push on each time important information was received from informant link to the study. This pushed the researcher to continue with the work till this stage.

This study had to be suspended for a while with the outbreak of the covid-19. The difficulties linked to covid-19 that frustrated movement and contact with people played negatively on this study. Government in collaboration with the world health Organization restricted movements in order to contain the virus bound us to suspend the study until when there was a relaxation in government policies in relation to the virus.

Organization of the Work

This work is made up of five chapters excluding the general introduction and the general conclusion. Chapter one focuses on chieftaincy as an indigenous institution in the Bamenda Grassfields before colonialism. Also coming up in this chapter is a presentation on how traditional rulers in both centralized and decentralized chiefdoms were organized during the period before the coming of colonialism. How did their mode of life and administrative set-up encourage or influenced their relationship with the people, the societies and their place in tradition or local governance? Lastly, an analysis on the pre-colonial territorial organization of the area is made. This will help show what aspects of life the people adopted in the course of their migration and settlement, how the environment influenced their way of life and contributed to efforts aim at integrating traditional rulers into modern governance. How did the experiences gather in the administration of the people all through act as a booster to integration efforts?

Traditional rulers and the German administration in the Bamenda Grassfields constitute chapter two of this study. It handles the organization of chieftaincy and the role of traditional rulers in German administration. What were the attitudes and perceptions of the Germans and its entire administration toward traditional rulers? What was expected from traditional rulers by both the Germans and the people of the colonized area? How did traditional rulers meet these expectations and with what outcome for themselves, their peoples and their societies? Thus, in this chapter, effort made by the Germans to ease or facilitate the integration of traditional rulers into German colonial governance is looked at.

After presenting the place of traditional rulers in German administration, the same approach is used to present the situation of the British in chapter three when they took over the administration of Southern Cameroons with particular attention on their rule in the Bamenda Grassfields. In this same chapter, we shall equally look at the role of the British House of Lord in relation to those of traditional rulers. The role or contributions of traditional rulers to adopted policies used by the British in the administration of the Bamenda Grassfield constitute part of this chapter. What efforts were put in by the House of Chiefs to facilitate the

integration of traditional rulers as well as the contribution of the House of Lord to British administration of the Bamenda Grassfield are issues raised. We conclude the chapter by bringing out factors that motivated the British administration to use traditional rulers as part of the colonial administration of the Bamenda Grassfield

In chapter four, efforts, role and reaction aimed at the incorporation of traditional rulers by the post-independence administration is our focus. A closer look at the different policies adopted, the place of traditional rulers in the application of the adopted policies is handled. Also, an examination of the mechanisms put in place to guide the chieftaincy institution, the efforts and the response of traditional rulers is looked at. This chapter refreshes the mind of the reader about the way the chieftaincy institution was involved in local and state governance during colonial rule. In particular, it describes the early days of the new cohabitation and quickly demonstrates how there was a systematic sidelining of traditional rulers to the embarrassment of chiefs of British Cameroons origins since the way chiefs were used in administration and local government in British Cameroon in general and the Bamenda Grassfield in particular was radically different from the experience that had prevailed in the former French Cameroons. Note is taken of how fast the francophone –led government very quickly moved to abolish the West Cameroon House of Chiefs, the highest structure of governance in the Bamenda Grassfield in which traditional chiefs were repugnant.

In chapter five, analysis on the effects of the integration of traditional rulers constitutes the central theme. In addition, the effects of the sidelining of the house of chiefs as the voice of traditional rulers and former partners in administration are also taken into consideration. Lastly, an examination on responses of traditional rulers to the different strategies, rules and mechanisms put in place aimed at making traditional rulers part of the governance machinery is handled. What are the changes and transformations which have affected the chieftaincy institution in the whole process of trying to use them as part of modern governance in the Bamenda Grassfield? The study closes up with a general conclusion which presents the indispensable role among others played by traditional rulers followed by appendixes and sources consulted.

CHAPTER ONE

CHIEFTAINCY AS AN INDIGENOUS INSTITUTION OF GOVERNANCE BEFORE COLONIAL INTRUSION IN THE BAMENDA GRASSFIELD

This chapter focuses on the place occupied by the chieftaincy institution in the indigenous governance space in the Bamenda Grassfields prior to the coming of colonial rule. In a way it is about the patterns of political, economic and socio-cultural organization as well as the nature and structure of power and authority held by grassfield traditional rulers in the period before the coming of European colonization. Again, the sources and methods of chiefly wealth, as well as the distribution and the importance of wealth in administration are equally handled. The place of traditional rulers in the judicial system of the entrie chiefdom is examined.

This chapter presents the opportunity to answer questions regarding the very nature of the chieftaincy institution, its pivotal role in the society and how officials who occupy it gain access to power to administer their people. The point in the chapter is that prior to the coming of colonial rule, the chieftaincy insitution provided effective administration in the political, economic and social dimensions. In their context and time, traditional governance may be consider or regarded as being modern. Each phase or period has its own challenges thereby bringing about revisions and changes in administration and governance in history.

A- Organization of the Bamenda Grassfield Traditional Society Before Colonial Rule

Before the coming of the Europeans in Cameroon, traditional rulers were considered as the indisputable custodians of the tradition and culture of their people. In reality, chieftaincy is one of the most enduring traditional institutions in the Bamenda Grassfield headed by a chief which has displayed remarkable resilience from pre-colonial through colonial to post-colonial times. The position of the chief and especially in centralized societies is guided by specific institutionalized traditions with respect to accession to office and performance of functions.

Most grassfields traditions holds that the chief must be of royal birth and of a particular chiefdom. In other words, a foreigner cannot become chief. This means that for an

individual to be called a chief, he must be a prince born on the tiger skin.¹ This is the first condition among others which qualifies one to ascend the throne. So, to perform the task of local administration as the governing authority, that individual must be of royal birth though a lot of changes came with the coming of colonialism as regard he who sits on the throne as chief or traditional ruler.

The culture of love and respect for traditional rulers and its institutions which originate from pre-colonial organization of traditional institutions still hold though with a lot of modifications on the roles, duties and responsibilities of traditional rulers with the passage of time. Like the biblical King Solomon, judgment passed by traditional rulers was with neither fear nor favor and their wisdom in handling administrative affairs and the settlement of disputes is considered to have come from God, as was the case with King Solomon in the Bible.²

In pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield, traditional rulers effectively wield powers in the executive, legislative and judicial domains in the day to day running of the territory.³ They were the political, social, economic and cultural head of the traditional state.⁴ As political head, the traditional ruler was responsible for the maintenance of law and order in his polity. He was the guardian of the fundamental values of his people and mediated between them and the spiritual forces. He administered tributes, court fines, market tolls, and other revenues. The chief/traditional ruler was also the final arbiter in the administration of justice. It can thus be seen that in pre-colonial Bamenda grassfield, traditional rulers commanded a great deal of autonomy. However, he ruled with the advice of a council that has been variously termed an inner or Privy Council. The council acted as a check to the powers of the chief⁵ In societies where the system of traditional organization functioned appropriately, these institutional checks as well as the queen mother safeguarded against dictatorial tendencies.

Pre-colonial traditional authorities derived their authority from a variety of sources: ancestors, rights of conquests, control over land, directs descent from great ruling ancestors or membership in a particular ruling family. They derived their legislative, executive and judicial powers from age long tradition of the ancestors who were recognized and revered over time

¹ In Bambili and Nso languages, the prince is referred to as a *muo ntoh* and *wan ntoh* respectively

² The Good News Bible with Deuterocanonical/ Apocrypha, First King, chapter 3:16-28, Claretian publication, march 10 1993, pp. 397-398

³ Fisiy, Cyprian F., *Power and Privilege in Administration of Law: Land Reforms and Social Differentiation in Cameroon*, Leiden, African Studies Centre, 1992, pp. 212-213.

⁴ Oduro-Awisi., "Chieftaincy Disputes in Akuapem Traditional Area: A Search for Solution", MA Desertation, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi Ghana, August 2013, p.36

⁵ Ibid, p 37

by all who found themselves in their area of jurisdiction.⁶ For example, among the powerful and influential Tikar tribes of the Bamenda Grassfields (Nso, Mankon, Kom, Bafut among others) in the Bamenda grassfield, traditional rulers were regarded as representatives of the gods and the liaison between the living and the dead. They are the custodians of the people's tradition and culture.⁷ The authority of traditional ruler is global; covering persons, goods and land. As such, they are the custodians of land which implies he owns and controls everything that exist in his polity as the administrator.

Traditional rulers in pre-colonial African societies just like those of the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon were political, economic and religious leaders of their polities. They are not just temporal but also spiritual leaders. That is, they are chief priest; a representative of the ancestors who ensures the liaison between the living and the dead and considered to be masters of the land.⁸ The Bamenda Grassfields chieftaincy institution under the authority of traditional rulers is one of the most documented and cherished traditional institutions in the political and social history of Cameroon. This is as a result of the role these categories of person play in the organization and functioning of the different traditional institutions in the society, their roles as custodians of the people's culture and tradition as well as the fact that these institutions and their leaders have stood the test of time. The taboos relating to their conduct and mannerisms are all intended to remind them and their subjects that the position traditional rulers occupy are sacred and therefore must be respected and revered by all.⁹ In fact chieftaincy as an institution in the Bamenda Grassfields emerged from the social fabric of the land and its nobody's creation and therefore cannot be easily destroyed.¹⁰ Both the chief and his subjects were to maintain strict accountability to ensure sound government.

The foundation of governance in pre-colonial Africa was based on the African conception that "the king or queen ruled but at the pleasure of the people, for a king without subjects is no king or queen."¹¹ The form of governance practised before colonial rule was based on the people. That is, the people set the standards by which the actions of the ruler or leader were judged. His actions were sanctioned by the people's representatives (*kwifor*). As such, the action of a chief is a reflection of the will and desire of the people. The different societies were well organized and stratified. Indigenous Bamenda grassfield societies had

⁶ Fisiy, *Power and Privilege in Administration of Law* 1992, pp. 212-213.

⁷ Gluckman, Max, "The kingdom of the Zulu of South Africa," Fortes, *African Political Systems*, pp. 30-31

⁸ Ibid; Bentsi-Enchill, Kwamena, *Ghana Land Law*, London, Sweet and Maxwell, 1964, p.46, note 5.

⁹ Gyekye, K., 1996. *African Cultural Values: An Introduction*. Accra: Sankofa Publishing Company, p.109

¹⁰ Interview with Syracuse Lee Been, 59 years, member of the Nso *ngwerong* traditional society, 8th November 2016, Bafoussam

¹¹ Interview with Abumbi II, 67 years, *fon* of Bafut, November 2017, Bafut Palace.

varying forms of political, economic, social and legal institutions which had different patterns of philosophy and culture. The societies were classified into two groups: centralized (acephalous) and non-centralized (non-acephalous societies) political systems of administration.

Most chiefdoms in the Bamenda Grassfields till date are dominated by centralized chiefly societies. Under the centralized chiefly societies, each society existed as a separate political entity governed independently by its authorities. The leaders put in place administrative, judicial and economic machinery activities which were binding to all inhabitation of that society. Villages under the centralized system of administration set up a system of government in which the direct descendant and heir to the throne held power at the center and delegated authority to subordinate traditional rulers. This was not the case with decentralized pre-colonial traditional societies found in the Bamenda Grassfields.¹² The organization of *fondoms* in the Bamenda Grassfield was thus linked to the complex interplay of economic, social and political power.

I- Socio-Political and Religious Set Up of Traditional Institutions in the Bamenda Grassfield

Traditional rulers acquired authority over their subjects from diverse sources. According to Max Weber, the right of a traditional ruler to command political power over his people comes from three sources; tradition, charisma and legacy¹³. The chiefs exercise continuous political power thanks to the tradition of hereditary rule. Charisma as one of the sources of power involves no skills or knowledge and has no particular way or set up for the chief to follow in order to better administer his people. Charisma as a source of political power results from the exceptional strength acquired by the personality of the traditional ruler.

Legality on its part is attached to the authority of a political office especially when the duties of that office are performed in a legal and constitutional manner. In the traditional system of administration, legality surfaces during the stoning of a newly crowned traditional ruler which signifies his acceptance as the traditional ruler of that community. Legality in traditional administration is exercised through different traditional institutions working in close collaboration with the traditional ruler for the management of the *fondom* for the benefit of all. These institutions made sure administration were performed in a legal and

¹² Ndobegang M., "Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change in Cameroon, ca. 1884-1966", PhD Thesis, University of Boston, 1985, p36

¹³ B. Amaazee's *Traditional Rulers (Chiefs) and Politics in Cameroon History*, Presses Universitaires de Yaounde, 2002, p10

constitutional manner as handed down by the ancestors or according to the custom and tradition of the people. The chief was seen as a singular figure, the incarnation of the customs and traditions of his people, powerful and enjoyed a number of prerogatives¹⁴. In the same line of reflection with Nkwi, Busia says:

When a chief was selected and initiated into his office, he became at once a judge, a commander-in-chief, a legislator, and the executive and administrative head of his community. It was not many offices, but a single composite office to which various duties and activities, rights and obligations were attached¹⁵ ... a chief or king had the power to raise taxes, or exact tribute, or ask his people to work on his farm, or even call them to take up arms to defend the chiefdom. But he had the corresponding obligation to dispense justice, or to protect the interests of his people, or ensure their welfare by certain ritual acts and observances. The ruler's subjects knew what duties they owed him, they also knew what duties he owed them, and they could exert pressure to make him discharge those duties.¹⁶

Judging from the above, traditional rulers have been and are still the pillars of nation building from time immemorial. Chieftaincy as an institution under the authority and command of a traditional ruler (chief) is assisted in this task by a council of elders and other traditional institutions who act as administrative agents and served as the eyes and ears of the ruler.¹⁷ They represent the chief in the different quarters of the chiefdom and help in the realization of communal goals as envisaged by the traditional ruler.¹⁸

The traditional institution is an assembly of traditional organs, agents, bodies and persons whose main aim is to maintain law and order and promote the development of the society. They made sure everything works according to the norms of the society. They act as advisory council to the *fon* to facilitate his duties and functions as the administrator of the land. The different units that make up traditional institutions among others include the lineages, clans, quarter and village. These units are controlled by traditional institutions such as council members, *kwifor*, *takumbeng* (*kwifor* and *takumbeng* being regulatory societies) and the *fon* himself. This organization eases the administration of the *fondom* under the leadership of the *fon*.

¹⁴ Nkwi., *Traditional Diplomacy: A Study of inter-Chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfields, North West Province of Cameroon*, Yaounde, SOPECAM, 1987, P. 39

¹⁵ K.A. Busia, *Africa in Search of Democracy*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967, p41

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 25

¹⁷ Amaazee., *Traditional Rulers (Chiefs) and Politics in Cameroon History*, Presses Universitaires de Yaounde, 2002, p10

¹⁸ Oladimeji Aborisade (ed) *Local Government and the Traditional Rulers in Nigeria*, Ife: University of Ife Press, 1985, p.156

i- Political Setup

Traditional institutions are administratively stratified from the smallest unit to the biggest starting from the nuclear family up to the *fon* who is the highest authority in the land. The smallest unit of the kinship is the nuclear family (*nfeu* in Nso)¹⁹ made up of parents and the children. Above the nuclear family was the compound (*achan* in Batibo)²⁰, headed by a compound head (*mbachan* in batibo and *mbong ndugu* in Bafut).²¹ Next is the extended family, *ngwe-enda* as refer to in Bafut. The extended family is made up of a number of nuclear families who descend from a common father. The *ngwe-enda* is made up of children of the same father who have set up their own families. Next in line is the lineage (*acheu* in the Bafut language), consisting of a number of extended families having a common ancestor. It is headed by a successor of the founder of the lineage called the lineage head, (*Ta-cheu*).²² Depending on the village, a lineage could be split into two or more lineages depending on the size. According to the Nso tradition, people of the same lineage cannot be married no matter the situation and size of the lineage even if fragmented into smaller group. The contrary holds in Bafut. When the lineage becomes too big and is splited, children from the two lineages are free to get marry to each other.²³

From the lineage we move to the quarter, *aba e ngha ku*, as seen in Batibo. The quarter is headed by a quarter head, *Ta-nikuru*. The quarter is made up of lineages; while many quarters make up a village, *nteh* in Bali, headed by a chief /*Nfor* or a variation of that name in the local language spoken by the various villages in the Bamenda Grassfield. With villages that do not have chiefs, the paramount *fon* appoints his favourite who acts as his representative. The representative gives the *fon* feedback on the administration of that part of the *fondom*.²⁴ According to Walters Samah, chiefs were in two categories. Firstly, there were those who have the primary executive authorities who handle political office directly without passing through an intermediary. The second category comprised those who were subordinate to primary executive authority. They dealt with political office only through an intermediary from their superior chiefs recognized by the subordinate leader themselves.²⁵ In this case, the appointed ruler (*Butangchuo*) cannot fully handle state matters without permission from the

¹⁹ Interview with Shey Banla Federick, 56 years, Driver, August 2016, Jakiri.

²⁰ Interview with Achia Vasco, 41 years, a trader, August 2016, Ntarikon

²¹ Interview with Francis Ngwa, 54 years, Lineage head, Plumber, Bamenda, August 2017, Alakuma.

²² Ibid, August 2017

²³ Interview with Elisabeth Manka'a, Age 92, wife of a chief, 23 September 2012, Mankanikong

²⁴ Interview with Divine Tangang, Age 39, Private Secretary to the *Fon* of Bafut, , 25th September, 2012, *Fon's* Palace, Bafut.

²⁵ Samah, "Chiefs (Traditional Rulers) in Anglophone Cameroon, 2006, pp. 3-4.

fon unlike the chiefs (*beu nfor*) who has the right to carry out reforms with or without permission from the paramount *fon* especially in their respective chiefdom.

Political power is exercised according to the stratification of the *fondom*. Power and authority in administration emanates from the *fon* and flows downward according to the political organization as presented above. As mentioned before, each lineage head is answerable to the chief who heads a village, the highest authority at that level. A number of villages come together to form a *fondom* under the authority of the paramount ruler who in most cases in our study area, is called a *fon*. He is the supreme commander and the administrator of the land. The power and influence of the *fon* in pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield was felt in all domains of life.²⁶ Following the administrative set up of Cameroon as of today, the President is the head of the executive but his power and authority is felt in the other arms of government. He appoints members of the other arms which makes them answerable to him. This was exactly the role played by traditional rulers in pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield. Judging from the power and influence exercised in all domains by traditional rulers in pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield and looking at the constitutional provision of Cameroon today, (part V, Article 37(3), 18th January 1996) (see appendix I) one is tempted to say inspiration in building the constitution was gotten from the role of pre-colonial traditional rulers. If regarded as such, effort at integrating traditional rulers into modern administration started with the power, influence and role of traditional rulers as reflected in the constitution as stated above. Most chiefdoms/*fondoms* in this part of the country were heterogeneous in nature as stated by Fortes and Evans-Pritchard in their classification of African political systems which is centralized, administrative and judicial in systems.²⁷

ii- Social Organization

Most *fondom* if not all in the Bamenda Grassfields are stratified into two main classes; the first and second classes. The first class is made up of members of the royal family while the second classes are commoners. There exist a third class which was made up of slaves but with the coming of colonialism, it faded away. Despite the stratification, members from the commoner's class could climb the ladder of nobility either by serving in the palace for a particular period or pay huge sums of money and items in order to be integrated into an upper class of the royal house. Although the society was stratified, the *fon* headed all the different

²⁶ The Constitution of Cameroon, Part V, Article 37(3), 18th January 1996

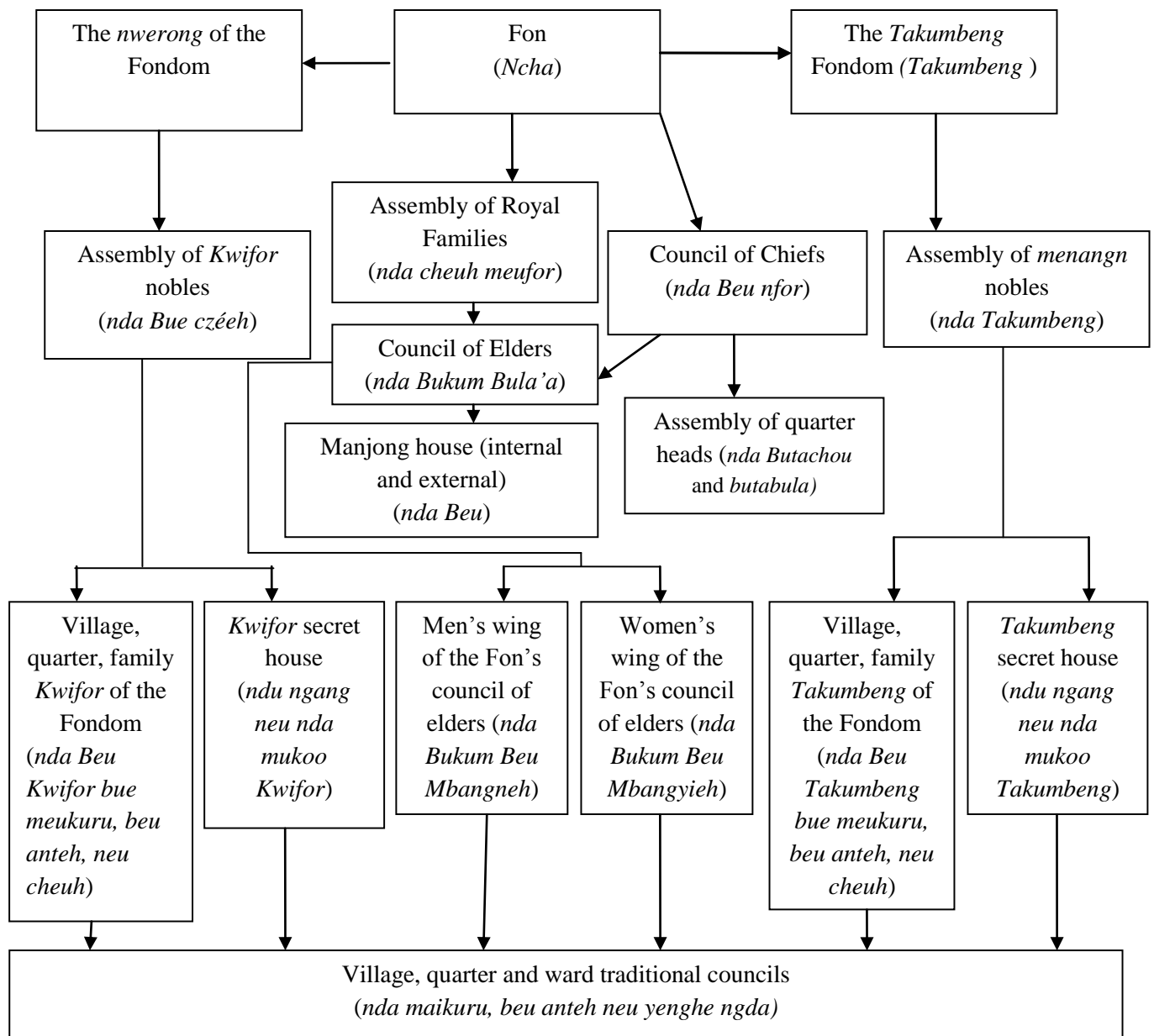
²⁷ M. Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchards (eds), *African Political Systems*, London, Oxford University Press, 1940, p.1

classes with support from other institutions which enabled him carry out his duties and responsibilities as the administrator and custodian of the *fondom*.

Traditional societies that made up the Bamenda Grassfield are organized into federated state with centralized system of administration having a hierarchical form like a pyramid with the traditional ruler (*fon*) at the apex. This means that, the *fon* could unilaterally take a decision on sensitive issues concerning the village without consulting his council of advisers and assume the consequences. His word is law as opposed to the modern administrator who is bound to consult the law before a final decision is taken.²⁸(See apendex II) Here we see the powers of the President of the Republic who appoints the Prime Minister and on the proposal of the latter; the other members of governments are appointed. This is not the case with decisions taken by traditional rulers in pre-colonial Bamanda Grassfields. Decisions taken by the *fon* can fall in line with the advice of the council of elders though the *fon* is not bound to apply or respect the advice he receives. One is tempted to conclude that the modern state drew inspiration from the pre-colonial traditional system of administration in order to draft its laws which are the genesis of integration effort. The traditional ruler puts in place an administrative form of machinery in the form of traditional institutions as presented on the chart below (see chart below). According to the tradition and customs of the people of the Bamenda Grassfields, the traditional ruler is the first citizen of the *fondom*. He protects the ancestral land and is the administrator of the entire land.

²⁸ The Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon, 14th April 2008, pp 5-7 (Section 10 (1) chapter one of part II of law No 2008/001 of 14th April 2008 to amend and supplement some provisions of law No 96/6 of 18th January 1996 to amend the Constitution of 2nd June 1972 which handles the executive powers

Figure 1: Organization Chart of the Traditional Government in the Bamenda Grassfields Fandom



It should be noted that each village in the Bamenda Grassfields has its own appellation for the traditional government. In the chart above, we use Bafut, Nso and the Batibo languages to demonstrate the different stratas in traditional administration. We focused on the Bafut language because most of the Tikar tribes which Bafut happens to be one of them have similar words. This means that if somebody from one of the tribes speaks, he/she can be understood by people from the other Tikar tribes.

Source: Ngwa, Paramountcy and the Control of Land in the *Bafut Fandom*, 1901-1974, p.49

This chart presents the stratification of the chiefdom from top to bottom indicating the positions of various institutions and the role they play in the administration of the territory. From this chart, at the top we have the *fon*, *kwifor* and *takumbeng*. The three hold the *fondom* together headed by the *Ncha\ nfon*. His position (at the center) indicates he is protected by *nwerong* and *takumbeng*. His rule is enforced by the *nwerong* and *takumbeng* as the administrator of the land, protecting him from any danger. They act as the spiritual protectors and advisers to the *fon*. Modern administration has equally instituted a battery of guards and advisers around the President which this study sees as the genesis of effort at bringing in the traditional into the modern starting with rules. This means that aspects of traditional administration are adopted and integrated to be used as part of the governing rules. His position places him as the first citizen of the land. He heads the *fondom*; so, whatever he decides in relation to the administration of the land is binding and implemented all over the entire *fondom*.²⁹ His rule is felt by all in the society as indicated by the arrows on the chart above. That is, the authority and decisions of the traditional ruler flows downward to all the other units be it village, quarter or ward. It should be emphasized that the basis of the constitution of all villages under the authority of a traditional ruler stems from culture. As such, the constitutional is understood within the context of the culture of the people.³⁰ According to the tradition and customs of the people, the traditional ruler is the link that protects both the ancestral land and the people in it and as such, he is the administrator of the land.

iii- The Traditions and Culture of the People of the Bamenda Grassfiels

In the Bamenda Grassfield, the people who occupy this area look at traditional administration from a different perspective when compared to the dominant national approach of looking at administration. This is because traditional administration takes into consideration the existence and respect of ancestors who are believe to be the gods of the land. As such, they belief in concepts that guide the people in that religion. Some of them belief in the Supreme Being, deities, ancestors, sculptures and the concept of death, life hereafter among others. The understanding and practice of these beliefs bring the people together, thus establishing social and religious cohesion. According to Mbiti, the existence for Africans is a religious phenomenon; man is a deeply religious being living in a religious

²⁹Interview with Divine Tangang, Age 39

³⁰ Aletum, *Bafut Institutions in Modern Politics*, Cameroon, Yaounde, SOPECAM, 1990, p. 25.

universe.³¹ One of these beliefs is the role the ancestors play in the life of the society through traditional rulers who acts as intemediaries.

Traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield have a special place reserved for the ancestral spirits and as such, the ancestors occupy a very unique position in the realm of spirits. Ancestral spirits are the spirits of the dead who have departed from the land of the living and are believed to be in the land of the dead. The departed are not so far away and are believed to be watching over their families like a “cloud of witnesses”.³² Ancestors play important role in the day to day life of the people under the authority and supervision of traditional rulers. According to the *fon* of Nso, ancestors act as friends at the court to intervene between man and the Supreme Being and to get prayers and petitions answered more quickly and effectively.³³ Ancestors serve as intermediaries between God and man, petitioning on man’s behalf. The pouring of libation is a way of communication between the people and the ancestors under the command of traditional rulers or their representatives.

The people of the Bamenda Grassfield believe in God, gods as well as in taboos which the ruler must adhere to. The people give each of the gods the honor and respect they deserve according to their belief. Each god has a particular role to play in the life of the people. The gods are associated with objects such as rain, mountains, lion, python, carved objects among others and they are offered wine, rum, goats, fowls as sacrifice for the general wellbeing of the community. As the political and spiritual leader of the people, the chief has to respect some norms put in place which are term taboos. All taboos have sacred connotation, and because chieftaincy has a lot of connections to spiritual purity, the chief takes the pains not to go against any of the taboos while in office because the consequences could be fatal. Some of the taboos a chief must adhere to as the administrator of his polity are as follows:

1. A chief must not strike anyone and should not be stroke by anybody. If this taboo is broken it is believed that the ancestors will bring misfortune to the community or the town.
2. Again, a chief should not walk bare foot because if his feet touch the ground some misfortune would befall the community or the town.
3. Neither in public nor private should he speak or greet a woman who is in her menstrual period.

³¹ Mbiti, J. S., African Religions and Philosophy, London: Heieman1969, Sited in Oduro-Awisi’s “Chieftaincy Disputes in Akuapem Traditional Area: A Search for Solution”, MA in Religious Studies, August 2013, pp 20-22

³²Interview with Semh Mbinglo II, Fon of Nso, August 2019, Younde.

³³ *ibid*

4. He is also not allowed to eat certain food and should not also be seen eating in public.
5. When he sits in state, he may not speak directly to the audience but through an interpreter. Apart from the above taboos, during the swearing in of the chief, there are some injunctions which are given to the chief. Busia states;

...all the elders say that I should give you the stool. Do not go after women. Do not become a drunkard. When we give you advice, listen to it. Do not gamble. We do not want you to disclose the origin of your subjects. We do not want you to abuse us. We do not want you to be miserable, we do not want one who disregards advice; we do not want you to regard us as fools; we do not want autocratic ways; we do not want bullying; we do not like beating. Take the stool. We bless the stool and give it to you. The elders say they give the stool to you³⁴

The words used in this citation are said to have spiritual backing, and are commonly used by the council of elders during the enthronement of a new chief in the Bamenda Grassfield. The chief in return takes the oath of office to abide by the political, moral and religious obligations for the welfare of his people. The chief is bound to uphold his oath of office as a matter of obligation especially because he is under both private and public obligation to observe them couple with the fact that in his capacity as the traditional ruler, his political and religious position with the ancestors warrant him to do so.

B- Traditional Governance in the Bamenda Grassfields

The structure of traditional authority refers to the assembly of traditional, institutions, bodies, agents and personalities whose source of strength emanates directly from a system of governance. The traditional system of governance is socially and politically organised into different structures and institutions which has as goals to maintain law and order, improve on the wellbeing of the people and the management of its external relations with other societies. This structure in the region under study is made up of the family, lineage, village and the *fondom*. These structures have traditional institutions that constitute part of the traditional system of governance. Among the institutions are the chief, regulatory societies and others. They assist the traditional ruler and his representatives in his mission of administration.

The social and political organisation of traditional structures and institutions in the Bamenda Grassfield has a common characteristic. What is common is the fact that most of their moral essence and legal authority is enveloped in mystical and religious connotations.

³⁴ A Busia, *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System of Ashanti*. London: Oxford University Press, 1951. cited in Oduro-Awisi's "Chieftaincy Disputes in Akuapem, p. 72

Before we move to the institutions that form part of the traditional system of governance, we shall examine the traditional structures.

It should be noted the family, lineage and the village formed part and parcel of traditional structure but on the paraphernalia of each territorial unit. The smallest structure of the kinship group is the nuclear family which is synonymous with the smallest territorial unit of the fondom. It consists of a compound head, his wife or wives, children and servants. A number of extended families formed a lineage who claimed descent from a common ancestor. The lineages are grouped together to form a village and a number of villages constitute the *fondom*. Village heads had a lot of authority as attested by Paulo Brown. He says that:

*Legal authority [legitimate power] was commonly held by heads of African lineages and clans [...] they settled disputes between members, mainly by arbitration and punished some offences committed by members. Small fines were usually imposed in such cases but some lineage or clan heads had the extensive right to pawn, enslave, expel dispossess members.*³⁵

The village head who though commanded power and authority is answerable or say accountable to the paramount *fon*.

Most *fondoms* were shared into social classes made up of royals and commoners with the traditional rulers as head of the royal class.³⁶ In Kom, Mankon, Nso, Bali and other well organised and centralised *fondoms* in the Bamenda Grassfield, the paramount ruler's decision is binding to all and sundry. In Bafut, villages that migrated into the land with their ruler were not answerable to the paramount *fon* as a result of misunderstanding or the quest for recognition, power and authority. As a result of the quest for the above, there has been a lot of in fighting between the *fon* and chiefs over authority, payment of tributes among others.³⁷ The Mbebili people (a village in Bafut) who are the original settlers of the land claim they are not to pay allegiance to the *fon* who came into the land, met a well-established and organised society and was offered a piece of land to settle on.³⁸ The Bawum another village in Bafut claim the paramount ruler met them and they are to work as equals, sharing power with equal

³⁵ Leonard Markovi's, *African Politics and Society*, New York, The Free Press, 1970, p.14.

³⁶ E.M Chilver and Kaberry, "The Kingdom of Kom in West Cameroon," in Daryll Forde and Kaberry, *West African Kindoms in the Nineteenth Century*, OUP, 1967, pp. 123-150

³⁷ For details, consult Fuhnwi Divine's "Fon, Chiefs and People in Conflict in Bafut, North West Cameroon, 1900-1982". Ph.D Thesis in History, University of Yaounde I. 2011, pp.83-104 In his thesis, he presents the different groups that make up the Bafut fondom, the organization and functioning of the fondom in Pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial administration. With the coming of the 1977 chieftaincy decree and the subsequent organization of chiefdoms in to first, second and third-class chiefs, the stage was set for conflict. Chiefs who felt their power and authority reduced (Mbebili, Bawum, Otang and others) jostled for their rights, interest and privileges which led to conflicts.

³⁸ Ngwa., "Paramountcy and the Control" pp. 27-43

authorities without one imposing himself over the other. This is to show that although most of these chiefdoms are of Tikar origin, they do not have the same culture and tradition when it comes to the authority of the chief as the administrator of the land.

Some paramount rulers have crushing power and authority which is felt by all chiefs who inhabit in the land no matter their position and migratory roots. Examples include Nso, Kom, Mankon and Bali. Traditional institutions in the Bamenda Grassfield are well organised and classified with each having its own role to play. In each society, the traditional ruler, (*fon* or chief) is at the top of the administrative ladder of the *fondom* with the support of other traditional institutions. He has distinct attributes and roles to play as would be presented as this study unfolds.

I- Traditional Rulers and their Rule in the Bamenda Grassfield

Traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield are the heads of the political structure of their polities. They are political and spiritual leaders and exercise executive, legislative and judicial powers over their people and their areas of traditional jurisdiction. Their positions are re-enforced by the near-sacred nature of their personality. Traditional rulers in pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfields had certain powers and attributes that were reserved for them, while powers and attributes distinguish them from all other people in the *fondom*. The power and authority they command enable them to introduce and initiate projects for the development of the land. I.B. Bello-Inam states that, in the pre-colonial era, the traditional ruler was more or less the executive, legislative and judicial arm of government and at the same time, the spiritual leaders and custodians of the culture and traditions of his people in his community.³⁹ “Among the Bantu, the traditional political system was based on the Kinship structures of the tribes. The Chief was the head of a community held together by bonds of Kingship. His office combined executive judicial and ritual functions performed on behalf of the village.”⁴⁰

Judging from the works of both Bello-Inam and Busia, it is seen that in traditional Africa, traditional rulers were and are the chief executive and administrative heads of their respective areas of jurisdiction. This is because they exercise religious, executive, legislative, administrative and judicial powers. Amaazee holds that because traditional rulers exercised and command a lot of power and authority, they are more powerful than a westernized

³⁹ B. Bello-Inam, “The Paralysis of Traditional Rulers in Nigerian Politics”, cited in Amaazee V. Bong’s *Traditional Rulers (chiefs) and Politics in Cameroon History*, Press Universitaires de Yaounde, Octobre 2002, p8

⁴⁰ K.A. Busia, *Africa in Search of Democracy*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), p.30.

president if left alone by the demands of modern government.⁴¹ This is because, the political powers of traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfields enabled them to inherit, create new titles, judge, offer sacrifices; exercise economic and socio-cultural powers over his people and the *fondom*. Achirimbi II of Bafut appointed his favorites to positions, abolished old and outdated laws and dispensed titles. During his reign, he went around the *fondom* creating contacts with the different sectors and population⁴². He introduced a strong authoritarian rule, concentrated power in his hands at the expense of chiefs and the regulatory societies. *Kwifor* who had to work in collaboration with the *fon* to conceive and execute policies was in most cases sidelined⁴³. He even scraped off the post of *Ndinfor* which was equal to the post of a prime minister with the pretext that his ancestors succeeded without such post⁴⁴. This confirms the power and authority commanded by traditional rulers. With the power and authority exercised by traditional rulers, their integration could help strengthened and enforce modern administrative decisions.

The power and authority exercised by traditional rulers made them to be praised and they go by certain appellation like “lion, eagle, python” and others which symbolizes strength and authority. Judging from the above, it seems traditional rulers enjoy both sacred and secular authority. It equally confirms the composite nature of the office of the ruler who had many duties, responsibilities and obligations thereby acting as the administrator of his land. These rulers manage their polities with little or no challenges. This explain why efforts are made to integrate them as part of modern administration so as to tap from their rich experience as experienced administrators in pre-colonial administration in order to strengthen and facilitate colonial and post-colonial administration.

As head of the traditional government, he is the chief executive, chief judge, army chief and the chief priest. Summarily, traditional rulers in pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield exercised political, judicial, religious and social powers.

Traditional rulers were the heads of the political structure of their polity. They are political and spiritual heads and exercised both executive and judicial powers over their people. Their positions are re-enforced by the near-sacred nature of their personality.⁴⁵ Traditional rulers in our study area had powers and attributes reserved for them and these

⁴¹ Amaazee V. Bong *Traditional Rulers (Chiefs) and Politics in Cameroon*, Octobre 2002, p8

⁴² Ngwa “Paramountcy and the control of land”, 2013, p 88

⁴³ Aletum, *Political Conflicts within the Traditional and the Modern Institutions of the Bafut, Cameroon*, Louvain, Vander, 1974, p.97

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Robert and Pat Zitzenthaler, *Cameroons Village: An Ethnography of the Bafut*, Milwaukee, Public Museum, 1952, ⁴⁵, Fuhwi “Fon, Chief and People in Conflict, 2011, p.30

powers and attributes distinguished them from all other persons in the *fondom*. The power and authority they wielded stem from the oath taking ceremony and powers bestowed on the chief on the day of his coronation. The power and authority they exercise enabled them to introduce and initiate projects for the development of the land. Their political powers enabled them to inherit, create new titles, judge, offer sacrifices; exercise economic and socio-cultural powers over his people and all that exist in his *fondom*.⁴⁶

Judging from the above, traditional rulers enjoy both sacred and secular authority. This confirms him as the administrator of his land. He heads the traditional government. Summarily, traditional rulers in pre-colonial Africa and the Bamenda Grassfield in particular exercise political, judicial, religious and social powers as presented below. The table below shows the percentages of persons who accept the important role played by traditional rulers in the society. Out of the listed roles presented on the table, all those who responded accept to the important administrative role played by traditional rulers.

Table 1: Perception of the Role of Traditional Rulers before Colonial Rule

<i>Rôle</i>	<i>Oui en %</i>	<i>Non en %</i>
<i>Incarnation de la culture</i>	95,0 %	3,9 %
<i>Porte-parole de son peuple</i>	90,3 %	8,6 %
<i>Élaborer les lois coutumières</i>	88,3 %	11,5 %
<i>Maintenir la loi et l'ordre</i>	88,2 %	11,6 %
<i>Gestion des conflits</i>	86,5 %	13,3 %
<i>Arbitrage</i>	85,2 %	14,7 %
<i>Rituels de l'État</i>	84,0 %	15,8 %

Source: L. Abotchie, A. Awedoba et al Sub Saharan Publishers, Accra 2006, p.109

Before colonial rule, traditional institutions headed by a traditional ruler were the sole administrators of land. Everything revolves around them and this explains why they carried this authoritative spirit into the colonial era though met with challenges. With the notion and

⁴⁶ Ngwa., "Paramountcy and the Control of land, p.53

role these rulers play before colonialism, a cross section of the population see them as gods in all domains as presented in the table above. This table presents the perception of a group of persons who acknowledges the role of traditional rulers as the administrator of his polity and head of the traditional government. From the table, it is seen that these rulers interfere in almost all domains in the life of the communities and the mean of the percentages for those infavour of the important role traditional rulers play in administration stands at 87.08% while the mean for those against is 11.34%. Although traditional rulers play an important role in their various polities, it should be mentioned that these category of persons will do everything possible to defend their interest. Considering the fact that they are revered persons and sanctions await anyone who goes contrary to stipulated norms (in relation to the custom and tradition of the people), it is understandable for natives to appreciate the role traditional rulers play for fear of the unknown. These same rulers are a threat to the peace and stability of some villages as a result of greed among other things⁴⁷. Their actions weaken administrative stability hence integration.

The chief is the traditional ruler. He is both the head of the traditional government and the religious authority in charge of appeasing the ancestors. His power is kept in check by regulatory groups such as the "Ngwerong" (also "Nwerong") which in effect is the security arm of government and enforces decisions taken by the *fon*. Traditional rulers reinforce traditional authority and the respect for human dignity. Apart from the respect of human dignity, communal life is a practice promoted by traditional rulers not forgetting the fact that they make sure their citizens are each other's keeper. So knowingly or unknowingly, pre-colonial traditional rulers practised and respected modern conversion aim at respecting human right.⁴⁸

The *fon* was an exalted personality with a mystical office and his person was sacrosanct. Among his prerogatives by tradition, he was the sole trustee, distributor and redistributor of land in his area of jurisdiction. He commanded free labour from his people; receive gifts in the form of tributes, fines, donations and others. All these placed him in a powerful economic position, thereby making him the wealthiest person in the society.⁴⁹ Traditional rulers were expected to be benevolent. As such, they had everything yet, they

⁴⁷ Chief Vugah Simon of Kedjom Keku and Fon Doh Gah of Balikumbat are clear examples of traditional rulers whose actions brought instability to their villages during their regien.

⁴⁸ Miriam Goheen, *Men Own the Fields, Women Own the Crops: Gender and Power in the Cameroon Grasslands*, 1997, Massachusetts, p.71

⁴⁹ W.T.T. Samah, "Chiefs (Traditional Rulers) in Anglophone Cameroon and Modern Governance 1961-2000", PhD Thesis in History, University of Yaounde I, 2006, pp.3-4

were poor.⁵⁰ This was because all what a traditional ruler has belonged to the entire community especially the needy. This explains why he was called the “father of all” since all what he possessed was in the name of the *fondom*.⁵¹

Traditional rulers had the power to inherit. Inheritance is anything acquired or possessed by descent or succession by an heir when the owner dies.⁵² It could be property, title, money or any other landed property and everything owned by the late chief who now cohabit with the ancestors. In most *fondoms* in the Bamenda Grassfield, it is well constituted that only princes begotten on the lion skin when the father was chief could take over the throne when the father takes the journey beyond. Once crowned heir, the newly crowned chief has full right to inherit the throne, children, wives, farm land and bushes of his predecessor. In short, all property of his late father including children and wives automatically become his responsibility. Whatever he requests is at his beg and call no matter who owned it as long as that property, person or thing was in his area of jurisdiction.⁵³

Traditional rulers were seen and acted like God’s representatives on earth. Seeing him as a near God-like figure in the society, he was not supposed to co-habit with commoners talkless of interacting with citizens unnecessarily. As such, he lives in a well-protected and confined environment made up of different quarters. Chilver and Kaberry comment on the increase powers of the traditional rulers as follow; “He had become suzerain, the distributor of rewards, dispenser of honors, head of all association of royal and commoners, the controller of the web of political communication and supreme judge”.⁵⁴

Despite the near-sacred nature of the *fon*’s personality, he had people who assisted him in the exercise of his duties and responsibilities and were mostly his relatives. At the beginning of each reign, a queen mother (*maamfor*) was appointed. She is usually the ruler’s mother or his sister in the case where the mother is absent. Her role was to advice the *fon* and exert a moderating influence on him. Apart from the queen mother, the *fon* has two brothers; *muma* (younger brother but not necessarily from the same mother) and *ndifor* (elder bother). *Muma* acted as adviser and both appeared with the *fon* at durbars, sitting at the right hand but

⁵⁰ Ngwa., “Paramountcy and the Control” p.53, Interview with Nyuyse Mathias, 53 years, farmer and elder in the Nso *Fondom*, December 2018, Bamenda

⁵¹ Interview with Atanga Muwah Nforbi, 53 years, Chief of Mekanikong Bafut and Teacher, 18th September 2017, Yaounde

⁵² Ngwa., “Paramountcy and the Control of Land” p.54

⁵³ Interview with Atanga Muwah Nforbi.

⁵⁴ E.M. Chiabi, “Traditional rulers in National Politics” in *the Annals of the Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences*, Vol II, No. 1 and 2, Jaunary-July 1990, p. 26

off the dais, with *ndifor* next to him. Gifts to the *fon* were presented to *muma* since the *fon* is not supposed or allow to touch the hand of anyone by virtue of his position.⁵⁵

Ndifor on his part is one of the persons who make up the royal class. He is a senior brother to the *fon* and sits at the left hand of the *fon* in public. He is crowned alongside *muma* on the same day. He acts as a guardian and adviser to the *fon*. They share the same father but different mothers. *Tabufor* (father of *fon*) is also a brother adviser. One thing about this position is that, he must be somebody born out of the leopard skin.⁵⁶ This means that, for one to be made *Tabufor*, he must have seen the world (elder man) before the prince who is crowned chief. One of the duties of *tabufor* is that he takes care of palace property and stores. He records all what comes in and goes out of the palace. He can be appointed as chief to any of the villages within the *fondom* in the case of decentralized societies if the *fon* is pleased with his job.⁵⁷ This position is common among the Bafut and Mankon people. These persons equally command a lot of power and influence though not like the *fon*. It should be mentioned none of the royal advisers acts as regent when the *fon* dies. *Muma* can represent the *fon* but cannot sit on the stool of the *fon* and cannot succeed the *fon* in case he travels to the land of no return.

Apart from the above, there is a noble class made up of commoners elevated to that rank thanks to services rendered to the palace for a period of time or gained access through fees paid into regulatory societies.⁵⁸ One other group of persons who play a great role in the life of the traditional rulers in all grassfield societies and are very influential are the council of elders locally called *ngumba*. Literally, *ngumba* means the holder or supporter of the *fon*. It is an institution common to all the grassfield fondoms and has different appellations in different *fondoms* though they mean the same thing and play the same role. In Nso, it's called *nwerong*, *kwifoyn* in Kom, *nkwifon* in Mankon, *ngumba* in Bali and *kwifor* in Bafut.⁵⁹ The council of elders acts as the advisory council to the chief and work in close collaboration with him in the administration of that land. The acting chief does not take a decision nor impose his opinion without consulting the council of elders especially when it concerns the administration of the *fondom*. If this happens, the chief is abandoned to his own fate. If the council refuses to see things from the chief's point of view, he had to follow the decision of the council or face the

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Interview with Ndifru Mathias, 53 years, elder of the Mankon royal family, 28th December 2017, Mulang Mankon.

⁵⁷ Aletum, *Political Conflicts*, p. 39

⁵⁸ C. Nchangwi., "Relations Between the Central and Subaltern Chiefdoms of the Bafut Kingdom", M.A. Dissertation in history, University of Yaounde I, 2003, p.3

⁵⁹ Chilver and Kaberry, Traditional Bamenda, pp.62-63, P.M. Kaberry, "Traditional Politics in Nsaw", *Africa*, Vol. 29, No. 4, 1959, pp. 366-383.

consequences.⁶⁰ The council of elders is made up of persons who had distinguished themselves in one way or the other in the society. This category of persons in collaboration with servants (*nchidas*) acts as intermediaries between the chief and the villagers.⁶¹ As one of their main duty and responsibilities to the *fondom*, they bring to the attention of the chief the concerns of the people and the functioning of the *fondom* through reports from different quarters or villages. Equally advise and assist the chief in administrative affair of the *fondom*. They act as a sort of check on the power and authority of the chief in order to prevent the abuse of power on the part of the *fon*.

The council could criticize the actions or inactions of the chief and demand for his deposition or suspension if need be depending on the nature of the crime committed.⁶² In council meetings, consensus is a cardinal feature in indigenous Bamenda Grassfields societies. This means that, the notion of majority did not count in decision making. This explains why deliberations at times go late into the night especially in crucial matters and adjournment could be called for a few minutes to allow those in council to ponder on the deliberated points.⁶³ At resumption of talks, deliberation and proposals are made and a decision is taken. The process of consultation was very common among the Fanti people of pre-colonial Ghana where it is purported parts of the Tikar people came from. The council is made up of objective persons and people of integrity in the *fondom*. Oguh puts it as follows;

*“...the Fanti chief has to consult his councilors on all decisions affecting the society... the council consisting of elders of the society. They were not appointed as councilors because of their wealth but because of their maturity, thus both rich and poor find themselves on the council bench...”*⁶⁴

It is said one hand cannot tie a bundle, as such, it is necessary for the *fon* to have some persons around him who assist him in the effective administration of the *fondom* in pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield. These are the persons who in collaboration with the *fon* and the ancestors coordinate the administration of villages in the Bamenda Grassfields

⁶⁰ Linus T. Asong; *The Crown of Thorns*, third edition, Patron Publishing House International Paperbacks, Bamenda, 1995, p. 138

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² L.T. Asong in *The Crown of thorns* narrates the encounter between the elders and the D.O. They inform him to dethrone the chief who has failed to live up to the expectation of the council and is disrespectful to them. They further inform the DO that the chief is now his chief and no long the chief of the village., Arhin K., *Traditional Rule in Ghana: past and present*, 1985, p 19

⁶³ It is belief that during the minutes of recess, the influential elders consult the ancestors and get their opinion on the issue under discussion and a final decision is taken when they resume talks

⁶⁴ B. Oguh., “African and Western Philosophy: A Study in Wright RA” (ed) in *African Philosophy: An Introduction*, 1984.

II- Rights, Privileges and Obligations of a Traditional Ruler

Traditional rulers had enormous / extensive right and privileged in their polities. Taxes and tributes were paid to them. They were the sole dispenser of titles. Looking at the case of the chief of Bum and Sawi, they disagreed and fought and the disagreement among them graduated from tax payment to the problem of tributes. It was about who was to receive tribute from the other. Tribute offered to traditional rulers varied in nature and quality. The tribute among others ranged from paying an annual amount to the chief in cash or kind, providing for his up keep, running the *fon*'s errands, subscribing labour for community projects, reporting all births and deaths, giving him wives, taking care of the *fon* when he was sick, providing food for the royal family among others. The most important and significant act of tributes that traditional rulers expects to receive on behalf of the community were certain reserved "animals of the community" like the leopard, should they be caught or killed by a member of the community.⁶⁵ Relating a similar situation in the Bayang society of Cameroon, Ruel notes that "The right to receive a leopard and to carry out the appropriate ritual concerning it, is an evident of the independent and super ordinate status of the leader of that chiefdom"⁶⁶

III- The Fon and the Fon's Palace

As the Unity Palace and White House is to Cameroon and America respectively, so too is the *Ntoh* (palace) in Nso, *Ilah* in Kom, *Nkentang* in Bali is to the people of the Bamenda Grassfield under the authority of traditional rulers. It acts as the administrative head quarter to the people and the office of the chief. The political, economic, spiritual and socio-cultural organization of the *fondom* is conceived and coordinated from the palace with the chief as the head. He resides in the palace and it serves as the fountain as well as the seat of the highest authority in the land. It is the capital of the *fondom* and the cradle of all traditional power.

The palace of the chief equally play host to other traditional institutions which act as regulatory societies. These institutions are separated from the quarters of the ruler. In fact, each group of persons or institution do deliberations among members solely in their respective quarters and submit their reports to the chief in his own quarter through their representatives. In each *fondom*, the inner section of the palace is reserved for the *fon* and his wives. This section is further shared into sub-sections. One section is inhabited by the wives

⁶⁵Samah., "Chiefs (Traditional Rulers) in Anglophone Cameroon", pp. 398-404.

⁶⁶M. Ruel, *Leopards and Leaders: Constitutional Politics among the Cross-River People*, London: Tavistock, 1969, p.14.

of the *fon* and the other by his children. The quarter of the *fon* is situated at the center of the palace and at the back of his quarters, we have the quarters for regulatory societies who are charged with the protection of the *fon*. Access to this quarter is prohibited from non-members.⁶⁷ The palace represents the unitary and the politico-religious base of the people of the Bamenda Grassfield. It's from the palace that each ruler exercises his role as the custodian and administrator of the land. In most areas of the Bamenda Grassfields, the chief is addressed using various appellations such as *mfon*, or *nfon* or *efo*, *Ifuo* or any similar word depending on the ethnic group and this takes place in his palace.⁶⁸

IV- Significance of the Palace

The importance of the palace needs special attention for us to understand the power structure of traditional administration in the Bamenda Grassfields because of the role the highest authority (the ruler) plays in the palace. The palace is the administrative headquarter in most grassfields *fondoms* as mentioned before. Everything about the *fondom* is coordinated from the palace. It is the fountain of authority.⁶⁹ It is where the chief resides and rules his subjects. This structure is common and respected by all Bamenda Grassfields societies especially with the Nso, Kom, Bali, Bafut, Mankon and Bum people who put in extra efforts to make sure it was well constructed with the finest of materials. As a centralised entity, the palace is the seat of the highest authority in the *fondom*. It is traditionally held to be the capital of the state and the cradle of all traditional power.

The palace does not only act as the seat and home of the chief but also, it plays host as the seat of the traditional Court. In Kom it is called *Ntul*, *Takibu* in Nso and *Ndege beche* in Bambili. The palace also hosts the regulatory societies who assist traditional rulers in their duties, responsibilities and obligations. In fact, most traditional societies in pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfields had palaces which are divided in different sections. Chiefdoms with large palaces include Bafut, Nso, Bali, Bum, Kedjom Keku and Kom. In one section of the palace we have the many wives of the chief, his children in another section and the palace retainers in yet another section. Each class of persons living within the palace are enshrined with the duty of protecting traditional seals. Houses are built in such a way that they act as a fence with protective walls. The construction is in such a way that no one can enter into the palace without passing through the main gates. This signifies unity among all those who live inside the palace and at the same time a defence or protective mechanism against invaders.

⁶⁷ Ngwa., "Paramountcy and the Control" p.56.

⁶⁸ Nkwi, Warnier, *Elements for a History*, p. 59

⁶⁹ Akwo., "The Mbeligi and the Palace", 2006, p.11.

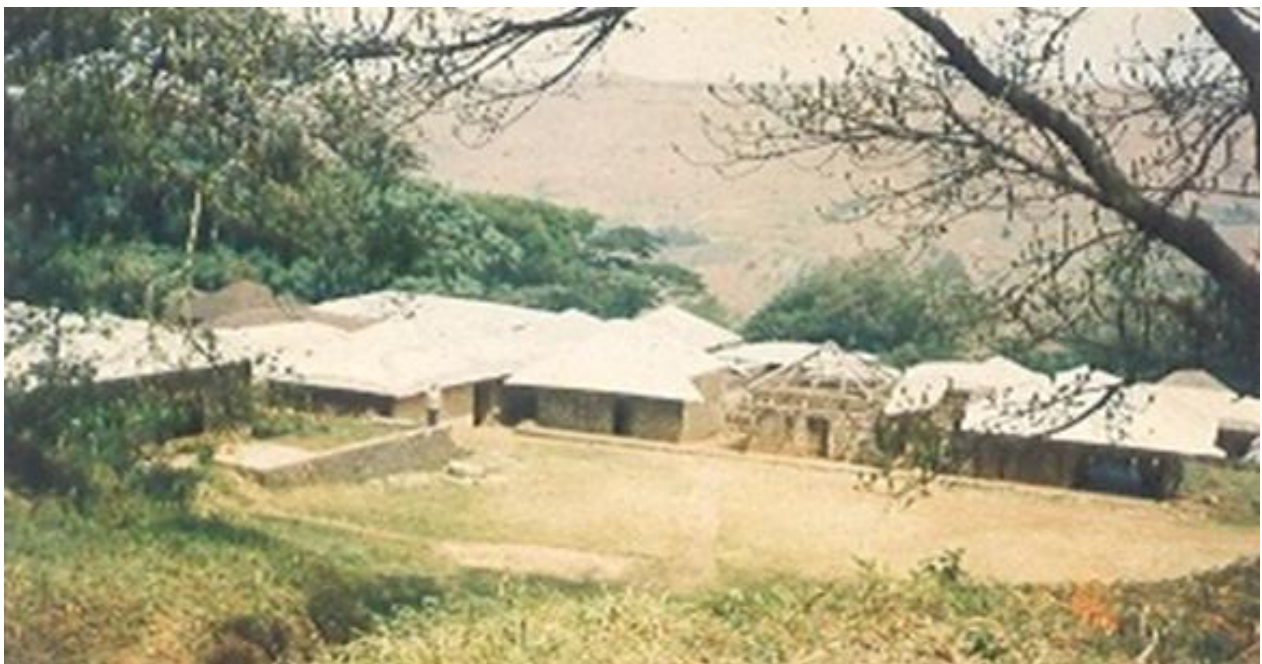
The picture below presents the Kom (picture 1) and Bafut (picture 2) palaces. The housing architecture seen in the plate represents just a tiny segment of the different sections found in the Kom and Bafut palaces respectively. The palace is divided into departments and each department has a precise role to play in the internal and external regional hierarchy.

Traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfields reside in their palaces. The palace represents the unitary and the politico-religious base of most chiefdom in the Bamenda Grassfields. Warnier uses a metaphor to aptly capture the role of the chief in the Bamenda Grassfields. To him, the chief was like a “container” or “vessel” that bound the people together, united and protected them and the entire land from malevolent forces. The chief from his palace poured out vital life-giving substances like breath, cam wood and saliva to ensure continuity. To become chief meant to dedicate oneself totally to the service of the people. Miaffo on his part says;

*Etre chef, c'est s'engager à s'investir au service des habitants des son village et de ses intérêts. Cet engagement doit se lire dans sa résistance aux menaces, aux chantages et aux pressions de toutes sortes. Il doit se lire dans la défense acharnée des intérêts de sa population.*⁷⁰

The palace is seen here as a container or a fence which holds or binds the people together under the leadership of the *fon*. The palace is considered as the entire village and this explain why when the palace is attacked, it is reported that the entire village has been attacked.

Plate 1: Partial View of the Kom (*Laikom*) Palace



⁷⁰Consult Sama's, "Chiefs (Traditional Rulers) in Anglophone Cameroon", 2006, p.78

Source: Ngam Confidence Chia Research Album 1999.

Plate 2: Partial View of the Bafut Palace



Source: Ngam Confidence Chia Research Album 1999.

In Nso, for example, the palace is made up of different quarters with a plethora of workers. It has the living quarters of the royal wives, a quarter for the main regulatory society where a number of retainers live, the living quarters of the *fon* built close to the shrines that sheltered the graves of his ancestors, and a few utilitarian buildings (kitchen, stores, and latrines). Royal retainers have their living quarters close to the *fons*. Lastly there are a number of buildings, where the subjects of the village could meet together with or without the *fon*. Access to the various quarters is restricted only to occupants of that quarter and the restrictions underscored the distinctions between various social categories. However, the *fon* as the patron of the palace had direct access into all quarters or send a representative to get information/persons or items.

V- Attributes and Role of the Traditional Ruler

Traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfields enjoyed both sacred and secular authority. By virtue of the ritual during their coronation ceremony, the chief underwent a remarkable transformation and became virtually invincible and an invulnerable person.⁷¹ In fact, the chief once crowned is elevated and kept in a respectful distance from the ordinary man. The chief is at the apex of the visible hierarchy and the ritual of his installation made him a sacred person and conferred on him a number of attributes. Traditional rulers in most

⁷¹Interview with Forbah Peter, 53 years, Teacher, Bambili, 13th August 2016.

Bamenda Grassfields traditional societies are said to be endowed with divine powers and the incarnate of the political and religious life of their people. Societies in the Bamenda Grassfields are characterized by a highly complex sociopolitical form of organization headed by powerful sacred chiefs. They play significant role in the functioning of the society. Fisiy stresses the traditional and religious foundation of their authority. He says:

*The founding of most of the chiefdoms in [the Bamenda Grassfields] is based on a myth of origin that tended to confer temporal power on those repositories of traditional authority. For the Fon, the source of legitimacy is shrouded in myth and ritual orderings which give a spiritual content to the exercise of his authority. This is because the lineage through which the myth was initially transmitted had contact with the deities and the ancestors.... This has safeguarded the sanctity and spirituality of the Institution of the Fon.... This conceptualization of the institution of the Fon, based on sacred attributes, has tended to sustain powerful chiefs who still maintain a firm spiritual and moral grip over their people.*⁷²

Although their existence is based on sacred attributes, the traditional ruler is responsible for, and accountable to his people. The traditional ruler of Ndu portrays his authority and responsibility over his people by rejecting female employment as labourers to work at the Estates and Agency Company Ltd. (EAC) in Ndu during negotiations with the EAC team.⁷³ He insisted and preferred the exclusive recruitment of local male workers from Ndu and nearby villages.⁷⁴ To him, it is a mechanism to control and halt male labour migration to the coastal plantations. For the chief it was a control mechanism to ensure that the estate workers would continue to be integrated into the local community and adhere to traditional norms and authority.

Once a prince has been enthroned as traditional ruler/*fon* and had undergone all prescribed rites, it was believed that the life force of his ancestors had automatically been transmitted to him. If the transfer of power did not follow the custom and tradition dictated by the ancestors, the usurper, after sitting on the ancestral stool automatically suffered a serious ailment such as sterility, madness or even death.⁷⁵ Traditions in most Bamenda Grassfields

⁷²Fisiy Cyprian., *Power and Privilege in the Administration of Law: Land Law Reforms and Social Differentiation in Cameroon*. Leiden: African Studies Centre, Research Report no. 48.1992, p.334

⁷³Koning Piet., *Chieftaincy, Labour Control and Capitalist Development in Cameroon* in *Journal of Legal Pluralism*, 1996, p.337

⁷⁴*Ibid*

⁷⁵M.T. Aletum., *The One-Party System and the African Traditional Institutions*, Yaoundé, SOPECAM, 1980, p.24. Until recently, in the Bamenda region it is common to hear of ailments or poor harvest in villages and at times death of chiefs which the subjects usually attribute to the chief's illegitimacy or bad rule and the non-respect of traditional norms laid down by their ancestors.

chiefdoms holds that immediately the *fon* assumes his ritual functions from his people, he automatically becomes the divine symbol of his people's health and welfare as it is believed that the life force of his ancestors is automatically transmitted to him.⁷⁶

The office of traditional rulers in pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfields was a composite one having many duties, responsibilities and obligations. As head of the traditional government, he was the chief executive, chief judge, army chief as well as high priest of his community. This was because, in the Grassfields traditional societies like in most African traditional societies, the power and authority of chiefs are not considered separate or divisible.

Politically, the *fon* in these traditional societies were the holders of the highest authority within their polities. This gave them the authority to direct, command and to dominate the political life of their traditional societies. The *fon* ensured law and order as well as guaranteed the sovereignty of his polity. He enacted laws for his community and rolled out old and out-dated ones. He also had the responsibility of appointing quarter-heads or sub-chiefs. This was usually done in consultation with other traditional institutions. The traditional ruler was also the sole dispenser of titles, awards and honours.⁷⁷

As supreme commander of the traditional army, he could declare war and conclude a peace deal after consultation with the competent traditional institution. Generally, in pre-colonial African societies, any chief who ignored the necessity of protecting his people militarily forfeited the trust of his people and was liable to deposition.⁷⁸ As supreme judge, all justice and verdict were passed in his name. As chief priest, the chief was the spiritual symbol of his people and the representatives of the ancestors. Bamenda Grassfields chiefs propitiated the spirits of the land by offering sacrifices to the gods and ancestors. He is the link between the living and the ancestors and therefore must make sure all necessary rituals that bond the living and the dead are always done at their appropriate time. The sacrifice he offered and the rituals he performed were believed to nourish the people's relation with the gods and assured continuity.

Owing to his divine function, the chief was looked upon with reverence and respected as such. No wonder that he went with praise names such as *cha-mfor* (the kicker of things), *lum-nyam* (king of all animals) *nyambo* (leopards cup) *nungubu* (python) and *anti-njong njong* (thorny tree).⁷⁹ Elucidating with the attributes of the *fon* of Nso, Aletum and Fisiy holds

⁷⁶ P. N. Nkwi., "Grassfields Kings and Chiefs and Modern Politics", University of Yaoundé, 1977, p.3

⁷⁷ Samah, "Chiefs (Traditional Rulers) in Anglophone Cameroon", p.75

⁷⁸ Economic Commission for Africa., *Relevance of African Traditional Institution of Governance*, Adid-Abeba, 2007, p.33.

⁷⁹ Ibid p.76

that the Nso people's praise-singers call their *fon* "the sun shine of Nso", "father of the Land", "the Lion".⁸⁰ This grandiose way of thinking led most grassfield societies to claim that the "*fon* never dies."⁸¹ As a result of all these, everything about the *fon* is special, his life as well as his death.

Traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfields have a number of rights, attributes and prerogatives. They had an exalted personality with a mystical office and his person was sacrosanct. This sort of spiritualisation of the traditional ruler's office enforces his powers. Tradition did not permit the disrespect of traditional rulers in whatsoever way or form. Amongst the *fon*'s many prerogatives, the *fon* by tradition was the sole trustee and distributor of all the land in his chiefdom. He also enjoyed free labour from his people on his farms, plantations and for the construction of his palace. He encourages his people in agriculture and in sitting up local industries, where they are needed within his chiefdom⁸². Apart from this, he received from his people gifts of tribute and harvest and as such, all of this put him in a very powerful economic position, which indeed made him apparently the wealthiest person in his society. But this was just in principle because the chief was expected to be benevolent as much of the wealth he accumulated was redistributed to the people especially to the poor and to take care of visitors.⁸³

Under no circumstances should there be shortage of food and palm wine in the palace to entertain and quench the test of visitors who visits the palace.⁸⁴ Akuma uses the adage which says; "under no circumstance should fire used in cooking at the palace go off" to explain the fact that the palace should and can never run shortage of food. That is to say there is and should always be food at the palace. It was therefore mandatory for subjects to help in the upkeep of the chief's household so that the fire never goes off. Farmers and hunters upon returning had to part with some portion of whatever was brought from the farm and offer it to the palace. All other items that were needed to help in the upkeep of the palace were provided by subjects without complaints. He had to attract development projects to his community or traditional area. He listens to every report, some very personal and delicate, and where necessary, instructions are given on what should be done. This made him the centre of attraction, and consequently the administrator of the land. The authority wielded by traditional rulers in pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield provoked their integrating into modern

⁸⁰ Aletum, Fisiy, *Socio –Political Integration*, p.35.

⁸¹ Ibid, p 35

⁸² Interview with Abumbi, *fon* of Bafut

⁸³ P. Kaberry., 1959; cited by Samah in "Chiefs (Traditional rulers) in Anglophone Cameroon", 2006, p.77.

⁸⁴ Interview with Akuma Benjamin Ndeh, 52years, farmer, 2018, Mulang Bamenda.

administration in colonial Bamenda Grassfield in order to effectively control the entire area which is under the authority of traditional rulers.

When a traditional ruler is chosen and initiated into office, he becomes the judge, a commander-in-chief, a peace officer, and a counselor to all his subjects. No matter the limit to the type of cases that are brought to him, he made sure fair judgment is given his subjects. He enforces the core values and norms of his state or community. Chiefs in the grassfields did not have many posts as such, but a single composite office to which various duties and activities, rights and obligations were attached.⁸⁵ As demonstrated earlier, the chief had the power to raise taxes, request tributes, ask his people to work on his farm, or even call them to take up arms to defend the chiefdom. The chief had the corresponding obligation to dispense justice or to protect the interest of his people and ensure their welfare by certain ritual acts and observance.⁸⁶ In fact, the chief in the Bamenda Grassfields played both the political, economic and judicial role in his chiefdom.

By virtue of his office, the traditional ruler was not supposed to be touched, challenged or insulted by anyone. His sacred nature made it such that he was like a near deity revered and obeyed, at least publicly. Anybody who disrespected the chief (not paying allegiance or being disloyal to him) received a penalty which ranged from fines, capital punishment to banishment depending on the gravity of the crime committed and in accordance to the customs and traditions of the people. An overt manifestation of the denial of authority of the *fon* by a lower chief could lead to dethronement. For instance, in the Nso *fondom*, there was a long-standing conflict between the palaces which was basically a question of authority. What obviously escalated the disagreement was the fact that the *shufai wo Ndzendzev*, the late *Njodzeka*, was alleged to have called the personal names of the *fon* of Nso, a treasonable offence that constituted an overt denial of the *fon's* authority. For the offence, he was dethroned and banished from the land.⁸⁷ To confirm this, Léon Kaptué remarked that “... when the chief gives an instruction, it was executed, when he commanded, the subjects obeyed, when he cuffed the subjects coughed. Nobody contradicted nor opposed the chief”⁸⁸

⁸⁵ K. A. Busia., *Africa in search of Democracy*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967, p.12.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Aletum, Fisiy, *Socio - Political Integration*, p. 35.

⁸⁸ L. Kaptué., ‘‘Rois et (chefs) dans les états Africains de la veille des indépendances à la fin du XXe siècle ; Pris entre le Marteau et Enclume, Le Pouvoir Traditionnelle choisit –il de se prostituer au Cameroun. Endoscopie de la situation de 1884 à 1992’’, Paris : Sorbonne, 8, 9,10 November, 1995. p.16.

C- Organisation of Bamenda Grassfields Chiefdoms

I-Territorial Organisation

Territorially, all chiefdoms in the Bamenda Grassfields are made up of households, compounds, quarters, villages then the chiefdom under the command of the chief/*fon*. At the level of the household, authority lies within the hands of the lineage head. He exercised both spiritual and temporal functions. His authority is derived from family-heads forming the lineage.⁸⁹ The household/family is the first stage of territorial organisation in the traditional society which is the nucleus of state formation. Two or more households make up a compound and it's under the care of the family head who equally heads a household. This is so because members look at their patrilineal (in the case of the Nso, Mankon, Bafut and others) or matrilineal (Kom, Wum) head as the political representative of the society. This means that succession to the throne is from father to son or father to mother's family depending on the village but the *fon* is not compelled to disclose the heir's name to any specific person, persons or groups.⁹⁰ The lineage head coordinates the activities of the different members of their family. He takes charge of traditional religious ceremonies, initiations and the pouring of libations. In traditional politics, he represents the highest traditional hierarchy in most lineages in the Bamenda Grassfields.⁹¹ Whatever the lineage head does be it the offering of sacrifices, initiations, pouring of libations among others to appease the land and for the wellbeing of the population, must be in conformity with the rules put in place by the quarter head who is answerable to a higher authority (the chief). The lineage in modern administration is compared to a district though it seemed to exist according to the administrative reorganisation of Cameroon.

The larger territorial unit in the Bamenda Grassfields is the quarter. The quarter is made up of all the lineages (households and compounds) forming this political unit. The leader of the quarter is the quarter head. The name of the quarter head changes according to the culture of the group. In Nso, the people address their quarter head as *nta teeh*, *Bo teh* in Mbessa, *tita* in Bali and in Bafut, he is called *Tanekuru*.⁹² Generally, they are known as quarter-heads and represent the chief or *fon* (according to the administrative organisation of that village) in their various quarters. For instance, the role of the quarter head is similar to that of the village head, but more demanding because the quarter head has to co-ordinate the

⁸⁹ Schapera, *Government and Politics in Tribal Societies*, London, C.A. Watts and C.O., 1937, p. 3.

⁹⁰ Ndobegang., "Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change" p.38

⁹¹ M. T. Aletum., "African Politics Yesterday and Tomorrow", *Science and Technology Review*, vol. III, No 3-4, July- December 1985, pp .25-26.

⁹² Aletum., "African Politics Yesterday and Tomorrow" p.26

activities of many lineages which are not necessarily known to the village head. The quarter head works in collaboration with all the lineage heads and is expected to know them individually by name especially as they meet in council.⁹³

At the level of the quarter, there is the institution of the quarter council (headed by a president) made up of heads of the various lineages that make up the quarter. The council is usually presided over by the quarter head. After their session, a report must be submitted to the village head stating the successes, failures and proposals on the welfare of the quarter. The village head (who is a traditional ruler) together with his own council study the report and make recommendation(s) before forwarding it to the head of the *fondom* if need be. The quarter in modern administration is a Sub Division placed under the authority of a Divisional Officer.

The larger territorial unit in the Bamenda Grassfields traditional society bigger than the quarter is the village. It is within the village that all the traditional institutions are found. At this stage of traditional organisation, the leader must originate from the royal family. Generally, in most Grassfields *fondoms* and chiefdoms, the head of the village is referred to as the traditional ruler or call him chief or *fon*. The title is bound and has meaning only within a given culturally defined group that varies from one ethnic group to another. The chief was a singular ruler, and the incarnate of the customs and traditions of the group. He presided over all major rituals of the chiefdoms. The chief could confer on his territorial agents (household or quarter head) titles, powers and privileges of owning associations that have corresponding functions at the village level. Titles were conferred upon persons either because of their lineage affiliation, social rank, exploits or wealth.⁹⁴ The village head acts as the link between the paramount ruler and his own people in his chiefdom if there is any and other territorial agents under his command. He preside council meetings and is the chairman of the council of elders made up of quarter heads. The chief is permitted to own traditional institutions among which are regulatory societies, *manjong*, cultural groups among others and is expected to fly the flag of the nation in his palace. He is revered and cannot be greeted with a hand shake. He owns a palace and all the attributes and advantages that go with it. The chief is seen in modern context of administration as the Senior Divisional Officer (SDO) according to the classification of modern administrative units in Cameroon. With the coming of colonialism, traditional rulers were allowed to fly the flags of the colonial master as part of the administering body which signify authority hence integration.

⁹³ Interview with Shey Banla Federick, 56years, driver and quarter head of Sob, August 2016, Jakiri.

⁹⁴ Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy*, pp. 39-40.

Among the villages in the Bamenda grassfields, Bafut is the only *fondom* where chiefs have independent authorities and decide whether to be answerable to the paramount *fon* or not⁹⁵. This is because, the *fondom* is made up of diverse tribes that migrated independently guided by their leaders from different parts into the *fondom*. The people of Bawum, a village in the Bafut *fondom* do not answer to the authority of the paramount ruler. They claim they are to share power and authority as equals and not a subordinate to a superior.⁹⁶ Generally, upper Bafut (Mambu, Mankwi, Mbebili, Mankanikong and Mudum) to a limited extent choose activities to part take when organised by the paramount ruler and decide when to pay allegiance to the paramount ruler if need be.

The largest political unit is the *fondom* or kingdom which is made up of many villages under the command of a paramount ruler called a *fon* in the case of Bafut, Bali, Kom, Nso and other organised villages in the Bamenda Grassfield. It should be noted though they occupy the position of a paramount; they are still called traditional rulers. The *fon*/chief performs the same functions, duties and responsibilities as those of the village head. According to the modern administrative organisation of Cameroon, the paramount traditional ruler (*fon*) in traditional administration is seen as the governor. In the Bamenda grassfield, not all villages have the qualification to be referred to as *fondom*. Among others, the few include Nso, Kom, Mankon, Bafut and Bali.

II-Pre-Colonial Military Organisation of Bamenda Grassfields Chiefdoms

One thing that was outstanding with the military organization of the Bamenda Grassfield chiefdoms was the degree at which the various ethnic units were organized militarily. The structural and functional organization of the militia posed serious problems for enemies to penetrate into the villages. This equally explains why it was difficult for the Germans to penetrate into some villages in the Bamenda Grassfield during the colonial period as a result of well-established and coordinated security mechanism. Even when they succeeded to enter, it took them time to defeat the soldiers put in place to defend the village. The putting in place of a well coordinated militia which is one aspect needed for effective administration and for the defence of the village empowered traditional rulers as administrators. The case of the war between the combined German/Bali forces against the Makon/Bafut soldiers is a good example. The security mechanism put in place by chiefdoms

⁹⁵ Interview with Afuti Peter Suh, 72 years, taper, 16th August 2017, Mambu.

⁹⁶ Interview with Neba Paul, 52 years, elder at the Bawum Palace, 16th August 2017, Bawum.

of the Bamenda Grassfields explain why the Germans found it difficult to penetrate some of the chiefdoms.⁹⁷ No chiefdom had a standing army yet the palace was protected. Each village within a given chiefdom had a military club composed of all adult healthy men and young boys of fighting age.⁹⁸ All these military clubs were under the command of the palace military club called *manjong*. They conducted regular sessions to drink, discuss, plan and practice war techniques and tactics when something fishy was suspected. The militia put up spies along the borders of the *fondom* as one of the mechanisms to make sure the *fondom* is secured from invaders. The spies give feet back to the palace in case of any suspects for precautions to be taken.

The Germans spent most of their time trying to disband or subjugate the militia. With the coming of colonialism, reference to frequent expeditions, usually punitive in nature, were always attempted especially by the Germans. This was aimed at subduing what they called rebel groups that refused to admit German suzerainty. Each chief did all within his power to consolidate the working relationship with the leaders of the various groups or villages that made up his chiefdom notably those who had been with the group for the longest period. This is because in an event of an attack, together they can easily identify and together deal with the enemy. In the *fondom* of Bum, Kwanga the *fon* of Bum in November 1937 supported the application for the chief of Sawi Ngwieh Nakun to have a double barrel short gun license. Kwanga went as far as lending his own gun to the chief of Sawi after obtaining permission from the Germans on February 19, 1940. Chief Ngwieh Nakun besides using this gun for hunting assignment had to provide security in the South Eastern borders with Kom⁹⁹. This comes to reinforce the fact that traditional rulers remain united and collaborated with each other for the security of their respective polities even before the coming of colonialism. An instance of collaboration could also be seen in the case of the imprisonment of the chief of Sawi by the colonial administration over the leopard skin. After negotiations, the *fon* of Bum, pleaded the cause of the Sawi chief who was released from detention in 1947 and brought to the Lakabum palace for royal cleansing and re-coronation. The chief returned the skin to the *fon* of Bum but without whiskers and teeth (important for medicine and privileged ornaments).¹⁰⁰ This is the atmosphere in which traditional administration was carried out in pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield. An atmosphere of cooperation and collaboration between

⁹⁷ Interview with Lodga Jude, 51 years, former member of the Bali war society, October 2018, Yaounde.

⁹⁸ Interview with Catherine Mbuh Antonia, 40 years, princess and house wife Mbesa, 28 December 2018. Nkween Bamenda.

⁹⁹ Tako Nixon K., *The Bum-Sawi Paramountcy Crisis in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon: Historical Basis of Context Identity Re-articulation*, 2006, p7

¹⁰⁰ Ibid p.8

chiefdoms for the interest of the entire *fondom* was the order of the day. It should be mention that the cooperation between traditional rulers as mentioned above during the German era did not start with the coming of the Germans. These cooperations were only strengthened because they had existed before the coming of the colonialist.

The political and administrative system put in place in the Bamenda Grassfields was one in which a position of pre-eminence was accorded to traditional rulers. The existence of other groups was recognized and they were given varying degrees of power and authority within the chiefdom. But it should be noted that effective power lay with the *fon* who had several methods and strategies for checking any threat to the central authority under his command. *Kwifor* acted as the police force of the *fondon*. It is generally believed that the eyes of *kwifor* are everywhere coupled with the desire to maintain law and order. The people themselves were part of the machinery put in place for internal security. *Kwifor* through its agents use force to confiscate the property of those who refused to toe the line, commit treason and other offences detrimental to the security of the community. Coming back to the Bum *fondom*, we see that for fear of the unknown, threats and suspicion, Kwanga the *fon* of Bum in 1914 reversed his decision of giving a double barrel gun to the *fon* of Sawi when he nursed fear and suspicion of an eminent attack on his *fondom*.¹⁰¹

Externally, traditional rulers established good working relations with neighbouring chiefdoms especially bigger and more powerful chiefdoms through gifts and marriage relations. An example is the case of the Bali where Galega I, the traditional ruler did everything possible to maintain good relations with the chiefdoms of Bafut and Mankon though it went sore along the way and degenerated to a war when the earliest Europeans came into the area in the 1890s.¹⁰² Also, external security was aimed at acquiring additional land in order to increase the resources which he and his people could exploit for their well-being and sustenance of the powerful chiefdom. Since wealth meant power, traditional rulers did everything within their powers to acquire wealth and maintain power. This consideration formed the cornerstone of Bali domestic and foreign policy under Galega I¹⁰³ as well as other chiefdoms.

The Mankon people on their part are one of the groups among others that had a citizen army which was called up when needed.¹⁰⁴ It was made up of able-bodied young men under the military organization called *Manjong* (army) which today is a social and cultural

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p 7

¹⁰² Ndobegang., "Grassfield Chiefs", p 39

¹⁰³ Ibid, p39

¹⁰⁴ Paula Brown, "Pattern of Authority in West Africa" *Africa* Vol. 21, No.4, 1951, p. 262

organization meant for the development of villages. As a security mechanism, each village had a communication system known to its people. There was a sound produced by drums (see plate 3), stationed at the palace indicating to the people what was expected of them or what was happening. These drums act as communication instruments to the entire village. There was a sound for war, peace and the lost of a member of the community among others. Those who belong to the *manjong* war society immediately rush to their training site once the sound of war was produced by the drum stationed at the palace to be dispatch to defend the land.¹⁰⁵ Those conscribed into the army immediately prepared themselves and move to the palace ready for war immediately the drum produced the sound of war. The drum up till date acts as a means of communication to the entire *fondom* especially in emergency and as a security mechanism. The different sounds produced by the drum inform the people what is happening or expected of them.

Plate 3: Some Instruments of Communication in the Bamenda Grassfields



¹⁰⁵ Interview with Nforbi Alexander, former member of *manjong* war society 68 years, August 2017, Bawum-Bafut.



Source: Ngwa Divine, photographic collection, August 2017.

III-The Judicial System

In pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield, everything as far as justice was concern revolved around traditional rulers charge with the daily running of the affairs of his polity ranging from executive, legislative and judiciary in close collaboration with his privy council. Among the duties and responsibilities of traditional rulers, justice was in his hands and he had the final say in such matters. Justice was centralized and the *fon*, had the final say in serious and sensitive matters involving treason, murder, arson, witchcraft, aggravated thefts, adultery with the chief's wives and others. The chief/*fon* was the highest judge in the chiefdom. Conflicts and crimes could be settled amicably among the conflicting parties at the level of the family and quarter but if a party decided to take it up, it was the traditional ruler who sat as the judge. The *fon*'s court acted as the court of appeal and the supreme court. His judgment was final.

Each decentralized territorial administrator, be it a quarter head, chief or a variation of that name handled cases at his own level and area of jurisdiction. The family head, lineage, quarter heads and village in order of authority were in charge of minor cases and the office of the *fon* who is the supreme judge was the supreme court. The nature of the crime determined who was competent to adjudicate and each person had a meeting house (court room) where cases were heard. If the case was beyond the competence of a family head, quarter head or

sub chief, an appeal was made and the *fon* if other duties permit him would preside over the case and if not, he delegated judicial functions to his council.¹⁰⁶

Kwifor was in charge of investigating the case while the *fon* delivered judgment and *kwifor* who acts as the police of the *fondom* executed the sentence.¹⁰⁷ Majority of cases that came to the palace revolved around land or land related matters. The pre-colonial experience of traditional rulers in settling dispute especially land or land related matters which were common, acts as a booster to why traditional rulers should be integrated. This is because as administrators and custodian of land, they were or are part of the land consultative Board and master land issues ranging from allocation, distribution and redistribution for the benefit of all. Efforts at integrating traditional rulers in modern administration as custodian is backed by the Decree of April 27, 1976 which stipulates that those seeking to register land that they had occupied prior to 1974 could apply for a land certificate directly. In the same decree it was stated those seeking access to land not previously occupied by themselves would have to submit indirectly for a certificate.¹⁰⁸ What is of interest to this study is the fact that traditional rulers are part of those who have to study the application files for the request of a land certificate which this study confirms as effort at making them part of modern administration. This is confirmed by Chem-Langhëë who notes that “the larger administrative districts which grouped several pre-colonial political and administrative entities together, paved the way for the traditional leader to operate within larger political and administrative units in the future.”¹⁰⁹

Trial by ordeal was a common way of judging in most *fondoms* in the Bamenda Grassfields as presented by Ikime in Delta tribes Nigeria.¹¹⁰ Through this means, the accused brought a live animal (preferably fowl) and poison was administered to the animal and the accused is proven guilty or innocent if the animal dies or lives respectively. This is what was called *sasse* wood poison used in dictating guilty individuals for crime committed by some tribes in the southern west region which was one of the causes among others to native resistances to Germans rule in Cameroon. Those found guilty were executed or exiled by *kwifor*. Those who were guilty of treason, witchcraft and adultery especially with the wives of

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Shey Banla Federick, August 2016, Jakiri.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Ndifru Mathias, elder and member of the Mankon royal family, 53 years, 28th December 2017, Mulang Mankon.

¹⁰⁸ Jacqueline Klopp, “Land, Legitimacy and Governance in Cameroon”, Institute for Research and Debate on Governance, Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs, 2010, p. 23

¹⁰⁹ E.M. Chiabi, “Traditional Rulers in National Politics” In the Annals of the Faculty of Arts, Letter and social sciences, Vol II, No 1 and 2, January-July 1990, p. 26

¹¹⁰ O. Ikime, “Traditional System of Government and Justice Among the Urhobo and Isoko of Delta Province, Nigeria”, The Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies, Vol. 7, No.3, November 1965, p. 297

the *fon* were executed by *kwifor* and their property reverted to the palace.¹¹¹ In Bafut, a public execution site was established at Mbeali called *Ntaribang* where enemies of the *fondom* were executed and to them, it was part of justice.¹¹² When the need for man labour for palace upkeep arose, the traditional judiciary forwarded convicted individuals to work in the palace as slaves or sold into slavery. Other minor crimes had fines ranging from the confiscation of property, financial payment, flocking among others. Fines included goats, sheep, food, wine brought to the palace which the *fon* distributed according to the needs of the people.¹¹³

Court cases with neighboring villages resulted to either war or amicable settlement. In the case of a war, the stronger party captured slaves, seized lands and imposed tribute to be paid to the victor in the form of goats, sheep, food, wine, land seizure, women and slaves. In minor cases, amicable settlement through negotiations and withdrawal was common and, in such cases, the two villages became friends and could lead to inter-tribal or village marriages to solidify the friendship.¹¹⁴ It should be highlighted that traditional rulers were at the center of judgment and punishment meted out. This explains why with the coming of colonialism, the services of traditional rulers were highly solicited thanks to their efforts in pre-colonial administration.

IV-The Economy of Pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield

As presented above, most if not all of the Bamenda Grassfields came into existence as a result of immigrants who had been forced out of their original homes by acute shortage of economic resources, raids, succession disputes among others not forgetting pull factors which equally contributed to migration into the Bamenda Grassfield. Thanks to the resilience and charisma of their leaders (traditional rulers), they set up new settlements in different parts of the region and embarked on expansionist policy with the help of the military wing. To consolidate their occupation of the land, there was need for each ruler to effectively invest in economic activities backed in most cases with military campaigns. These campaigns were directed against weaker neighbours in order to seize and expand the territory and their sphere of influence.

¹¹¹ This was common with the people on Nso and Bafut fondoms. They have the same background to traditional justice which stems from their origin. Their origin and migration permit them to carry out similar traditional practice since they have a common ancestor.

¹¹² Abumbi II, *Tradition and Customs of the Bafut Kingdom*, p. 26

¹¹³ Interview with *Fon* Abumbi.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Tiba Grace, 52 years, wife of a chief, August 2017, Bali. (Victim of exchange marriage between two villages)

Each *fon* had at least a reason why he wanted an expanded territory. Galega went out for the expansion of his land because his territory did not produce vital commodities like palm oil, fish and game;¹¹⁵ needed for the up keep of the population so, conquered territories would be able to supply these needs. These conquered territories equally supplied labour to the central administration as well as slaves which increased the wealth of the chiefdom since land was wealth and all land was under the control of the *fon* as the custodian.¹¹⁶

Most traditional rulers extended their sphere of influence to include areas which were not under the command of their chief. Bali under Galega extended his land to include areas that were initially under the control of Mankon, Moghamo, Mundani and Menemo areas situated to it west, south and northwest¹¹⁷ He claim they had been under his control. Another example is the unoccupied Bafut land at Fuku Mfoutah which the people of Big Babanki were encroaching into it. To protect his economy and property, the *fon* of Bafut shared the land to interested Bafut people for cultivation to sustain the economy and each year, the cultivators brought what pleased him/her to the *fon* as a symbol of appreciation.¹¹⁸ (See appendix III)

Other reasons for expansionist wars were linked to the quest for access to markets where chiefs could obtain other commodities such as arms and salt¹¹⁹ through trade by barter. Most economy of Grassfields traditional rulers were sustained through predatory activities as they raided for slaves, food, building materials and additional territory from their weaker neighbours before joining the economic pattern which was agriculture and trade. The *fon* of Bali seized tracts of fertile land from neighbouring villages and the land whether cultivated or not became the property of the entire village under the administration of the traditional ruler.¹²⁰

Trade was a major economic activity. Detailed studies on the involvement of chiefs in trade suggest that trade followed an extensive trade line from Nso-Kom-Bafut-Mankon-Ashong axis into Bayang land then to the coast.¹²¹ Some degree of royal regulations on trade existed in the Bamenda Grassfield especially in the centralized *fondoms*. This was visible in the control of markets by royal retainers or regulatory societies who acted as the police. A little fee was paid in kind or with coins (cowries) by those who used the market to the palace

¹¹⁵ Ndobegang., "Grassfield Chiefs", p. 43

¹¹⁶ C.K. Meek, "Land Tenure and Administration in Nigeria and the Cameroons", London: HMSO, 1957, p 380

¹¹⁷ File Ab 5, NAB

¹¹⁸ Ngwa "Paramountcy and the control of land" p. 88

¹¹⁹ Files Ab/4 and Ab/5, NAB

¹²⁰ Interview with Lodga Jude, 51 years, former member of the Bali war society, October 2018, Yaounde.

¹²¹ Nkwi and Warnier, *History of the Grassfields*, quoted in Ndobengang "Grassfield Chiefs and political Change". P.49

police.¹²² Trade in ivory was highly promoted as it was considered lucrative and contributed greatly to the economy of the *fondom*. Today, fee for trading is paid into the council coffers (an inspiration drawn from pre-colonial traditional administration by traditional rulers) for the upkeep of the land.

Much attention was given to land for agriculture and its related activities. This explains why land was given so much importance because it was an inheritance from the ancestors. This was why the *fon* did everything possible to protect land from invaders knowing how important land was for the survival of his people. It was considered the dwelling place of the ancestors and so mismanagement or sale of land was like selling the ancestors. Although much attention was on agriculture, trading was equally carried out though timid. The *fondoms* of Nso, Baba, Kom and Bafut did trade exchange with palm oil, kola using intermediaries¹²³ and with the introduction of the trans-Sahara rout, essential and ornamental items like salt, gunpowder, cloths, beads were added to the trading items.

Apart from diplomatic exchange of gifts between two *fondoms* through a messenger of the *fon* bearing a diplomatic bag *abaa nto'o*, there was also a market system which contributed to the upkeep of the chief and hence the entire palace. It handled exchange of goods and services. Hopkins notes the market occupied a very important place in the life of the *fondom* especially in West Africa.¹²⁴ Most of these markets were located a short distance from the palace and the messengers of the traditional ruler could descend to the market and pick up items for the upkeep of the palace, its occupants and its visitors. In Bafut, the aspect of picking up choicest items from the market for the *fon* is called *nsie njo*.¹²⁵ This was an aspect of the control and administration of the economy by traditional rulers in pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield. As a result of the economic power exercised by traditional rulers in pre-colonial Grassfield, some of them took the aspect of command and control of the market into the colonial and post-colonial period with slight modifications. Rather than go to the market to pick up items for the upkeep of the palace, those who were outstanding in the different fields especially in agriculture and trade had to pass by the palace and drop the first produce of their harvest for the *fon* to bless them for more and better harvest in future¹²⁶.

¹²² Ibid

¹²³ E.M. Chilver, "Nineteen Century Trade in the Bamenda Grassfields, Southern Cameroons", in *Africa and Overseas*, Vol. 45, 1961, p. 241

¹²⁴ A.G. Hopkins., *An Economic History of West Africa*, London, Longman, 1973, p.54, Robert H.T. Smith, "West African Market Places: Temporal Periodicity and Locational Spacing", cited in Claude Meillassoux (eds), *The Development of Indigenous Trade and Markets in West Africa*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, pp341-343

¹²⁵ Interview with Marius Che, 62 years, Teacher, November 20018, Mbebi Bafut.

¹²⁶ Interview with Victor Fuh, age 51, a trader, November 2019, Kom.

Adding to the diplomatic visits carried out by *fondoms* as a means to keep the *fondom* active and alive, the barrier of the royal bag (a *nchida*) had diplomatic immunity. That is, the *nchida* is on a royal errand and so is protected by all and behind him were other messengers carrying gifts of various sizes and quality depending on the nature of the mission either to another *fondom* or from another *fondom* to their own traditional ruler. The Nso, Baba and Kom did exchange visit of this nature with the palace of Bafut using oil, slaves, cloth and ornamental goods on which the welfare and prestige of the *fondom* depended on.¹²⁷ Items which were both of European and African origin like guns, gun powder, cloth, salt, beads which were of high demands in the Grassfields in the 19th century could be seen in circulation especially with the coming of colonialism.¹²⁸ The economy played an important role in the upkeep of the *fondoms* as the palace did not only act as the *fons*'s residence but also as the center of commercial and administrative activities which maintained order and enabled the ruler and the ruled to go about their daily activities.

Another economic factor that contributed to the economic growth of pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield *fondoms* was the collection of taxes. Traditional rulers granted settlements rights to new comers upon the payment of some fees depending on each traditional ruler and according to the need of the *fondom*. In the course of the year, the new comers equally paid taxes to the *fon* which he used in the running of the *fondom*. He equally received the pride price of a twin girl born into any family when she was ripe for marriage or he took her in as a wife. This is because it was believed twins had supernatural power like the *fon* and had two pairs of eyes.¹²⁹ In the case where one of the twins was a boy, he was taken into the palace as *nchinda*. This was common in Bali and Bafut. More children meant wealth; so, taking a twin girl as a wife meant more wealth since the strength and wealth of a man was measured /determined by the number of children he had. Globally, taxes came in through fines of various categories, settlement fees for new comers, trade dues, transfer of land among others.

Another source of income into the palace that was used for the administration of the *fondom* was through gifts. Each month, one or more village(s)/quarter(s) depending on the size of the *fondom* were expected on a particular day in turns to bring a tin of oil to the palace while the other village was to bring something else. Villages in turns brought items like groundnuts, beans, maize, palm oil; palm wine, games to the palace as a sign of allegiance

¹²⁷ E.M. Chilver., "Nineteenth Century Trade in the Bmenda Grassfields, 1961, p. 241

¹²⁸ Ibid, pp342-351

¹²⁹ Aletum, Fisiy, "The Traditional Political Institutions of Bali-Nyoga", p.24

and appreciation for the security enjoyed in the land. At the end of the day, the palace had almost all what was needed for the up keep of its occupants and the outside world. These items equally came in from land seized or acquired through conquest especially raffia bushes placed under the control of an individual by the traditional ruler. The *fon* through *kwifor* assigned a taper to take care of it under the supervision of a notable who was accountable to the *fon*. The taper supplied wine to the palace at an agreed period and during ceremonies. It goes same with all royal properties situated within or out of the *fondom*.¹³⁰

Hunting and the cultivation of the *fon*'s farm were some activities carried out by the people and these activities supplied meat and food respectively to the *fondom*. Animals like elephants, leopards, deer, buffalo and smaller games such as cane rats, squirrels and birds of all species were hunted. The men hunted animals for the *fon* while the women cultivated his farm. A large-scale community hunting operation was organized once or twice a year in order to provide the chief with as much meat as could be obtained from the hunt.¹³¹ Animals like buffaloes, pythons, elephants (the tusk), and leopards caught by individuals were taken to the palace considered royal animals and only the *fon* could eat them since it is believe eating them fortifies the eater. In order to administer the power, traditional rulers needed to be fortified once the opportunity presents it self. Also, such animals were very powerful and sacred and the only person who could be equated to the strength of these animals is the *fon*. As such, he had monopoly over choicest parts of such animals. Anyone who caught and ate such an animal was equating himself with the *fon* which was a taboo, thus attracted sanctions.

The people of Nkwen presented leopards from hunting expiditions to the Bafut palace as tributes because they were subdued in a battle field championed by a man nicknamed *Tekolo* who distinguished himself, arm-bushed and killed Nkwen warriors.¹³² Failure to do so was a declaration of war by the subdued tribe. Apart from hunting, domestic animals like goats, sheep, pigs and fowls were reared which equally boosted the economy of the land. These activities fortified the authority of traditional rulers whose power and influence over his people portrayed him as a great personality who attracted the attention of the administration to use them as focal points in the administration of the land during the colonial and post-colonial era.

¹³⁰ Interview with Micheal Nanefor, Age 65, Former chair and general controller of royal properties in Bafut palace, November 2017, Mulang.

¹³¹ Veronika Manka'a, "Chiefs and the Economics of Colonialism: The Impact of Colonial Rule on the Economic Basis of Chieftaincy in the Bamenda Grassfields, 1889-1961", University of Yaounde (ENS), pp.43-44

¹³² Fuhnwi Divine, "Fon, chiefs and People" P.38

From the rivers and streams, the people got fish which improved their protein intake. The people equally engaged themselves with handicrafts such as carving, weaving, pottery and smiting (blacksmith).¹³³ Most of these items were used as kitchen utensils and for decoration. Those specialized in this domain produced mortars, dishes, spoons, pots, ritual objects like masks, ancestral statues¹³⁴ and musical instruments (drums, violins) use for communication and entertainment among others (see plate 3). It is important to note that the presence of traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfields was being announced with some of the drums fabricated by the people themselves. Also, important information was given to the people through a particular sound of the drum. As such, drums were very relevant to the day-to-day administration of the fondom as traditional rulers used them to communicate with his people and the ancestors.

Talents were also manifested in decorative arts in door posts, drinking cups out of buffalo horns and stools.¹³⁵ Carvers, smith men, weavers and thatchers presented themselves to the palace on the request of the *fon* and offered unpaid services as need arises. Smiting was an essential craft for the survival of chiefdoms for many a farmer depended on stools manufactured by black smith for agriculture. Agricultural tools like hoes, cutlasses, axes, knives, spears, bows and arrows, guns were produced thanks to ore that came in from Santa and Bambili. The *fondom* of Ndu (Babessi) supplied the region with pottery and smiting while the people of Meta were specialized in waving of bags and baskets.

Agriculture was one of the main activities carried out by people of the Bamenda Grassfield thanks to stools produced by the iron smelting industry. The *fon* had overall control of the economy. Apart of being the general overseer, he had his own farm which was cultivated by all under the supervision of his guards and elders. In Bafut, the *fon* had an estate situated 20 kilo meters away from the palace in a village called Kendnshu (toward the Menchum valley) and each village was expected to work in that estate in turns. At the farm, clearing, hoeing, seeds planting, weeding, harvesting and drying was carried out thanks to the mobilization of the villagers by chiefs. He equally keeps cattle in the same area. The sizes of

¹³³ From a discussion in a local palm wine bar at Bambili where some elders were drinking, I was made to understand through a discussion among the elders that the people of Ndop plan (Babissi, Babungo, Babalang and their neighbours) were experts in iron work and pottery while the Kom and Nso people were experts in carving and those from Momo and Bafut were good weavers.

¹³⁴ For more on this, consult L.T. Asong, *The Crown of Thorns*. In this novel, Asong narrates how the fabricated mask that replaced the stolen god from the shrine was carved by one of the best carvers in the land, an elder who doubles as a king maker.

¹³⁵ Interview with Muchia Lawrence, 72 years, quarter head and trader, confirms that the people of Mbebili Bafut were specialized in carving and weaving as well as the Babungo people of Ndop, November 2017, Mbebili Bafut.

Galega's maize and guinea corn farms were astonishing to Zintgraff when he visited Bali at the turn of the 19th century. Seeing the size of the farm, he estimated that about hundreds of persons worked on the farms but his entire family was not up to that number.¹³⁶

After harvesting, storage was in huge granaries constructed in the palace to feed the ever-growing population. This implies that, the size of the farm could only be maintained by external man power coming from the *fondom* justifying that traditional rulers willed authority and control the economy of pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield. Traditional rulers in this part of the land were a center for accumulation and the distributor of wealth according to the needs of the people. This factor and many others undeniably reinforced his position as the administrators and controller of his polity which attracted modern administrator to work toward integrating traditional rulers.

In Europe, there existed a traditional system known as divine right of Kings, a political theory which claims that the sovereign is a direct representative of God and has the right to rule absolutely by his royal birth. The practice originated from the medieval concept of God's award of temporal powers to civil rulers and spiritual powers to the church. This right was particularly claimed by the early Stuart kings in England and explains many of their attitudes in the struggle which developed between them and parliaments for political sovereignty. This theory of divine right of kings was the order of the day in the 18th and 19th Century Europe. African traditional leaders in general and those of the Bamenda Grassfield in particular by virtue of their royal birth enjoyed this theory though they had no contact with the western world at that time. Traditional rulers were central to Grassfield political systems. In theory, traditional rulers were autocrat with total power over his people. He owned all land, controlled the court system and his court was the highest and final court of appeal. As chief judge he could confiscate property, especially cattle and had the power of life and death. He was the religious leader and the wealthiest man in his society having as many wives as he wanted.

D- Traditional Institutions of Governance

Traditional institutions are all those forms of social and political authority which have long existed and served the society as source of power and authority before the advent of colonialism¹³⁷ Also, traditional institutions can be defined as “the indigenous political

¹³⁶ E.M. Chilver, Zintgraff's Explorations in Bamenda, Adamawa and the Benue lands, 1889-1892” Buea, West Cameroon Government Printer, 1966, p 9

¹³⁷ Crook R., *The Role of Traditional Institutions in Political Change and Development*. Accra: Ghana Center for Democratic Development, 2005, cited in Ukam Ivi Ngwu's Traditional Institutions and Development

arrangements whereby leaders with proven track records are appointed and installed in line with the provisions of their native laws and customs...they are the custodians of their people's norms, cultures and practices"¹³⁸On his part, Omele refers to traditional institutions as those social, economic or political organizations/bodies which derive their powers, legitimacy, influence and authority from the traditions of a particular people.¹³⁹Contextually, traditional institutions are long existing authorities under well organised and coordinated bodies supervised by a traditional ruler who coordinated the political, economic and socio-cultural life of a people respecting native laws and customs. Traditional institutions have been identified to include: traditional rulers who act as the head and their subordinates, traditional councils, regulatory/sacred societies, princes' societies, ward heads, women clubs among others. These institutions though they played an important role in the administration of the *fondoms* were under the authority of traditional ruler. Each of them had a specific role to play in the general administration of the land under the protection of the chief as presented in the following paragraph.

I-The Traditional Council as an Institution of Traditional Governance

Each village in the Bamenda Grassfields has a traditional council reputed in traditional political institutions as the third in rank after the *Fon* and the regulatory society in decision making.¹⁴⁰The traditional council is a body made up of elderly and well-respected representative of each village in a *fondom*. For one to be a member of the traditional council, he must have proved himself to be an honest, upright and disciplined elder of the community. The number of elders that made up the traditional council of each society varied from place to place. Generally, most traditional councils were composed of representatives of quarter/village heads, representatives of regulatory societies and other action groups in the *fondom*. Also, representatives of the army and elders who operated at various levels of the traditional political system equally form part of the traditional council. In the Nso *fondom*, for example, the traditional council which is called *Takibu* is made up of seven members locally

Communication in Nigeria: *Journal of Media, Communication and Languages (JMC &L)*, Volume 5, No 1, 166-172, 2018, p 169

¹³⁸Nweke K., The Role of Traditional Institutions of Governance in Managing Social Conflicts in Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta Communities: Imperatives of Peace-Building Process in the Post-Amnesty era EEE. *British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 5 (2): 205-219, 2012, p 206

¹³⁹Omole B., *Traditional Institutions, Democracy and Development: Role of Oba and his Citizens*. Accessed on April 1st 2017 from: <http://www.nigeriatoday.ng/2016/06/traditional-institutions-democracy-and-development-role-of-oba-and-his-citizens>, 2016

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Ngam Nestor, 52 years, traditional council member, December 2017, Belo. In cases where divergent views arose in the course of deliberation, the traditional council did consultations and struggle to reconcile those involve through a general consensus.

called the *vibai*, meaning the *Fon*'s councilors.¹⁴¹ In Bafut, *nda nushie* is the local name for the council and they are answerable to *tanikuru* (elders in council) No matter the house or council, all reports from their meetings end on the table of the traditional ruler who either endorses or called for amendment.¹⁴²

In most *fondoms*, each quarter had a traditional council which is made up of responsible sons and daughters of that quarter. Their decisions were forwarded to the village's traditional council for adjustments or onward transmission to the traditional ruler for validation.¹⁴³ Their deliberations were opened to members of the public who acted as spectators in the deliberations. In the Bamenda Grassfields, the appellation of the traditional council varies from one chiefdom to the other and had its seat at the palace. In Mankon, the central traditional council is called *Nda-Kwifor*.¹⁴⁴ In Nso it is referred to as the *Takibu*. The traditional society had a stabilizing influence in the whole set up of the traditional political system. Interestingly, the traditional council is characterized by the predominance of commoners and the total absence of the members of the royal family. This give the council of elders the authority to curb and suppress the power of princes who might want to destabilize the normal functioning of the society or want to usurp or attempt to disobey the reigning *fon*¹⁴⁵ in complicity with other princes. The council took care of minor issues affecting the land and focused their interest on developmental projects.

II- The Traditional Council

Despite the chief's diversified duties, rights and responsibilities, the traditional council had a great role to play in its administration. He is guided by the council. If he acts arbitrarily and without consultation from the council he was sanctioned.¹⁴⁶ For example, in Babungo if the *fon* took decisions especially decisions that might be detrimental to the progress of the land without consulting the traditional council, all services and support were withdrawn from him. The council isolated him and "waited for him to die, believing that the ancestors would mysteriously eliminate him."¹⁴⁷ In other areas of the Bamenda Grassfields, traditional rulers who were too frail to rule, or misbehaved beyond any acceptable standard were secretly taken

¹⁴¹ Faày Woo Lii Won., *An Introduction to Nso' Culture*, vol 1, Bamenda, Copy Printing Technology, 2001, p.75

¹⁴² Interview with Climent Che Ngwabajong, 69 years, president of traditional council, 28 December 2018, Small Makon (Bamenda)

¹⁴³ Ibid

¹⁴⁴ Aletum, "African Politics Yesterday and Tomorrow", p.28.

¹⁴⁵ Aletum, Fisiy, *Socio – Political Integration*, p.45.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.p.19.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Shang Gilbert, age 54, Compound Head, 20thDecember 2010, Banzo.

unaware and put to death by *kwifor* who were represented in the traditional council¹⁴⁸ In some cases, he was openly dethroned by the council and information sent to the appropriate quarters and the population that he was no longer the traditional ruler.¹⁴⁹ Any chief who refused to work in close collaboration with his council of elders was abandoned. Asong puts it

*“...His highness, here we are again to talk to you about what to do. It is eight moons since we sat in this same room to vow that we shall never again sit in council to tell you to do this or that. We meant what we said. But today we are gathered here to break our word. We do not do that often.”*¹⁵⁰

If the excesses of the chief were too much to bear after several warnings had been given to him, he was dethroned and the administration/population was notified depending on the era. In pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield, neighbouring chiefdoms were notified while during the colonial period, the administration is informed.

*“We have also come to tell Goment that we have no chief any longer.... Meaning, Goment that we the people who catch our Chiefs, have decided to take back our respect from Nchindia Fuo-ndee Alexander who was until yesterday paramount Chief of Nkokonoko Small Monje- for reasons which Goment knows already.”*¹⁵¹

Calling a traditional ruler by his names meant he is dethroned and as such, no longer worthy of the titles that goes with the position. The traditional council in the Bamenda Grassfields traditional society exercised a lot of influence on the authority of the *fon*. Each council member had the obligation to advance and protect the interest and wellbeing of his quarter during deliberations in the assembly.¹⁵² Normally, in traditional politics, the ruler is an embodiment of many values who performs a multiplicity of duties. To prevent the *fon* from becoming a tyrant, it was necessary for the council to be created.

According to Busia, an office which combined so many duties must be watched and guarded, so that the one in charge of the office could not become a dictator. This explains the existence of the traditional council.¹⁵³ The council respected and paid a lot of obedience and

¹⁴⁸ Samah., “Chiefs (*Traditional rulers*) in Anglophone Cameroon”, p.74, Interview with Fon Abumbi II, Age 67, Fon of Bafut and Magistrate, November 18th 2017, Bafut palace.

¹⁴⁹ T. N. Kaze, “The Dethronement of Traditional Chiefs in the Bamenda Grassfields: A Historical Study of the Chieftaincy Crisis in Kedjom Keku 1982-2006”, MA in history, University of Yaounde I, 20012, pp. 105-108

¹⁵⁰ Linus T. Asong; *The Crown of Thorns*, third edition, Patron Publishing House International Paperbacks, Bamenda, 1995, p 138

¹⁵¹ Ibid, pp 154-155

¹⁵² Aletum, “African Politics Yesterday and Tomorrow”, p.31.

¹⁵³ Busia, *Africa in Search of Democracy*, p.26.

allegiance to the *fon*. Using the case of Ashanti in Ghana, the *fon*'s duties, rights and responsibilities exercised gave him more power. Despite his position, the traditional council was put in place to advise him. If he acted arbitrarily without consultation, he could be dethroned /deposed.¹⁵⁴ But this situation was not obtainable in pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon because, a *fon* who disobeyed and disrespected the traditional council in pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield was simply allowed to be judged and punished by the ancestors. Note should be taken repeated atrocities caused by the traditional ruler/*fon* after a series of advice without results earned him dethronement especially when the gods seems to be silent over such repeated atrocities. As such, the relationship that existed between traditional councils and the traditional ruler in the Bamenda Grassfields was that of check and balances.

III-Regulatory Societies

The regulatory society is that traditional institution that rendered services for the defense of traditional institutions and at the service of the ruling *fon*.¹⁵⁵ In the highly centralized societies of the Bamenda Grassfields, it was vested with much power. Known in Nso as “*Ngwerong*” in Bafut as *Nkwifor*, in Bali Nyonga as *Ngumba*, and *Nkwifoyn* in Kom, this institution is common in almost all Grassfields traditional societies.¹⁵⁶ Regulatory societies were the most powerful traditional institution in most Bamenda Grassfields chiefdoms, otherwise referred to as sacred societies.¹⁵⁷ As the name implies, these sacred societies are those traditional organizations whose activities are not widely known or visible to the general public, especially non-initiated members.¹⁵⁸ Most of these regulatory societies operated as the supervisory organs or call it the legislature of the traditional government.

Membership into the regulatory society was strictly limited to commoners. For instance, in Bafut and Bamunka, no prince could become a member of *nkwifon*. This is because its decisions were sacred were implemented to whoever is guilty be it the chief, prince or the commoner in the society. Bringing in a prince could be detrimental to the decisions and sacredness of the house if any member of the royal family was guilty. They were two ways by which integration to the society was allowed. Either one is a descendent of one of the members or a commoner who pays a heavy fee to become a member. Traditional

¹⁵⁴Ibid, p 26

¹⁵⁵Aletum, “*African Politics Yesterday and Tomorrow*”, p.29.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁷P. N. Nkwi., *Traditional Government and Social Change: A study of the political institution of Kom of the Grassfields of Cameroon*, Yaoundé, 1986.

¹⁵⁸ M. T. Aletum, *Political Sociology*, Yaoundé, Patoh Publishers, 2001, p.214.

regulatory societies performed multiple functions depending on the traditional society they operated. As Nkwi and Warnier put it: “there are enormous variations from *fondom* to *fondom* in the meaning and function of *Kwi’fo*: this institution encompasses its power and recruitment.”¹⁵⁹

In Kom for example, *Kwifoyn* could not dethrone the *fon* but could order him to answer charges related to some offences.¹⁶⁰ As a result, the authority of the *fon* of Kom over all his subjects was unchangeable. However, the stability of the Kom traditional society depended on the collaboration between the *fon* and *Kwifoyn* who at times levy fines to the *fon* to pay because *Kwifoyn* sometimes wielded much power than the *fon*.¹⁶¹ This therefore forces the *fon* to recognize and respect *Kwifoyn* in order to avoid sanctions. On the whole, one may compare the functions of *Kwifoyn* with those of the prime minister of Britain in parliament and those of the *fon* in the Bamenda Grassfields to the Queen of England. While *nkwifon* as an institution in Bamunka is comparable to the House of Commons under the British system, the *Gueiteh* which is a princely traditional society in Bamunka performs the functions of the House of Lords under the British system of administration. To show the power and authority of the *fon* as the administrator of his people, he was one of the privileged persons to be a member of both *nkwifong* and *gueiteh* sacred societies. In the Bafut *fondom*, the *fon* can not be a member of *kwifon* but has/had the right to belong to *takumbeng* which is a regulatory society mostly for princes.

In Bali, *Ngumba* which is a regulatory society could dethrone the chief if he repeatedly committed offences that desecrated the throne that could lead to the wrath of the ancestors who are seen as “gods” of the land¹⁶². Consequently, the deposition of the *fon* was considered a legitimate act to appease the ancestors. This practice did not only obtain during the pre-colonial era as cases of dethronement of traditional rulers are seen recently in some villages in the Bamenda Grassfield.¹⁶³ Apart of *kwifoyn*, there are other regulatory societies with each having a particular role to play in the life of the *fondom*. *Takumbeng*, a regulatory society for princes has as duty to manage crisis among princes in the palace and to construct hurts (see plate 4) in the palace which acted as host to drums and equally act as ritual grounds for the purification of the land.

¹⁵⁹Nkwi., Warnier, *Elements for a History*, p.19.

¹⁶⁰M. T. Aletum., Ngam Chia., “The Socio-Political Structure of Power in Kom Traditional Society”, *Science and Technology Review*, Vol. vi, No 1-2, January-June, 1989, p.54

¹⁶¹*Ibid.* pp.54-55

¹⁶²B. Ndinka., “*Fon* Galega II of Bali Nyonga and Politics in Cameroon, 1940-1985”, M. A. Dissertation in History, University of Buea, 2005, p.48

¹⁶³For more information, consult Kaze’s “The Dethronement of Traditional Chiefs in the Bamenda Grassfields”

Plate 4: Takumbeng House



Source: Ngwa's photographic collection, 18 September 2012

IV-Relevance of the Regulatory Society

Generally, in the Bamenda Grassfields traditional society, regulatory societies were the most influential institution that could call the *fon* to order when he became irresponsible and refused to listen to the council of elders. Regulatory society made sure that the *fon* or traditional ruler did not abuse his authority or become a dictator.¹⁶⁴ As such, the chiefly office was incompatible with other public offices and so any attempt to do the two was unethical. This arrangement guaranteed a fair balance in the distribution and ensured the balance of power. Apart from these institutional restraints imposed on the *fon* by the regulatory society, he was also subjected to very strict control by means of taboo. He could not shake hands especially with women, shed tears, eat in public or enter public places like bars, night clubs and hotels. If the *fon* transgressed any of such taboos, he was sanctioned, though discreetly.¹⁶⁵ This greatly limited the *fon's* activities around his palace and made him what Pierre Aleixandre has described as the "Prisoner of the palace"¹⁶⁶ With all these measures and follow up, the *fon*, could hardly become a dictator as earmarked by Kaberry;

Chieftainship is not despotism. Though the Fon is paramount and has the right to initiate and make final decisions in all matters affecting the people or

¹⁶⁴ P. M. Kaberry., "Traditional Politics in Nsaw", p.379

¹⁶⁵ Asong; *The Crown of Thorns*, 1995, p 138

¹⁶⁶ P. Aleixandre cited in Samah, "Chiefs (Traditional Rulers) in Anglophone Cameroon", 2006, p. 79.

*country, he is also responsible and accountable to his people. He is the source of welfare and wellbeing, and he may be called to account as a person, for his authority is not an impersonal kind ...*¹⁶⁷

This falls in line with modern administrative authorities (the executive, legislative and judiciary) whose actions are guided by the constitution put in place by the state. We could conclude that most of the laws that binds modern states today drew their inspiration from the pre-colonial traditional way of administration. For example, in *Kom*, the *kwifoyn* was and is still the executive and police force of the *fon* of *Kom*. It served as the greatest socio-political institution that brought people of diversified clans, chiefdoms and classes to help the *fon* rule. *kwifoyn* like the *fon* was made to be mystical to avoid people questioning its decisions. The *kwifoyn* of *Kom* acquired most of its sacred powers by cooperation of mystical objects from individuals and rival chiefdoms like *Alemin Kom*.¹⁶⁸ This institution acted like the legislative and judicial arms of government to the *fon* when compared to modern administration.

In *Nso*, the regulatory society was the only institution representing the various social strata in *Nso* traditional society and the only properly constituted organ which was the opposing force to the excesses of the *fon*. Its effectiveness as a check to the exercises of the ruling monarch can only be insured when the *ngwerong* as it is called in the *Nso* land remains basically as an institution for commoners.¹⁶⁹ This is because a commoner will be objective in his judgment over the way the *fon* administer the *fondom* better than a prince of the same palace. With the help of *ngwerong*, the *fon* administers the land in the interest of all for fear of the heavy hand of *ngwerong* on his head should he fail to respect rules and institutions. This comes to confirm that, in most if not all of *Bamenda Grassfield* traditional institutions, decisions are conceived by the commoners as members of traditional institutions and endorsement is done by traditional ruler while regulatory societies come back to implement and sanctions. Implementation comes to play after the chief must have endorsed the decisions proposed to him by the council of regulatory societies.

The secrecy surrounding the *ngwerong* gives it the aura of omnipotence. That is why in *Nso* and many other traditional societies in the *Bamenda Grassfield*, the people described *ngwerong* as having eight hundred eyes.¹⁷⁰ This stems from the fact that all deeds irrespective of their magnitude and where they are carried out, be it home or out of the *fondom*, be it in hiding or in the open are knowingly or unknowingly reported to *ngwerong* who takes prompt

¹⁶⁷Kaberry, "Traditional Politics in *Nsaw*", p. 379.

¹⁶⁸Aletum, Ngam, "The Socio-Political Structure of Power", p. 53.

¹⁶⁹Aletum, Fisiy, *Socio-Political Integration*, p. 51.

¹⁷⁰Interview with Nyuyse Nestor, 47 years, electrician and *Ndu* council member, 15th September 2017, Yaounde

and efficacious action. This gives the institution enormous credibility in checking excesses in the *fondom*, be it on the part of the traditional ruler or the people. That is why it is claimed that, the powers of regulatory societies in our area of study lie in the people, yet it acts in an impersonal manner. Due to its excessive competence, regulatory societies are the main organ for the execution of the *fondom*'s policies. This is not only common in the Nso land but all over the Bamenda Grassfield where *ngwerong* or a variety of the name is found.

Before the coming of colonialism, *ngwerong* executed sanctions including death penalty for treason offences. For example, if the *fon* persistently rejected the advice of his councilors or was absent from the palace without due cause or carried out acts which endangered the welfare of the country, *ngwerong* deprived him of services and even isolated him from his people.¹⁷¹ But the *ngwerong* could not dethrone or unseat the *fon*. His fate was put into the hands of the gods who did not fail the people in sanctioning an unworthy ruler. The dethronement of a traditional ruler became common during the colonial and post-colonial period in the Bamenda Grassfield as a result of western influence, resulting from the wish to amass wealth, protect the interest of colonial administration among others. In pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield, it was believed that the ancestors would seal his fate and pass judgment if he infringes traditional norms and usage.¹⁷²

Another remarkable function of regulatory societies found in the area of study was to initiate a newly installed *fon*. They assume all functions of overseeing that the *fon* is effectively the chosen one and not an impostor, and made sure he is the custodian of all cultural values of the land. When the *fon* is found wanting in his function, traditional institutions are the only traditional political institution that can correct or impose a law on him. This society also imposes on the population to remain indoors if there is a calamity, until amends or sacrifices are made to pacify the gods. *Ngwerong* equally ensures that, religious sacrifices are constantly offered to the ancestors on time. In Bafut, no matter the circumstances even during war, sacrifices must be offered to the gods before the annual festival of the *fon* is carried out. With such extensive powers, *ngwerong* becomes the ideal opposing force to the all-embracing powers of the *fon*.¹⁷³

Regulatory societies in the Bamenda Grassfields had the power of enthroning and dethroning traditional rulers. That is why they play important roles during the enthronement ceremony. During this exercise, a sort of reciprocal oath-taking is made between the would-be

¹⁷¹ Asong; *The Crown of Thorns*, 1995, p 138

¹⁷² Nkwil., Warnier, *Elements for a History*, p.188.

¹⁷³ Aletum., Fisiy, *Socio-Political Integration*, p.51.

traditional ruler and his people represented by the regulatory society.¹⁷⁴ Judicially, all deliberations and decisions taken in the traditional council by the *fon* and his elders are referred to the regulatory society for execution. Confirming the role of regulatory societies, Locke holds that:

*for all power given with attaining an end and being limited by that very end, whenever that end is manifesting neglect or opposed, the trust must necessarily be forfeited, and the power devolves into the hands of those that gave it, who may place it anew where they shall think best and safety and securely. And thus the community perpetually retains a supreme power of saving themselves from the attempt and designs of anybody, even of their legislator, whenever they shall be foolish or so wicked as to lay and carry on designs against the liberties and properties of the subjects.*¹⁷⁵

The relationship between the traditional institutions and the *fon* who himself is an institution is that of total collaboration among the two for the better administration of the *fondom*.¹⁷⁶ Taking the case of the *kwifor* in the Mankon traditional society, it serves as a check to the excesses of the ruling monarch and it also serves as a countervailing force to the excesses of the *fon* as well as checking the excesses of the population toward the *fon*.¹⁷⁷ The *fon* on his part pays respect and obedience to the regulatory society by means of collaboration. The choice of a new *fon* must be approved by the *ngwerong* in the Nso, *kwifor* in Bafut and Mankon, *ngumba* in Bali and other *fondoms* of the Bamenda Grassfield. Immediately after his enthronement, the first place the *fon* visits is the house of *ngwerong* where the *fon* goes to reaffirm his allegiance and respect to *ngwerong*, promising to rule in collaboration with it/them.¹⁷⁸ Note should be taken all of the consultation between the chief and the council are done in closed doors.

Generally, in the Bamenda Grassfields traditional societies, regulatory societies exercise a restrictive function in the powers of traditional rulers. It equally participates in the enthronement and dethronement (abandon the fate of the *fon* to the gods) of traditional rulers, in case of persistent bad administration and violation of established custom and tradition. Regulatory societies can impeach and execute a dictatorial ruler using well established rules without bias. They made sure the administrative functions of traditional rulers are respected

¹⁷⁴ For detail on death, burial, succession and enthronement of a Grassfields chief, see Faày Woo Lii Won, *An Introduction to Nso' Culture*.

¹⁷⁵ See J. Locke on the *Rights of Revolution* cited in R.P Sharma, *Modern Western Political Thought*, India, Sterling Publishers, 1966, p.30

¹⁷⁶ Aletum., *Bafut Institutions in Modern Politics*, p.28.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Chi Joseph, 61 years, carpenter and member of *kwifor*, 29th December 2018 Alhamu.

¹⁷⁸ Aletum, Fisiy, *Socio –Political Integration*, p.49.

by the people and vice versa. Regulatory societies in pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield acted as the legislative and the judicial arms of government as we see today in modern administration.

Conclusion

The organization and structure of indigenous societies in the Bamenda Grassfield where traditional rulers were the central actors influenced the functioning of the different groups that make up that society. The society is hierarchical with the chief at the summit who rules in close collaboration with traditional institutions and officials. The strength of regulatory societies is very evident and they are very crucial to ensure respect of the laws of the land. This means that, the administration of the *fondom* was in the hands of a traditional ruler who worked in close collaboration with other regulatory societies in the *fondom*.

Traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfields enjoyed both sacred and secular authority. By virtue of the ritual of their coronation, the chief underwent a remarkable transformation and became virtually an invincible and an invulnerable person. After coronation, the traditional rulers were at the apex of all visible hierarchy. Their ritual of installation made them sacred persons and conferred on them a number of attributes. The *fon* in most Bamenda Grassfields traditional societies was said to be endowed with divine powers and incarnated the political, socio-economic and religious life of his people. He was the head of the executive, legislative and the judiciary branch of administrations. Before the coming of colonialism, traditional rulers exercised “power” and “authority” over their peoples. The authority they dispensed over come from different sources emanating from tradition, charisma and legacy Max Weber.¹⁷⁹ That is why they were seen or perceived to hold power that came from the ancestors and exercised same over their peoples. As a result of the influential role play by traditional rulers thanks to the authority coming from different sources which they dispensed, coupled with the wish of modern administrator to control the local population, making traditional rulers part of modern administration is getting hold of the local population since the people believe in and respect their traditional rulers.

Judging from the presentations above, it may be said that most or parts of the traditional methods of administration practised today date from the pre-colonial era. Thanks to the traditional system of administration contemporary administrators drew inspiration from the traditionally established institutions to fashion some of their governance procedures. This

¹⁷⁹ For details, consult Amaazee's *Traditional Rulers*, p10

is what has sufficiently buttressed the desire to involve traditional rulers so as to facilitate administration. Through traditional rulers and traditional or indigenous governance structures, access to the population especially in the rural areas is less of a headache and somehow exonerates imposed administrators from the evils of their neo-traditional or modern practices.

CHAPTER 2

THE RE-ORIENTATION AND INVOLVEMENT OF TRADITIONAL RULERS IN A HYBRID ADMINISTRATIVE DISPENSATION 1884-1916

With the help of German traders and the inadvertent complicity of some traditional rulers of the Douala area, the Germans made Cameroon a German colony.¹ The outcome of different meetings held between traditional rulers and German traders was the Germano-Douala Treaty of 12th July 1884. This arrangement is considered to have officially handed Cameroon to the Germans. The German Chancellery thought of a colonial system under the control of trading companies with a little push from a few administrators. Taking into consideration the presence of other European traders in the area and for fear of the unknown, the Germans moved to assert full control of the coastal territory and started moving into the hinterland. In this chapter, attention is given to the German administration of Cameroon in general and the Bamenda Grassfield in particular. It involves a discussion of the position of traditional rulers in the German colonial administrative setup, with an analysis of the results of the colonial endeavor to obtain and ensure the collaboration of traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield.

The chapter looks at the colonial ambition of the Germans, their colonial policy and the different methods they used to consolidate German administration in the Bamenda Grassfield. The chapter includes the role played by German traders, education and Christianity in the process of trying to make traditional rulers a part of German administrative set up. Essentially, it is about describing and evaluating German contributions toward the integration of traditional rulers by showing how German colonial presence worked hard to cause traditional authority to be at the service of the colonialists.

A-German Colonial Ambitions

Germany had acquired territories in Africa for prestige rather than with a specific economic plan, and their initial policy emphasized or centered on exploration over

¹ As a result of the influence of German traders, traditional rulers signed the German-Douala treaty of 12th July 1884 that made Cameroon a German colony. It should be noted traditional rulers did not know the impact of the treaty they were made to sign. This explains why resistances were organized to push the Germans out of Cameroon

administration.² Her ambition was to measure up with other European powers so as to be counted among the great nations of the world. With the influence of traders, she fully engaged herself in the colonization of colonies. Edward Schmidt a trader of the Woermann firm was instructed on his way to Cameroon to secretly sign treaties with traditional rulers of Douala. On his arrival in Cameroon, he pleaded and offered gifts to some traditional rulers in Douala for them to accept German occupation of their land for economic reasons. The result of their acceptance was the 12th July, 1884 annexation treaty with Schultze representing German traders and the traditional rulers of Douala standing for the people of Cameroon.³ This treaty became the basis for the colonization of the territory and its hinterland. With the signing of the 12th July treaty, traditional rulers ceded their sovereignty, legislative and administrative right over the control and administration of the land to a private German firm who were to lay the groundwork for German administration in the hinterland.⁴

Initially, the German Chancellery thought of a colonial system under the control of trading companies but this could not be possible because traders from other European nation especially British traders were present in Cameroon since the 1840s. British traders were not only present in the annexed land but also outnumbered those of the Germans.⁵ For fear of British influence over traditional rulers and other motivating reasons, the German administration fully took over the administration of the territory. Although the people were given some rights over their land as stipulated in one of the clauses of the annexation treaty⁶, when the German administration finally took over the control of the territory from private German firms, they extended German administration into the interior. This extension was through conquest, subjugation, active collaboration on the part of traditional rulers among others. The annexation treaty of 12th July 1884 is among the 95 treaties signed by the Germans with various ethnic groups of Cameroon between 1884 and 1916, the period of German occupation of Cameroon. Through these treaties, the natives through traditional rulers gave away their sovereignty, administrative, legislative and judicial rights over the administration of Cameroon in general and the Bamenda Grassfield in particular to the Germans.

² Chiabi., *The Making of Modern Cameroon*. Vol. 1, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997, pp. 2-10

³ V. J. Ngong., *Cameroon History Since 1800*, Limbe, Malawi Presbook, 1996.

⁴ Michael Ndobegang, "Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change in Cameroon, 1884-1966", Ph.D Thesis in History, Boston University, 1985, pp. 74-75

⁵ Ibid, p 74

⁶ Harry R. Ruddin., *Germans in the Cameroons, 1884-1914: A Case Study in Modern Imperialism*, New York: Greenwood, Press, 1968, p 425

Though the Germans practiced direct administration, what is of importance to us is the fact that during the negotiations for the various treaties to be signed and during their implementation, the Germans recognized traditional rulers as the sovereign political leaders of the land.⁷ It was in this spirit that the Germans through the policy of effective occupation and administration of the country never ignored traditional rulers and this gave the rulers the feeling of being part of the administering authorities. This explains why even in the interior with the Bamenda Grassfield inclusive, Zintgraff sorted and got the collaboration of traditional rulers with Galega I of Bali a good example in order to obtain the cheapest means to effectively control the territory.

I-The Advent of German Colonial Rule in Cameroon

In order to consolidate her presence throughout the territory, the Germans establish political, economic and cultural domination over the colonized people of Cameroon. They equally aimed at establishing frontiers with other European colonizers. For these ambitions to be realized, a full knowledge of the geographical and natural potentials of the territory was needed by the German administration. The only way of getting full knowledge and control over the entire nation was for the Germans to move to the interior. The ambitious nature of the Germans coupled with other factors pushed them to explore the limits of the territory they occupied ignoring some of the clauses of the 12th July 1884 treaty.

To Cameroonians and especially the middle men, the penetration of the Germans was not acceptable and out of place considering the clauses of the July 12 treaty.⁸ This explains why some traditional rulers especially those who refused to participate in the signing of the annexation treaty together with the natives resisted the Germans. An example is the traditional ruler of Hickory town, (Bonaberi) Lock Priso who warned his counterparts on the dangers of signing a treaty with the Germans.⁹ He went ahead to organize an abortive resistance against the Germans which resulted to an insurrection in December 1884 crushed by the German forces.¹⁰ This resistance though abortive, set the stage for other traditional rulers out of the coastal zones and in the Bamenda Grassfield in particular to resist German administration.

⁷Amaazee., *Traditional Rulers (Chiefs) and Politics in Cameroon History*, Press Universitaires de Yaounde, 2002, p16

⁸ The dissatisfaction of German penetration could be seen in the resistances organized by some villages in order to block/stop the Germans from occupying their territory though with little or no success.

⁹Gwanfogbe Mathew Basung; Resistance to European Penetration into Africa: *The case of the North West Region of Cameroon in the Journal of the Cameroonian Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 13 No. 3, 2017 pp120-121.

¹⁰ Ibid

To the Germans, the defeat of the coastal chiefs of Hickory and Bakweri in 1884 and 1894 respectively was a booster and an open door for them to move into the interior. The Bamenda Grassfield was their prime target for moving inland. This is because apart from the economic benefits, it doubled as an entrance into northern Cameroon (Adamawa) where he had as goal to establish contact with the people of the interior, survey and open up trade routes and as well as assess how much ivory and kola nut the hinterland could produce.¹¹ Also, it permitted them to penetrate the hinterlands in order to effectively administer and explore the territory under their control and this could only be possible through the collaboration and effort of traditional rulers.

To achieve this aim, diplomacy, punitive force among others were the different mechanisms applied. When the Germans launched the campaign to move inland, they encountered traditional rulers with well elaborated and established palaces and strong traditional institutions with well-defined and established political functions. Nonetheless, these communities varied considerably in the degree of centralization of political powers. In order to gain total political and economic control over the different ethnic groups and the entire territory, the Germans made sure powerful traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield and all what they represented actively took part in the German system of administration which was considered modern. The involvement of traditional rulers into the German modern system of administration re-orientated traditional administration which was under the command and authority of traditional rulers.

II- Reasons for German Penetration into the Interior

The introduction of German rule in the Bamenda Grassfields among other reasons was facilitated by the Berlin Conference held from November 15th, 1884 to January 30th 1885 in Berlin, the German capital. This conference was one of the main factors which encouraged German penetration into the Bamenda Grassfield. This was thanks to the hinterland theory adopted in the course of the conference which gave occupying powers free access into the interior of their respective colonies.¹² Linked to the above was the doctrine of effective occupation that equally saw the light of the day thanks to the deliberations and resolutions arrived at during the Berlin conference. It specified that, an imperial title was not secured until a skeletal presence on the ground was put in place by the colonial power.

¹¹Ndobegang; "Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change", pp. 76

¹² Thanks to lectures in class, we were made to understand that in the course of the Berlin Conference, some resolutions were taken among which was the hinterland theory. It stipulated that all colonial masters had the right to move into the interior of the occupied territory in order to have a full knowledge of the colony in all domains and bring the people to understand they are in charge.

Aware and for fear of the unknown of the effort made and ongoing by some traditional rulers in collaboration with British traders and administrators to occupy Cameroon, the Germans became scared the territory might be taken away from them if they did not make their presence felt through effective occupation. Couple with the presence of the British in Nigeria, their fear doubled for they knew the British could expand from their Nigerian protectorate in the West and seize part or why not all of Cameroon from the Germans. As such, it was imperative for the Germans to move inland right up to the Bamenda Grassfield in order to delimit their area of jurisdiction.

Apart from the hinterland and effective occupation theories, reports from early German explorers in Cameroon made the Germans to realize that the real wealth of Cameroon was found in the interior. This was buttressed by the fact that Douala chiefs in one of the clauses of the annexation treaty insisted that they had to maintain the middle man monopoly of trade from the interior,¹³ an indication that the middle men made profit from trade between the Germans and the natives inland. By insisting on the clause of maintaining their middle man monopoly, the Germans understood there was much to gain if they bypassed the middle men and exploited the interior. Their quest to move inland in order to discover what it was made of brought the Germans to the Bamenda Grassfield.

From the coast, the Germans realized that the interior had fertile soils good for plantations and equally had valuable products like palm oil, palm kernel, ivory among others. These products which were very cheap in the interior were of high demand in Europe. As such, it was their wish to get these products at the source which of course would be cheaper rather than count on the middle men who sold at high prices in order to make profit. Also, it was an opportunity for them to have control over indigenous trade and for the Germans to check the British and the French from diverting ivory to Nigerian and Congo respectively. The best way to control trade was to move into the interior which the Bamenda Grassfield happens to be part. The quest for cheap labour needed for the construction of roads, railways and plantations also contributed in bringing the Germans into the Bamenda Grassfield.

Economic and political goals also brought the Germans into the Bamenda Grassfield under the command of Eugen Zintgraff who arrived the area in January 1889, on his way to Adamawa. His mission was to assess the economic importance of the hinterland, establish contacts and strong trade relations with the people in order to deflect ongoing trade that flow

¹³ For details, visit the terms of the Preliminary and the German-Douala treaty of 12th July 1884 cited in Gwanfogbe Mathew Basung; Resistance to European Penetration into Africa p.121

towards Calabar¹⁴ in favour of the Germans. Also, he had as mission to establish trading relations between the Germans and the Cameroonian peoples of the hinterland, as steps towards the introduction of alien rule and the implementation of the principal of effective occupation. Zintgraff's wish was to establish contact with the people of the interior, survey and open up trade routes and assess how much ivory and kola nuts the hinterland could produce in order to feed his home industries. The above reasons explained why the Germans decided to penetrate the interior by bypassing the terms of the treaties signed with coastal chiefs. This had an influence on the role played by traditional rulers in pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfields as the presence of the Germans re-orientated the role of traditional rulers in administrative affairs. Before bringing traditional rulers into the German administrative machinery, the Germans used a variety of methods to expand their activities into the interior.

III-Methods of German Expansion

Different methods among which were administrative approaches, military expedition, signing of treaties among others were applied by the Germans in order to gain access into the entire Bamenda Grassfield. These methods were aimed at countering resistances to German occupation and administration. For the Germans to succeed; they had put in a lot of effort and strategies so as to overcome resistances to their movement inland. The manner of expansion and penetration is grouped into three.

The first strategy used was the administrative approach. By this method, collaboration with friendly traditional rulers of the area was the order of the day. Some traditional rulers willingly accepted to hand over their land to the Germans with neither little nor any motivation and resistance. In the case of the Ewondos, Charles Atangana handed over his land to the German. In the Grassfield, *fon* Galega I of Bali willingly handed over his territory to Zintgraff and later on signed a treaty with him.¹⁵ This act of Galega brought the entire Bali *fondom* under German rule and open the way for other villages in the Bamenda Grassfield to fall under Germans rule. To effectively control these villages, the Germans had to gradually involve traditional rulers into the German modern system of administration. Traditional rulers who gave up their territories through administrative methods were protected and made part of Germans administration with little or no supervision.

Military expedition was another method the Germans used to gain access into the interior and got hold of traditional rulers whom they later made part of the modern German

¹⁴ Ibid, p 75

¹⁵ Ndobegang., "Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change". p.78

administrative system of governance. By this method, the Germans carried out punitive expeditions against villages under the authority of chiefs who refused to accept their presence. Through wars of conquest, forceful occupation and intimidation among others, the Germans brought the Mankon, Bafut, Kom and the Nso people on their knees with the help of soldiers from friendly traditional chiefdoms.¹⁶ It should be noted that help for the subjugation of chiefdoms that refuse to accept German rule did not only come from friendly traditional rulers. The Germans equally had support from Liberian mercenaries who acted as porters and some like soldiers. Though out of our scope, we saw the use of force by the Germans in the 1900s in conquering Garoua. The refusal by some traditional rulers of this part of the territory to embrace the Germans led to the use of force. This explains why there were pockets of resistances against German administration though the outcome was always in favour of the Germans and as such, traditional rulers were forced to accept German rule and collaborate with the German administration.

The signing of treaties with traditional rulers was another method used by the German colonial administration to gain access into the Bamenda Grassfield. These treaties were signed with local traditional rulers and their terms permitted the Germans to administratively take over the control of the land. For the period the Germans spent in Cameroon, over 95 treaties were signed and these treaties could be classified into the following; sale contracts, negotiated treaties and peace treaties. As to what concerns sale contract, this was common with the traditional rulers at the coast. Here, chiefs and kings handed over part or all of their land to the Germans in exchange for German goods and money as was the case with king William of Bimbila who signed a sale contract with the Woermann firm. Negotiated treaties on their part were signed between two parties who had something to protect and benefit from the other. The Germano-Duala Treaty of 12th July 1884 which gave Germany the administrative right over Cameroon is an example. Also, the treaty between Galega and Zintgraff is another example of negotiated treaty signed between traditional rulers and the German administration.¹⁷

The last category of treaty which made the Germans took whole of the Bamenda Grassfield were peace treaties. It should be noted that peace treaties were negotiated at the end or in the course of military confrontation. With the inability of traditional rulers to push

¹⁶ From the analysis, one could say the war between the joined Germans and Bali soldiers on one side against the people of Bafut and Mankon on the other side is a clear example of resistance against German penetration and occupation.

¹⁷ B. Amaazee's *Traditional Rulers (Chiefs) and Politics in Cameroon History*, Presses Universitaires de Yaounde, 2002, pp 17-18

the German military out of their respective polities through war, seeing the destruction inflicted on their people and land, most traditional rulers sued for peace and the Germans imposed or dictated the terms of the peace agreement. An example of such an agreement was used by the Germans when they defeated the people of Bafut and Mankon which led to the exile of the *fon* of Bafut to Bota. Also, the *fon* of Kom was forced to give slaves who were to be accompanied by her daughter a thing he had vowed not to do, to work at the military station in Bamenda because he had his back on the wall.

Apart from the resistance put up by the people of Mankon, Bafut, Nso and Kom which ended up in the signing of peaceful undertakings, the people of Bum, Fungom, Aghem, Esu, Esimbi wisely sued for peace because the defeat of great kingdoms had instilled fear in their minds. This means that, traditional rulers of neighbouring *fondoms* apart from Kom, Bafut and Nso willingly accepted to cooperate with the German administration without a fight because of fear.¹⁸ From the above, traditional rulers with or without their concern were forced to accept German administration either through administrative negotiations, military expedition or through treaties. No matter the method used, the end result was for traditional rulers to work according to the dictates of the German administration.

IV-Zintgraff's Expedition and Contact with Bamenda Grassfield

What happened to Zintgraff upon his arrival in Bali, that is the grandeur and treatment he received and the promises he made to Galega I as appreciation for the warm reception were very important in determining German policy toward traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield. Before the arrival of Zintgraff in the Bamenda Grassfield, he had made several expeditions to other parts of the country. Between 1886/88 he made some probing expedition in the coastal inland around the Kamerun Mountain. In early 1886, he and Krabbes who later on was appointed administrator in charge of the Victoria District explore the area and spent the first night in Bonduma in Buea. From there they travelled with a trader-chief, Nggale, to Yabassi.¹⁹ Zintgraff's second expedition was from September to October 1886 which he left Douala through River Mungo to Bakundu. From Bakundu, he continued to Bombe, Mudamba up to Mukonje where his caravan was halted by chief Makia on grounds that Zintgraff and his team had invaded his territory without his permission though they were allowed to continue two days later to Kumba. Chief Makia's halting of Zintgraff presented the role, influence and authority traditional rulers had in their area of jurisdiction. Nothing happens in their land

¹⁸ NAB, Ad No. 688,39 Bum Intelligent Report, 1935, p.5

¹⁹ E.M. Chilver, Zintgraff's Explorations in Bamenda, Adamawa and the Benue lands, 1889-1892" Buea, West Cameroon Government Printer, 1966, p. 2

without their knowledge. The experiences he had from the contact with the people of the coastal zone in his previous expeditions made communication easy and fast with the traditional rulers of the Bamenda Grassfield. To avoid disruption in his journey as was the case at Mukonje, his targets were traditional rulers in order to gain access into any village in the Bamenda Grassfield.

The reception and guidance he received on his way to Lake Barombi, couple with traders from the northern hinterland on trade mission he saw encouraged and motivated him to continue his expedition inland with the hope that there was a possibility of moving up north for better trade. In his third expedition, Zintgraf travelled by canoe up the Dibombe River in the company of Chief Mikeng of Pobo to Mangamba from where they travelled to Nyassoso. On the 29th of January 1887, Zintgraff again left Douala in the Governor's Steam Yacht for Victoria.²⁰ From Victoria, he went to Buea where he met Kuva Likenye, a Buea chief before moving to Lissoka and Barombi. At Barombi, a German station was built to facilitate exploration into the hinterland. From Barombi, he travelled to Lobe in Ndian division. In Ndian, he discovered that the soil was fertile for plantation agriculture (oil-palm, and rubber) and a reasonable quantity of ivory was equally discovered.²¹ These discoveries motivated him to move further inland with the hope that the land would be more fertile and available for more plantations which explained also why he and his team found themselves in the Bamenda Grassfield.

The next phase of Zintgraff's exploration was into the Bamenda Grassfield. This analysis enables us to see the effort put in by Zintgraff despite the numerous challenges to effectively occupy and administer the interior with the Bamenda Grassfield inclusive. It should be noted the starting point of most of Zintgraff's expeditions was Douala. The presentation of the various trips to the different villages Zintgraff visited is aimed at tracing his movement to the Bamenda Grassfield. It equally prepared him to know how (route) and where labour from the Bamenda Grassfield which was cheap would reach the coast. Also, the visits to other parts of the territory permitted him to familiarize himself and make friends with the local authorities. Also, it provided an opportunity for him to build German resting post from where command and assistance could be gotten in case of challenges on his mission to Adamawa through the Bamenda Grassfield. Lastly, it facilitated his journey to the stations that were already built which did not only act as resting points but also as ware houses. These stations would link the Bamenda Grassfield with the rest of the territory and ease trade

²⁰Gwanfogne., *Resistance to European Penetration into Africa*, p 124

²¹ Ibid

between the people of the grassfield and the coastal people on the one hand and the Germans on the other hand.

Between July-August 1888, Zintgraff left Douala in the company of Muyenga, Manga Bell's slave from Bayang. They went through the German station at Barombi with aim of visiting Adamawa through the Bamenda Grassfield. The building of stations along his part was aim at linking the coast and the interior in order to ease German trade between the coastal people and the people of the interior. From Barombi, he travelled through Tali and Sabi where he met the first Grassfield people as he climbed the escarpment at Babessong (Ashong) in present day Batibo Sub-Division.

On his third day while in Ashong, he received envoys from the *fon* of Bali who came to accompany him into their land. He and his carriers left Ashong on the 16th of January 1889 for Bali where he was offered a hospitable reception by *fon* Galega I. The hospitality and comfort Zintgraff and his people received from the people of Bali made him to request for a station to be build in Bali which was granted. The Bali station became the first German station build in the Bamenda Grassfield which lasted till 1902 where it was transferred to Bamenda presentday upstation around the Governor's office.

On the 25th of April 1889 after spending some months in Bali, Zintgraff left Bali in pursuit of his dream to the Benue.²² Before leaving, he promised *fon* Gelega I he will return. He noted that Galega I was "a real chief who unlike those at the coast had the potential to become a reliable and capable friend of the German".²³ This motivated Galega I to give Zintgraff soldiers and carriers to ease his journey. He trekked through Bande, (Mankon) Bafut where he spent some days with Gwelem, *fon* of Bafut as a would-be collaborator.

From Bafut, he crossed River Menchum through Befang and continued to Takum. He left Takum and preceeded to Donga on 28th May 1889. After resting for five days, he visited Okari and the Royal Niger Company at Ibi.²⁴ Remembering the promise he made to Galega, he decided to move through Banyo (though he was blocked from entering there by the Fulani population at Yola) with hopes of going back to Bali. Unable to go through, he went back through Takum. Though this part is out of our scope, it should be noted it outline the journey of Zintgraff into the Bamenda Grassfield through the coastal zones, out of this zone to the Benue and back to our study area. It gives an account of his visit to the different villages in the area and his interaction with the various traditional rulers.

²²Ndobegang., "Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change". pp. 77

²³Ibid., p.77

²⁴Gwanfogbe., *Resistance to European Penetration into Africa*, p122

From Takum he travelled through Bum and Bikom (Kom) in the Bamenda Grassfields where he was detained for some days by the *fon* of Kom for trespassing. Zintgraff had to negotiate with the *fon* of Kom before he was allowed to continue his trip. These negotiations were aimed at preparing the chiefs to accept and collaborate with the German administration, hence integration. From Kom, he went down to Bamungu (Babungo), Bambui, Bafuen (Nkwen), Bamendankwe, Nsongwa and back to Bali to meet his old friend Galega there by respecting his promise of coming back. To respect his promise, Zintgraff wrote; “I must not put Garega (Galega) my friend to shame by not coming back, and building my house elsewhere. I gave them my oath and to make it stronger, we rubbed each other with camwood.”²⁵

After resting in Bali from the fatigue of the expedition that took him from Bali to Benue and back to Bali, he left for the coast on the 24th December 1889. His leaving for the coast was to give an account to the German administration that authorized him to explore the hinterland and also to request for more funds to establish other German posts in some of the places he had visited. Despite the challenges in the course of his tour, one of his missions which was to establish contacts with the people of the interior for German administration and trade was realized.

At the end of November 1890, Zintgraff took off from Douala for the second expedition to the Bamenda Grassfield and arrived on 9th December 1890. His main objective this time was to open trade with the people of Mankon and Bafut. His ambition of establishing trade links with the Mankon and Bafut *fondoms* met with serious resistance which resulted into a war.²⁶ Zintgraff sent two of his carriers to survey Mankon and Bafut and bring him feedback on the potentials of the areas so he could start trade dealings with them. Unfortunately for him, the two envoys were killed by the people of Mankon and the 10 ivories and two oxen compensation requested by Zintgraff from the people for killing his messengers were not paid. Filled with humiliation by the people, Zintgraff attacked Mankon on 30th of January 1891 and to his greatest surprise; he lost a good number of his fighters to the joint Mankon/Bafut force.²⁷ In total, four Germans were killed being Lt. Von Speangenberg,

²⁵Chilver., Zintgraff's Explorations, p.11

²⁶“Paramountcy and Protection in the Cameroons: The Bali and the Germans, 1883-1913”, *In Britain and Germany in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, edited by Fifford and William R. Lewis, New Heaven, Yale University Press, 479-511, 1967, p. 27

²⁷*Ibid*, Gwanfogbe., *Resistance to European Penetration into Africa*

Huwe, Tiedt and Nehber with a total of 180 Bali soldiers. On their part, the Mankon and the Bafut joined force lost a total 1500 warriors.²⁸

Seeing that he could not withstand the war, Zintgraff on the 8th February 1891, requested to the Governor for assistance and traveled to Douala on the 1st of March of the same year to personally present his request to Zimmerer, the then German Governor in Cameroon, for assistance. Despite arguments advanced by the administrative authority for not being informed of such a war, he however gave 120 troops alongside rifles and ammunitions with Conrau as military head who was later beheaded by the Bangwa people in their fight against German occupation to accompany Zintgraff. The request for reinforcement was aimed at bringing the people of Mankon and Bafut and their chief under German control and administration.

On the 23rd August 1891, Zintgraff arrived Bali alongside Hutter and insisted on bringing all of the Bamenda Grassfield under German administration. However, some of the villages coordinated by their chiefs willingly submitted themselves to German protection and administration for fear of the unknown in the event of a war. Apart from Bali, the people of Bamundankwe and Bafreng (Nkwen) submitted themselves while Bagam and Bansoa found in the western region of today's Cameroon sent messengers to recognize the authority of the Germans under Zintgraff.²⁹ The coming back of Zintgraff to Bali, marked the total transfer and surrender of Galega I and his *fondom* under the care and protection of the Germans. During this visit, he signed a treaty with *fon* Galega I, the paramount and traditional ruler of Bali, whom the terms of the treaty were dictated by Zintgraff.

V- "Treaty" Between Galega and Zintgraff

To make traditional rulers part and parcel of the re-orientation which introduced them into a hybrid system of governance, the German administration through its representatives signed treaties with traditional rulers. These treaties were needed in order to partnership with traditional rulers. One of the treaties signed which gave the Germans legal authority to dominate and influence administrative decisions in the Bamenda Grassfield was the 1891 treaty between Garega (Galega) (representing himself and his people on the one hand and Zintgraff representing the German administration). The terms of the 1891 treaty were as follows.

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Albert Pascal Temgoua., "Resistance à l'occupation Allemande du Cameroun, 1884-1916", Thesis for the award of a Doctorat D'état-en-lettres, University of Yaounde I, 2005.

1. Galega would transfer to Dr. Zintgraff such powers as he at present exercises in the lands, namely the right over life and limb and the final decisions as to war and peace.
2. Accordingly, Galega undertook to give effect to such orders as might be given by Dr. Zintgraff himself or to comply loyally with their execution by other means, and finally to hold his forces in unconditional readiness for any war Dr. Zintgraff may consider necessary and not to undertake war for his own advantage and without Dr. Zintgraff's concurrence.
3. In consideration of this, the establishment, recognition and protection of Garega's position as the paramount chief of the surrounding tribes of the Northern Kamerun hinterland would be secured.
4. The proceeds of regular tax to be raised from the neighbouring tribes and a fixed duty payable by Caravans passing through the Bali districts from the hinterland would be divided between Dr. Zintgraff and Garega. Also, to defray the costs of administration in North-Kamerun, the part due to Dr. Zintgraff to be used for direct government costs such as road and bridge building, supplementation, provisioning of the station etc and the part due to Garega to be regarded as an official payment for loyal compliance with the terms of the treaty now concluded.
5. The regulation of the incidence of these taxes, the establishment of customs stations and appointment of customs officers and connected regulations were to be decided in accordance with the wishes of Dr. Zintgraff.³⁰ Since he was made to believe that Galega was the paramount ruler in the Bamenda Grassfield, signing this treaty with him meant he had total control of all the vassal states that were under the command of Galega. This explains why the Germans expected all other villages in the Bamenda Grassfield to peacefully submit themselves under the authority of the Germans with little or no resistance. Where the chief and his people refused to submit to German authority, military force had to be used to bring traditional rulers under German administration.

In order to demoralize Zintgraff who came back with reinforcement and determined to revenge the humiliation on his men on 30th of January 1891 by the combine Mankon and Bafut fighters, the people of Mankon on December 9th 1891, sent a peaceful delegation with ivory and labour as compensation for the 1889 war only to surprisingly attack the patrol of Pavel the next day. This was an indication that traditional rulers were not ready to cooperate

³⁰ E.M. Chilver., *Zintgraff's Explorations in Bamenda, Adamawa and the Benue Lands. 1889-1892*, Buea: Government Press, 1966, pp. 30-31, cited in Amaazee's *Traditional Rulers*, pp 17-18

with German administration. They were just playing for time while looking for an opportunity to kick the Germans out of their respective villages. The traditional rulers of Kom and Bafut did a similar thing to the Germans as was done by the people of Mankon under the authority of their ruler but were subdued in the long run and brought under German rule.

With the case of Kom, their *fon* willingly sued for peace to Captain Von. Pavel, the commanding officer of the expedition meant to bring Kom under subjugation. He sent gifts and accepted to provide labour for the construction of the Bamenda Military station but the peace was short-lived as the Germans raided Kom leading to widespread destruction. This was because the *fon* of Kom refused to comply to all the terms dictated by the Germans. He refused to send his daughter and food stuffs as requested by the Germans to accompany labourers to the station in Bamenda for peace to reign.³¹ As a result of heavy human and material lost on the side of the Kom, the *fon* reluctantly submitted himself and his land to German rule on January 1905³² thereby accepting to be integrated under German administration.

Bafut on their part was defeated but the *fon* was nowhere to be found. Seeing the destruction ongoing in his land, the *fon* of Bafut willingly gave up himself to the Germans and was exiled to the island of Bota.³³ Looking at the actions of most traditional rulers of the Bamenda Grassfield ranging from the *fon* of Mankon, Bafut, Kom and others, we can say they were not willing to surrender their administrative powers and authority to the German colonizer. But since the Germans were bent on bringing traditional rulers under German administration no matter the method, they used military force to make traditional rulers part of the German governing system of administration. This was because they were organized, coordinated and better equipped more than the defending force under the command of traditional rulers.

B-The Establishment of German Rule in the Bamenda Grassfields

For the Germans to effectively administer the Bamenda Grassfield, they divided it into divisions and place them under the supervision of German administrators who worked in collaboration with traditional rulers. These were effort made by the Germans to gradually integrate traditional institutions and take total control through traditional rulers. The

³¹ NAB., Bikom Assessment Report, Ad 2, No.59/26:37, 1926

³² Paul NKwi., and J. P. Warnier, (1982), *Elements for a History of the Western Grassfields*, SOPECAM, Yaounde, 1982, p140

³³ Paul Nkwi., *The German presence in the Western Grassfields 1891-1913: A German colonial account*, Netherland, Leiden, 1989, p 40

involvement of traditional rulers in the administrative structures of the territory put in place by the Germans was aimed at reducing cost, risk of day to day contact with the natives among other things. Some traditional rulers seized the opportunity of working with the Germans to improve on their social wellbeing and benefit from it through the various taxes paid and other services they rendered to the people. The imposition of colonial rule impacted the people and their traditional form of administration in various ways. All conquered traditional rulers lost their political power as they could no longer take decisions affecting law and order, land matters, justice in their communities. Worst of all, traditional rulers lost control of the economy which acted as the spinal column of the *fondom*. The presence of the Germans marked the gradual loss of political power on the part of traditional rulers who now worked as errand boys in favour of the German administrators whose rule lasted for thirty-two years and was continued under the British mandate.³⁴

The Germans from the onset realized that they could not succeed in their mission if they wanted to rely only on German administrators. Consequently, they encouraged native participation in the administration of their colonies. It should be noted indirect rule was effective through traditional rulers. With only rudimentary administrative machinery, the Germans decided to rule using indigenous institutions especially traditional rulers whose duties were modified to suit European needs.³⁵ They modified the functions of traditional rulers to suit the day to day running of the German colonial system of administration, involving them in the settlement of disputes, suppliers of labour, collection of taxes among others. This way, traditional rulers became agents of colonial rule contrary to the customs and tradition of the people who saw their rulers as demi gods.

To some traditional rulers, being part of the colonial administrative staff was an added advantage to their rule and a preparation for future administrative task. Galega became influential thanks to his collaboration with Zintgraff. This could be the reason why with the coming of the British, traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield had a lot of influence in the administration of the territory. This stems from the experience acquired during the reign of the Germans in the Bamenda Grassfield. The Germans unconsciously prepare traditional rulers for British administration.

Territorially, German officials instructed local officials to show proper respect for native chiefs, warning administrators against the whipping of chiefs and the weakening of

³⁴Ebune B. Joseph., *Colonial Rule and Bakundu Traditional Authority*, published in *International Journal of History and Cultural Studies (IJHCS) Volume 1, Issue 2, PP 10-16*.

³⁵ Harry R. Rudin., *Germans in the Cameroons, 1884 – 1914; A Case Study in Modern Imperialism* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938, p.213.

their authority over the people. This decision was later reinforced through a decree in 1913 which stated that no chief was to be removed from his post and no native was to be appointed as chief except with the approval of the Governor.³⁶ This decree buttressed the important and influential role traditional rulers played in the life of German administration in the Bamenda Grassfield. Random dethronement of traditional rulers might weaken the effective grip and administration of the area and consequently might lead to protest from the people.

To effectively control and integrate traditional rulers under German administrations, there was need to reorganize the traditional setting of the people. The re-organization of the territory into divisions was to effectively control the society and facilitate the collection of taxes. To make it legal, the Germans in 1906 passed a law regrouping scattered settlements into new communities and ordered the burning of any isolated hamlets.³⁷ The forced resettlement affected the people and the functioning of traditional authority in a variety of ways: people began life afresh in new sites. In Bakundu, villages like Mosanja were resettled and they had to start life from scratch because of the reorganization of their land by the Germans.³⁸ They migrated without their shrines and totems. Most importantly, the forced migrants began undermining traditional authority since it led to relocations and where they were asked to settled, they had to respect the authority of the ruler of that area which led to conflict. The British on their part as would be seen continued with the German policy of grouping villages under Native Authorities and asked them to pay taxes into one native treasury when they took over the territory. This strategy resulted to a lot of court cases between traditional rulers especially in the Bafut Native Authority area as will be examined in the next chapter.

Apart from the above, in some villages, new leaders appointed by the Germans emerged. The power these appointed rulers enjoyed in their new positions and their association with German administrators led to a gradual decline of traditional authority since the people did not see the appointed traditional rulers as their representatives but as the traditional ruler of the German administration.³⁹ As such, little or no respect was accorded to such traditional rulers. The appointment of chiefs by the Germans to replace village heads who were considered weak or not submissive to German rule led to divided loyalties on the part of the people and worked in favour of the Germans as it facilitated integration efforts.

³⁶ Ibid p 183

³⁷ N.A.B., File No Cd/1921/1 Kumba Division Annual Report, 1921

³⁸ Ebune B. Joseph., *The Bakundu of Cameroon Yesterday and Today: A Study in Tradition and Modernity*, Kansas City: Miraclaire Academic Publications, 2014, p. 69.

³⁹ Asong., *The Crown of Thorns*

Appointed traditional rulers and his supporters stood by the Germans while natural rulers stood for his people which resulted into clashes. The division that exists today between traditional rulers of the same *fondom* in relation to modern administration originates from the colonial classification of traditional rulers. Traditional rulers who wield much power and influence were sidelined in favour of colonial traditional stooges. Appointed chiefs no longer respected the customs and traditions of the people. Instead, they paid more allegiance to the Germans who appointed them⁴⁰ which was detrimental to the appointed chiefs because his reign lacked the backing of the people. This situation made appointed traditional rulers arrogant to the people and disrespected traditional institutions with destitution as one of the consequences for such rulers especially in post-colonial Bamenda Grassfield.

The Germans weakened most traditional societies as was the case in Bali and its neighboring villages. It gradually led to a replacement of traditional secret societies that was in charge of justice with the German judicial system and the traditional jurisprudence of the people was incorporated into European legal norms.⁴¹ At this stage, traditional rulers no longer respected the customs and traditions of their people. Instead, they paid more allegiance to the Germans who appointed and incorporated them into the German system of administration.

In the course of Cameroon's colonial experience, German administrators began influencing the chain of command. Harry Rudin's dissertation on German colonial policy in Cameroon notes that "by decree of 1913 no chief was to be removed from his post and no native was to be appointed chief except with the consent of the governor."⁴² This was as a result of the indiscriminate violation of the power and authority of traditional rulers. This explain why Governor Satz in 1909 instructed local officials through a decree to show proper respect for native chieftains and warned administrators against whipping traditional rulers or in other ways weakening their authority over tribesmen.⁴³ In return for "proper respect," the chieftains maintained sufficient local authority to carry out "the responsibility of collecting taxes in the colony when taxation of natives was adopted as a regular policy, their compensation being 5 to 10 percent of the amounts collected."⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Interview with Tanji Godlove, 67 years, a carpenter and prince, September 2018, Batibo.

⁴¹ Ebune B. Joseph., *The Bakundu of Cameroon Yesterday and Today*: Academic Publications, 2014, p 69.

⁴² Rudin, Harry R., 1938. *Germans in the Cameroons, 1884-1914; a case study in Modern Imperialism*. New Haven: Yale University press, p. 213

⁴³ Ibid p.214

⁴⁴ Ndobegang., "Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change", p.84

I-German Administration of the Bamenda Grassfield

In her quest to promote her interest and minimize German spending as a result of sketchy administrative machinery available on ground, the Germans decided to operate through indigenous institutions which they empowered. They hoped that the empowered traditional rulers will manage the day to day activities of the territory better. Gann and Duignan say:

*The Germans, however, felt that they could not work through native traditions unalloyed by efficiency, and they determined to accord greater privilege and larger financial rewards to the chiefs. Chiefs received honorary distinctions, they were allowed to recruit workers for their own benefit as a substitute for tribute formerly collected from their subjects, and in exchange for traditional sources of income such as tolls on caravans, they received fixed annual stipends of varying amounts...In return for these privileges, chiefs had to supervise tax collection, report diseases, maintain local parts, provide labour to the colonial government, afford hospitality to visiting Europeans, and perform other such duties.*⁴⁵

The policy of bringing in traditional rulers to help in German administration was aimed at easing administration, reduce expenses, avoiding clashes and diseases which could be grouped in to three (influence of climate, economy and policy).

The adopted policy in Cameroon in general and in the Bamenda Grassfield in particular could be referred to as direct rule introduced by one of the German colonial secretary Wilhelm Solf who worked from 1911-1918. Visiting Nigeria in 1913, Solf was inspired by Lord Lugard's policy of Indirect Rule which he decided to modify and introduces to suit German realities in Cameroon. Through this inspiration and the implementation of the policy, Solf wrote to Lugard telling him in his opinion, the policy of preserving African law and customs would certainly lead to opposition from Missionaries, petty white officials, Europeanized Africans and European capitalists. He however told Lugard not to give up because the approach he is using is correct and the people of Cameroon would certainly benefit from it. This system of administering the people of the Bamenda Grassfield was modeled on that of Northern Nigeria.⁴⁶ The cooperation of traditional rulers with German colonial authorities worked at the vantage of traditional rulers who capitalized on German

⁴⁵L.H. Gann and Peter Duignan., *The Rulers of German Africa 1884-1914*, Stanford, California: Stanford University press, 1977, p.81

⁴⁶ Amaazee., *Trditional Rulers*, pp.18-19

protection to fight against their local opponents and benefited from career opportunities provided by the Germans among others.

For traditional rulers to be part of the advisory council and make their influence felt, they were offered a German flag or some other symbol of German authority so as to identify themselves as part of the new dispensation. For example, a German official carried along a box of hats bearing the colours of the German flag (black, white and red) with him to the Mamfe area and distributed them to traditional rulers within his area of administration.⁴⁷ In return, traditional rulers pledged themselves to recognize German rule, supply workers and refrain from interference with trade as was the case with Galega of Bali and other traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield.⁴⁸

Most *fondoms* had well organized administrative procedures with the traditional ruler at the top. The arrival of the Germans created fear among the people of the Bamenda Grassfield since they did not know the real mission of the Germans into the region. This explains why Galega, the chief of Bali, misled by the number of hostages and porters who accompanied Zintgraff though he was a slave dealer and offered to arrange many more slaves for him.⁴⁹

Some traditional rulers manipulated and created alliances with the German explorer for their own personal interest and for that of their communities by opting to be part of the German administering authority. Seeing that their communities were at the brink of collapsing, traditional rulers danced according to the tune of the music played by the Germans so as to benefit from the backing of the Germans to reinstate their authority and dominance over their neighbours.⁵⁰ Galega told the explorer the *fon* of Bafut is known for his greed and cunning though unfounded. The above information made Zintgraff to see in Bali under Galega a powerful friend with the biggest, civilized and respected *fondom* in the Grassfield of Bamenda. As such, he saw in Galega a “true friend” who would be a stepping stone for the exploration of North Cameroon.⁵¹

Apart from Bafut, Mankon and Bali, the Kom people had a well organized traditional ruling authority. For example, the Bum (chiefdom in Kom) ruling authority instituted a form

⁴⁷ Harry R. Rudin., *Germans in the Cameroons*, p. 213

⁴⁸ Amaazee., *Traditional Ruler*, p.20

⁴⁹ Chilver., “Paramontcy and protection”, p. 483

⁵⁰ From lectures received in class, we were told that the chief of Bali is a good example of a traditional ruler in the Bamenda Grassfield who did everything within his powers to stop Zintgraff from visiting the chiefdom of Bafut, Mankon and Bamoun. This is because, these *fondoms* were well organized, centralized and powerful than Bali so Galega’s fear was that allowing Zintgraff to move closer to these powerful *fondoms* was dangerous to his power and authority over his neighbours.

⁵¹ NAB File Ab/5, Baki Political Situation, 1924

of centralized and regional administration which was almost monopolized by closed associates and trusted members of the Royal family.⁵² This supposed that before the coming of the Germans, these people had well established and organized system of traditional administration. The Germans penetrated the organized system of administration put in place by the traditional ruler of Bum to take total control and made their authority felt through traditional rulers.

German administrative policy in the Bamenda Grassfield was set up based on this false information given to Zintgraff by Galega, a traditional ruler. As a result, of the false impression given out, the Germans saw in Galega as well as other traditional rulers, good partners who would facilitate the administrative running of the territory. As such, efforts were made at all levels to bring traditional rulers closer to the Germans. This explain why, on his return from Adamawa in November 1889 before proceeding to Europe, plans were made to build up Bali as the German headquarters in the Bamenda Grassfield. Zintgraff knew that from Bali which would act as the headquarters, all other traditional rulers will easily be incorporated into the German modern system of administration.

While in Germany, Zintgraff galvanized support to build a station (trading and administrative station) in Bali and from there, German administration would be spread to other parts of the Bamenda Grassfield. To capture commercial companies, Zintgraff presented advantages of controlling the hinterland which is rich in palm products, ivory, man power and a potential market for German goods. The only way to get hold of these resources was through the opening of a station in Bali⁵³ He backed his proposal with claims that, Bali men recruited would act like a military force in an event of opposition or threat to German administration. Also, it would help to reduce the cost of maintaining a German post in the hinterland if all other tribes were grouped under the authority of Galega who was subject to German rule.⁵⁴ This marked the coming in of traditional rulers into German administration in the Bamenda Grassfield since through traditional rulers, they could easily get to the people.

The Germans, one of the colonial powers that occupied the Bamenda Grassfields, secured the cooperation of traditional rulers for the collection of taxes, labour recruitment, the maintenance of law and order among others. This was as a result of the shortage of personnel on the part of the Germans. This pushed them to use indigenous traditional institutions for the

⁵²Takor Nixon Kahjum., *The Bum-Sawi Paramountcy Crisis in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon: Historical Basis of Context Identity Re-articulation*, 2006, pp.3-4

⁵³Ndobegang., "Grassfielf Chiefs and Political Change", p 78

⁵⁴Chilver., "Paramountcy and Protection," p. 485

control and exploitation of Cameroon's resources through traditional rulers as part of the administering authority. Thus, when the German authorities under Zintgraff entered the Bamenda Grassfield, they struggled to collaborate and win traditional rulers who wielded influence and authority over large *fondoms* to their camp as administrators. Traditional rulers who hesitated to collaborate with the Germans were forced to do so through military assaults. Those who collaborated with the Germans were empowered and their rule over the people re-enforced. It should be noted that efforts made by the Germans to effectively occupy and administer this area in most cases met with oppositions and contradictions. As such, collaboration with traditional rulers was one of the best option or solutions. In each case, the colonial administration did adjustments to cope with the contradictions. At the same time, traditional rulers of the Bamenda Grassfield exploited relations with the colonialist to pursue their own interest and that of their people.

II-Structure of the German Administration in the Bamenda Grassfield

German administration in Cameroon in general and in the Bamenda Grassfield in particular was well stratified with different category of persons having precised duties and responsibilities. This stratification was in order of superiority from top to bottom. Traditional rulers were part of this administrative stratification. We had from top to bottom the Governor General, Advisory Council, District Commissioners and Traditional Rulers. From the top, the Governor was at the head of the German administration in Cameroon. He was the most senior and most powerful administrative official in the territory. He issued and ruled by decrees. He was the highest court and at the same time, the head of the military. He controlled state property and appointed officials who represented him all over the colony. He was the representative of the German chancellor in the Colony. During the 32 years of German occupation of Cameroon with the Grassfield inclusive, six German governors administered Cameroon.

The next body closer to the Governor was the Advisory Council which was closely attached to the governor's office. This body had the responsibility to examine the budget, make laws and advise the government on important administrative issues. The members of the Advisory Council were administrative staffs and non-administrative staffs. The District Commissioners were next on the line. They were the head of various districts in Cameroon and Bamenda was among the 26 districts created. Among the 26 districts created by the German administration, Bamenda, Victoria, Dschang, Yaounde, Edea and Garoua were the main districts. The districts were under the control of District Commissioners who were

charged with the supervision of the activities of the heads of German stations and traditional rulers. They advised station managers and traditional rulers on administrative matters and were answerable to the governor. The last structure/body on the administrative organigram of the Germans was traditional rulers.

Traditional rulers included chiefs/*fons*, lamidos and any other name used that qualified a person to act as a traditional ruler. These rulers were responsible for collecting taxes, presiding over lower courts and collecting imposed fines. They were assisted in this duty by the colonial police. Circumstances forced the Germans to bring in traditional rulers into German administration of the Bamenda Grassfield. Among other things, the German used traditional rulers because of poor means of communication and lack of finance to pay German administrators. Seeing the role, prestige and authority exercised by traditional rulers over their people when they came in contact with the people of the Bamenda Grassfield, the German administration saw the need to consolidate the authority of traditional rulers by making them part of the structure of German administration.

III-German Policy in Native Administration

When the Germans finally took control of the Bamenda Grassfield, they realized that traditional rulers had a strong sway over the people. Seeing this, the Germans had to rely on traditional rulers to satisfy their colonial exigencies. The German decision to rely on Galega and other Bamenda Grassfield traditional rulers for the purposes of colonial administration was a practical one since they lacked the personnel to manage the political, economic and socio-cultural activities of the territory. This was possible only through the policy of “Indirect Rule”⁵⁵ which focused on the use of locals to run the day-to day administrative work of the Germans. This policy was applied with some slide modifications to suite the given circumstance and the environment the Germans found themselves. Also, divide and rule was applied as one of the policies in most part of the Cameroonian territory especially in the Bamenda Grassfield. Bali and her neighbours were good examples of an area where divide and rule was applied. She was constantly in conflict with her neighbours backed by the Germans at the detriment of her neighbours.

From the impression given to Zintgraff by the traditional ruler of Bali, he saw Bali as the greatest *fondom* in existence in the area and as such, suggested the “unification of

⁵⁵ Le Vine., *The Cameroun from Mandate to Independence*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1964, p. 37

Bamenda Grassfeild tribes under Galega who is subject to German rule.”⁵⁶In order to discourage any form of cooperation between the Germans and other neighbouring villages which could be detrimental to him, Galega did everything possible to paint the other chiefdoms black in front of Zintgraff and presented his *fondom* as the honest child put at the beg and call of the Germans. The Germans protected Bali from other chiefdoms and backed them in their effort to invade nearby villages. Under the influence of Galega, the Germans antagonized villages and made them to see each other as enemies. This way, no village would support the other in case of an attack. This explains why resistances against the Germans were not coordinated from a central position. Each village fought the Germans individually with little or no support from neighbouring villages. These were principally the policies used by the Germans to administer the Bamenda Grassfield in close collaboration with traditional rulers.

Those who stood along the path of the German in a bid to disrupt their colonial administrative setup were crushed. Recalcitrant traditional rulers who stood on the way of the Germans were publicly whipped, dethroned and others exiled.⁵⁷Each traditional ruler had to do everything possible for his people to live up to the expectations of Germans demands. Failure to do so was attracting the anger of the German administration with varied consequences. The palace of chief Mubadji a village in Menchum was burnt because his people refused to supply labour.⁵⁸ The Reports further indicated that when the traditional rulers of Nyos and Abar refused to supply carriers and labourers, they were arrested and many of their subjects executed. After executing the villagers, the entire village was razed by the German soldiers.⁵⁹Another example was the traditional ruler of Munken who was publicly whipped for refusing to supply carriers to transport German goods to the station. To the Germans, all traditional rulers had as an obligation to furnish the German administration with whatever was needed.

Apart from villages in the Menchum valley, the Germans made their presence felt by traditional rulers in the Momo through repression. The traditional ruler of Ngie, chief Akorkwe, had almost half of his population arrested and imprisoned by the German administration. He was tricked to summon his people for peace talk and when his people had

⁵⁶Chilver., “Paramountcy and Protection”, p.485

⁵⁷Ngoh., *Cameroon History Since 1800*.

⁵⁸Wum assessment report presents the treatment minted out on traditional rulers and the entire village who fails to live up to the expectations of the German administration. This report shows that no matter the level of collaboration between traditional rulers, his people and the German administration, failure to respect the least demand made by the colonial administration call for sanctions.

⁵⁹ NAB., Ad 14, No. 772/22; Wum Assessment Report, 1922.

assembled, they were all arrested for resisting German administration.⁶⁰ This did not only show the repressive policy put in place by the Germans to effectively control the Bamenda Grassfield but it equally presents the collaboration between traditional rulers and the Germans in the administration of the people. The traditional ruler of Ngie Akorkwe collaborated with the Germans in convincing his people to come out for peace talks but the outcome was their arrest. Whether he knew the plan that his people would be arrested or not, the bottom line is that he was under pressure and had no choice but to collaborate by asking his people to come out from the bushes. Most traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield out of fear were forced to collaborate with the German administration which facilitated efforts at integrating traditional rulers into the German modern system of governance. This was the spirit in which the German established its colonial rule in the Bamenda Grassfield.

From the assaults and pain inflicted on the people, some traditional rulers decided to collaborate with the Germans not on their own accord but for fear of the unknown. The people of Adjì, Apong and Fawnbot all from Momo collaborated with the Germans in whatever demands that were made. They even went an extra mile of giving more than what was required just to avoid the destruction of their land by the Germans. The assistant district officer for the Bamenda Division, A.D.T. Weed said, apart of a few villages that were spared for collaborating with the Germans, "... every single house was burnt throughout the whole country for one reason or the other, either for their initial resistance or flight or for not complying with some consequent order"⁶¹ But for the traditional rulers of Etuwi and Adjì, most traditional rulers from the Ngie area were arrested and imprisoned while some were forced to burn down houses of their village men.⁶² This equally goes to buttress the fact that the Germans through traditional rulers could do anything humanly possible for their rule to be respected by all and sundry as the administrators of the Bamenda Grassfield.

IV- Traditional Rulers in German Economy and the Judicial System

To maintain peace and order, the Germans in 1895, created a special police force to maintain public security. Before this force was created, the Germans under the command of Lieutenant Hutter began training a force of Bali soldiers named *Bali-truppe*. The aim of the force was to revenge on all villages that supported Mankon in the war of 1891.⁶³ This training was made possible thanks to the effort and collaboration of Galega and other traditional rulers

⁶⁰NAB., Ab 28:19-21, An Assessment Report on the Ngie Families of the Bamenda Division, 1923.

⁶¹ Gwanfogbe., *Resistance to European Penetration*, p. 127

⁶²NAB., Ab 28:19-21, An Assessment Report on the Ngie Families of the Bamenda Division, 1923.

⁶³ Ndobegang., "Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change", p.84

who enhanced the shortlisting of able men to be part of the German-*Bali-truppe*. Before colonial rule, security of the land was under the care of *kwifon* and *majong*, institutions in the palace but with the introduction of colonial rule, *kwifon* who had eyes all over the *fondom* backed by *manjong* were relegated and the German police took over the task of maintaining security in the territory. Worthy of note is the fact that some *majong* members were short listed to work in the German *Bali-truppe*.⁶⁴

Judicially, the Germans created a court of first instance at Kombone and appointed a Bakundu notable, Henry Itie, as head. Another court was composed of a number of chiefs appointed by the German Governor. When the Germans divided the territory into two divisions, two judicial systems were applied: one for Europeans and the other for Cameroonians Bamenda Grassfield occupants. In most cases, defaulters were publicly whipped and or confined in make shift irons prisons. The highest form of punishment was death penalty passed only by the governor unlike the pre-colonial era when judgment of such magnitude was passed by traditional rulers. This brings to the lamp light the notion of the re-orientation and implication of traditional rulers in a new governance dispensation where orders were dictated from above.

In the day to day functioning of the justice system, chiefs controlled the court of first instance and were to render judgment according to native customs in civil cases. In such cases, if the object of contention was not valued at more than 100 marks, and in criminal cases where the crime committed did not carry a fine of more than 300 marks or a prison sentence beyond six months, traditional rulers were the competent authority to handle.⁶⁵ Appeals could be made to a higher court under the authority of more than one traditional ruler who kept a record of all proceedings appointed by the Governor. The court of appeal had jurisdiction over cases that could not be handled by the court of first instance but for cases of murder, manslaughter and other crimes punishable by death which were handled by a higher court chaired by the Governor. The Governor who was the president and chaired all appeals coming in from lower courts could attend a session or delegate somebody to sit for him in the third court and its jurisdiction was in cases that were beyond the competence of lower tribunals.⁶⁶ Generally, justice was handled by traditional rulers in the court of equity organized in 1850

⁶⁴ Interview with Abumbi II, *Fon* of Bafut, November 18th 2017, Bafut palace,

⁶⁵ Amaazee., *Traditional Rulers*. Pp 20-21

⁶⁶ Rudin., *Germans in the Cameroons*, pp.200-201

which was later abolished by the Germans and put in place two types of courts; one for the Germans with an appeal and the other for Africans.⁶⁷

Beside their judicial functions, traditional rulers were tax collectors and they retained a 5-10 percent of the amount collected. These rulers were expected to furnish the Governor with information about the number of people in his polity and the total amount qualified to pay taxes. The governor gave the chiefs a numbered slip of papers (later metal tags) which were used as receipts to be given to those who paid their taxes. Traditional rulers provided the services of a consultant especially when important decisions and policies concerning projects in their land were to be carried out.⁶⁸ All these were part of the governing laws put in place by the Germans to guide the judicial management of the colony.

V- German Trade and Traditional Rulers

The old system of trade by barter was changed by the Germans with the introduction of cash crops and European currency (German Mark) in order to boost the economy. They equally introduced cash crops to feed home industries since there was man power in the colonies. A cordial relation was established between the Germans and the people of the Bamenda Grassfield in order to foster trade. In 1889, Zintgraff, the pioneer German explorer enjoyed two weeks hospitality in Lagabum and two nights in Fonfukka as well as in Munken, Fang, Mashi, Abar, Kung, Esu and Gayama when he travelled to Adamawa. The good relation between him and rulers of the above-mentioned villages were cemented by the exchange of food and services between Zintgraff and the people.⁶⁹ Relations between the people of Fungom and the Germans became even stronger as the *fon* of Fungom welcomed and offered Zintgraff food on his return visit. In recognition of the *fon*'s gesture, Glauning decided to buy a cow from them at an exorbitant price of sixty marks. This marked the beginning of friendship ties and collaboration with the Germans in the area.⁷⁰ The collaboration between traditional rulers of the Fundong area and the Germans in the exchange of goods and services marked the gradual integration of these rulers into the German system of administration thanks to trade links established among them and the German.

The people of Befang and Esimbi in the Mechum division equally benefited from the friendly relations of Glauning when he visited them in 1907 from Bafut.⁷¹ The relation

⁶⁷ Harry Rudin., *Germans in the Cameroons 1884-1914*, Archon books, 1968, p.199

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ NAB., Ad 10 No. EP608, Fungom District Assessment Report, 1929.

⁷⁰ Gwanfogbe M., *Resistance to European Penetration*, *Journal of the Cameroon Academy of Sciences* Vol. 13 No. 3, 2017pp.125-126

⁷¹ NAB., Ad 14, No. 772/22; Wum Assessment Report, 1922.

between the Germans and the people promoted the supply of labour to work in plantations created especially in the southern part of the English speaking Cameroon since the soil was more fertile.⁷² These workers however, were given a small wage to enable them pay their taxes and run their families. The workers through hard labour promoted the production of crops that were traded with other items while part of them exported. Traditional rulers played a central role in German trade in terms of recruitment of workers and received motivations in kind and in cash from the colonial administration as well as the workers. Part of the salary paid to the workers at the coast went to traditional rulers as a sign of appreciation for sending them to work at the plantation.

Income from labour supplied promoted trade as royal regalia were bought mostly through exchanges. This brought economic changes in the life of the people especially traditional rulers who now live a luxurious life thanks to their interaction and cooperation with the Germans. Sources of wealth were created as a result of the introduction of the money economy which led to a change in status of traditional rulers, thanks to the introduction of trade. The introduction of money as legal tender led to the introduction of cash crops and hence markets. Traditional rulers played a great role in trade as they acted as intermediaries between the traders and the German administration in the collection of taxes and other dues. Labourers were also recruited from market squares and other gatherings. The efforts of traditional rulers in facilitating trade through recruitment of labour, tax collection among others gradually led to the full integration of traditional rulers as part of the administration in order to facilitate German trade which was one of the main motives for colonization.

Trading items included pepper, beans, cassava, maize, groundnuts, yam among others. These commodities had trading centers with Bafut, Fundong and Bamenda as the main trading centers created by the Germans where locals sold and bought. These centers equally acted as tax collection venue for traditional rulers to exercise one of their functions which was the collection of taxes in order to effectively run the German administration. For external trade, manufactured goods like gunpowder, watches, alcohol, arms, cloth were imported from Germany while agricultural products like palm oil, cocoa, coffee and palm kernel were exported.

With the introduction of the monetary economy, some communities were monetarized with the German mark as legal tender which facilitated exchanges and helped in the creation of markets that empowered some traditional rulers who had control over most of the

⁷² NAB. file No 143/1 Vol. Ae G1 Ad/ Reassessment Report on the Bakundu Tribal Area, Kumba Division.

markets.⁷³ The involvement of traditional rules in German trade called for their integration into the system of German administration so that they could be effectively controlled since trade was the main focus for colonialism. From the experience in German administration, traditional rulers fully engaged in trade and commercial activities even after the departure of the Germans. The *fon* of Bafut Abumbi II owned and managed COTEC Bafut thanks to the collaboration of his predecessor which he (Abumbi II) cemented with the Germans. As a result of collaboration, the Germans constructed and equipped the school as a sign of gratitude for friendly ties that existed between his father and the Germans.⁷⁴

C- Education as a Factor of German Administration

The Germans were the first to introduce formal education though the first school was opened by the missionaries of the London Missionary society at Bombe in 1896. Main subjects taught were Arithmetic, Writing, German, Geography, Natural Sciences and History.⁷⁵ From Bombe, other schools were opened in the South West and in the Bamenda Grassfields. Traditional rulers played the role of land provider in the German educational system. This boosted their positions in the administration as custodians of land. As a result of the introduction of education, a new group comprising civil servants, teachers, plantation workers and intellectuals who became known as “colonial elite”⁷⁶ emerged. This new class subsequently controlled wealth and became influential in the society. The influence and participation of the new class in the society pushed some traditional rulers to embrace western education and encouraged their children to attend school in order to enjoy the affluence of the west associated with education. An example is the *fon* of Bafut (Achirimbi) whose son was sent to study in Bali thereby preparing him for the throne with the help of western education.⁷⁷ The Germans sent some Cameroonians to Germany to further their education while preparing them for administrative positions in German colonies though some of them came back from studies and mounted up resistances against the German administration. An example is Rudolf Duala Manga Bell and Martin Paul Samba though they had opposition from native German fervent supporters like Charles Atangana, a traditional ruler.⁷⁸

⁷³ Ebune B. Joseph., *The Bakundu of Cameroon Yesterday and Today*, p91

⁷⁴ Interview with Abumbi II, *Fon* of Bafut, November 18th 2017, Bafut palace.

⁷⁵ W Kelle., R Bruutsch and J. Schnellbarch. *The History of the Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon*, Victoria Presbook Printing Press, 196, p21.

⁷⁶ Ebune B. Joseph., *The Bakundu of Cameroon*, p.91

⁷⁷ Fuhw Divine's “Fon, Chiefs and People in Conflict in Bafut, North West Cameroon, 1900-1982”. Ph.D Thesis in History, University of Yaounde I. 2011, pp 72-104

⁷⁸ Victor J. Ngong., *Cameroon (Kamerun): Colonial Period: German Rule in World History*. Biz, 2015

I- Christianity and Chieftaincy

The coming of Christianity equally played an influential role in the process of integrating traditional rulers into modern administration be it positively or negatively. Missionary effort started with the arrival of Alfred Saker in Cameroon. The early attempts to Christianize the people met with a lot of resistance from different villages. In the South West Region, Christianity was introduced in Bakundu land in 1873 and it was later extended to other villages like Bombe, Itoki and Konye.⁷⁹ In the Bamenda Grassfields, it was first introduced in Bali with the opening of a Basel Mission station. From Bali, other stations were opened in Bafut, Metta and other parts of the Bamenda Grassfields.

The Pallotin Fathers led by Father Henry Vieter and George Walter introduced the Catholic faith. The society of the Secret Heart of Jesus who arrived in November 28th 1912 carried the catholic faith into the interior. The focus of their preaching was against ancestor veneration, witchcraft, polygamy, juju practices, traditional medicine and others. This led to division among the adherence of christianity and those of traditional religion under the authority of traditional rulers. Those who had been converted to christianity became hostile to traditional practices and saw their chief as an ordinary person. They became more loyal to missionaries than the traditional rulers or elites. Any society divided against its tradition could not stand and the support the missionaries gave to the converts weakened the authority of the traditional rulers. This was more so because of the support the missionaries received from the colonial government. With the threats of pushing out ancestral worship, traditional rulers became hostile to christian religion which went a long way to upset and weaken the relation between traditional rulers and the missionaries protected by the German administration.

With the support of the administration, traditional rulers willingly or were forced to rally behind the missionaries in order to provide land and labour for the construction of churches, mission houses, roads or face the heavy hand of the German administration. This went a long way to facilitate their incorporation into modern administration which required education, morals in order to adequately fit into modern administration. Christianity facilitated the building of churches and mission schools hence the development of communities. Despite resistance from the people, christianity and other benefits from missionary activities in the fields of education, agriculture, healthcare and hygiene promoted the integration of traditional rulers into the German modern system of governance in order to

⁷⁹ J. Du Plessis., *The Evangelization of Pagan Africa. A History of Christian Missions to Pagan Tribes of Central Africa*, Cape Town and Johannesburg, Juta and Co. Ltd., 192), p.162.

benefit from these services.⁸⁰ This was because, traditional rulers acted as land and labour providers for the construction of churches, schools, health centers and some other facilities in the Bamenda Grassfield. This went a long way to cement the relation between traditional rulers and the missionaries backed by the German administration.

II-Traditional Rulers as Enablers to Germans Penetration and Administration

A good number of traditional rulers facilitated and greatly contributed to the establishment of German rule in the Bamenda Grassfield. Their contributions went a long way to promote, encourage and motivate their integration into the German modern system of administration. One of the traditional rulers who played the greatest role to the establishment of German rule in the Bamenda Grassfield was *fon* Galega I of Bali. Galega was born in Banyo but later migrated with his people to Bali in 1825. He ruled Bali from 1851-1901. In 1891, he signed a friendship treaty with Zintgraff. This treaty made him an ally, collaborator, servant and a subject of the German administration which went a long way to facilitate the building of a German station in Bali. He facilitated and accepted the recruitment of Bali natives into the German colonial army which fought alongside other German recruits for the Germans in subjugating villages like Mankon, Bafut, Nso and Koms that resisted German rule in the Bamenda Grassfield.

Galega made Bali a center for the recruitment of porters and labourers for German plantations. Thanks to his collaboration in offering land and labour German schools were established in Bali. This pushed other traditional rulers in other *fondoms* to do same. Galega acted as a supervisor in road construction, tax collector, a spy, labour recruiter, provider of porters and soldiers for the German authorities. Thanks to his efforts and collaboration, other neighbouring tribal groups came under the German administration. Judging from the role Galega played, it can be concluded that traditional rulers through Galega and some other traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield acted as bridges that link the colonial administration with the natives. Collaboration between traditional rulers and the Germans led to the protection of traditional rulers and this protection came with gifts and other benefits offered by the German administration.⁸¹

⁸⁰Ebune., The Bakundu, p116

⁸¹Tako Nixon K., *The Bum-Sawi Paramountcy Crisis in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon: Historical Basis of Context Identity Re-articulation*, 2006, p7

The German administration offered guns to the traditional ruler of Lakabum for protection and hunting as a result of friendly cooperation.⁸² Having gained this European favour, the *fon* of Lakabum gave one of the guns to the chief of Sawi, Ngwieh Nakun, who was a close associate and daring hunter.⁸³ This went with strict instructions to the latter to bring the proceeds of each successful hunt to the Lakabum Palace. Such an obligation ran in line with the mode of tribute that all the other chiefs and subjects of the Bum *fondom* paid to the *fon*.⁸⁴ The cooperations between the traditional ruler of Lakabum and Sawi was thanks to the support of the Germans. This was seen as a gradual process and a move to bring traditional rulers together in order to facilitate German colonial administration.

Traditional rulers under German administration acted as informants to the German administration. They gave necessary information as requested by the Germans on when and how each village could be approached. This went a long way in bringing all of the Bamenda Grassfield under German control. The subjugation of most tribes in the Bamenda Grassfield was possible thanks to the hostile and ferocious German raids which led to the establishment of the German imperial administration in the Bamenda Grassfield. Traditional rulers were forced to accept the Germans because of terror posed by the German military in collaboration with some traditional rulers.⁸⁵ The pressure and terror from the German attacks couple with the help from conquered traditional rulers made many villages to prefer collaboration to German brutality.⁸⁶

The presence of traditional rulers in German administration was equally felt through collaboration that came from traditional rulers. Most traditional rulers led or constituted the delegation that in most cases sue for peace in the course of German attacks. Achirimbe of Bafut and the *fon* of Kom had to sue for peace by surrendering to the German force for peace to reign when they discovered the damage inflicted on their lands and people by the Germans. As a consequence, Achirimbi was exiled to Bota island while the *fon* of Kom was forced to send his daughter alongside slaves to work in the German station in Bamenda.

Any agitation on the part of traditional rulers and his people was brutally suppressed. For the people to live in peace, collaboration was the only option which was the gate way to

⁸² Ibid, p7

⁸³ Ibid, p 7

⁸⁴ Ibid, p7

⁸⁵ Gwanfogbe., *Resistance to European Penetration into Africa*

⁸⁶ The Nso *fondom* came under German rule after countless efforts thanks to the collaboration between the Germans and the Sultan of Bamum who himself took arms together with 200 Bamum soldiers led the army into the battle field that led to the final defeat of the Nso. Though it could be seen as a sort of revenge, what is of interest is the fact that the support from the Bamum troops contributed to the defeat of the Nso there by bringing them under German rule.

integration. In the event of mistrust and refusal to collaborate, the ruler and his entire village was attacked by the Germans. A case in point was the people of Aghem whose village was shattered in 1905 by the Germans on mere suspicion of a rebellion from a village chief. In order to be protected and to enjoy the “warmth” of the Germans, traditional rulers had to collaborate with the German administration which facilitated their integration into the German modern system of administration.

Traditional rulers acted as enablers in German administration in order to benefit from German’s protection. The Germans took upon themselves to protect traditional rulers who collaborated with the German administration no matter what it took. As long as a traditional ruler was on the side of the Germans, his reign was guaranteed. Any form of opposition or insubordination was brutally handled. In Menchum, German troops invaded Weh village and arrested twenty-two persons, killing twenty others for refusing to obey the chief’s orders. Those arrested were confined in the Bamenda station⁸⁷.

In 1912, when relation between Bali under Fonyonga II and the Germans were on a decline, Fonyonga II was forced to appear before the administration to testify that he was not in collaboration with Douala Manga Bell and Martin Paul Samba (who had slide away from the German) to instigate a nationwide rebellion against the German administration.⁸⁸ For fear of being executed, he had to go to the station in Bamenda to prove his innocence. This deteriorated the German-Bali relation which gradually led to the looting and burning of part of Fonyonga’s palace.⁸⁹ This was an indication that the Germans had no friends; their interest was to use traditional rulers as a bridge to achieve their imperialistic wish. As such, traditional rulers enabled the Germans to achieve their imperialistic objectives in the Bamenda Grassfield by cooperating with the Germans be it willingly or through force.

Other traditional rulers though out of our scope contributed and facilitated the establishment of German rule and their subsequent integration as part of German administration. Charles Atangana of the Ewondo clan, Rudolf Duala Manga Bell of Douala and Sultan Njoya of Bamum all had their turns in the consolidation of German administration in Cameroon. Njoya of Bamum played a great role to the establishment of German administration in the grassland. Thanks to the effort of Njoya, the Nso resistance of 1904-1906 was crushed.⁹⁰ Captain Glauning invaded Nso and after two months of punitive assaults with the help of the Bamum soldiers who attacked from a second company made up of 200

⁸⁷ Tako Nixon K., *The Bum-Sawi Paramountcy Crisis*, 2006, p8

⁸⁸W.E. Hunt., *Bali Clan Assessment Report*, 1925

⁸⁹Ibid

⁹⁰Gwanfogbe Mathew Basung; *Resistance to European Penetration into Africa*

Bamum soldiers, the Nso were defeated. Njoya himself who was a soldier returned from the attack on 3rd May 1906 while his soldiers continued till the Nso surrendered to the Germans on June 5th 1906.⁹¹ The support received from Njoya contributed to the defeat of the Nso. To Njoya, it was a sort of revenge of an inter-ethnic war between Nso and the Bamum which led to the killing of Njoya's predecessor.⁹² With this defeat, the *fondom* of Nso was brought under German administration.

III- German Perception of Traditional Rulers

Before the introduction of German administration in the Bamenda Grassfield, traditional rulers had well established traditional institutions. The position of these rulers was re-enforced by the near-sacred nature of their personality. Traditional rulers had multiple political, judicial, religious and social duties. In pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield, traditional rulers occupied important positions in the political and economic organization of their respective societies. In each chiefdom, the ruler was at the apex of the administrative, military and judicial hierarchies.

Administratively, a chief was assisted by a council of advisers called notables. Traditional rulers controlled external relations, did appointments, made war and signed treaties. Justice was in his name and he was the court of appeal and at the same time the Supreme Court in modern context. He had power over life and death on all who resided in his polity. The power and authority exercised by traditional rulers made them supreme. To secure the cooperation of traditional rulers for administrative duties, each colonial power employed its own method and strategy of working with traditional rulers in order to meet up with colonial exigencies and kept adjusting their policies to achieve the best and cope with the circumstances they met.

As a result of the shortage of personnel, the Germans had to rely on indigenous institutions for the control and exploitation of the Bamenda Grassfield. This could be possible only through the collaboration of traditional rulers who wielded authority, power and influence over their people. This support was given to traditional rulers who showed interest to work with the Germans. Though German rule in Cameroon in general and the Bamenda Grassfield in particular has been described as harsh, brutal and repressive,⁹³ it took into consideration the existence of traditional rulers and their institutions. Since the colonial

⁹¹NAB, Bikom Assessment Report, Ad 2, No.59/26:37, 1926

⁹² Ibid

⁹³ Walters Samah, "Chiefs (traditional rulers) in Anglophone Cameroon and Modern Governance, 1961-2000" PhD , Thesis in History, University of Yaounde I, 2006, pp 81-82

powers had as objectives to achieve political control and the economic exploitation of the territory, there was need for them to bring in traditional rulers who mastered the terrain and his people to act as collaborators.

The Germans saw traditional rulers as executioners and to re-enforce decisions taken by the colonial administration though most of the decisions were unpopular to the people. This means that, traditional rulers deliberately or unwillingly served the colonial administration to the detriment of their people for fear of the unknown. In order to secure their interest and continuously use traditional rulers for their own interest, the Germans colonial authorities called on local officials to show respect for chieftaincy and warned administrators against neither the whipping of traditional rulers nor weakening their power and authority over the people.⁹⁴

In addition, the decree of 1913 stated that, no traditional ruler was to be removed from his post and no new person was to be appointed traditional ruler except with the governor's authorization. This was because they saw the respect, authority and power traditional rulers commanded over their people and disrespecting them in public might lead to agitation from the people and consequently might destabilize the smooth functioning of German administration put in place and disrupt the exploitations of resources. Generally, it was not aimed at protecting traditional rulers per say but to protect and guarantee the peaceful exploitation of resources without native disruption since the people believe so much in their chiefs.

Traditional rulers were given new role to play as intermediaries between their people and the German colonial administration. This was aimed at ensuring the execution of colonial decisions, transmitting government orders to the people and ensured their execution. They retained jurisdiction over minor disputes, served as tax collectors, labour recruiters for colonial projects, maintained law and order, suppliers of food to the colonial administration among others.⁹⁵

In fact, traditional rulers became a part of the colonial administrative bureaucracy as a result of the responsibility entrusted into their hands by the German colonial administration. They were answerable to the Germans and had no regard for their people. An example is the *fon* of Bali, Galega whose position as the controller and distributor of wealth and other economic resources reinforced his power over his people in pre-colonial and colonial

⁹⁴ Harry R. Rudin., *Germans in the Cameroons, 1814-1940: A case study in Modern Imperialism*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1968, p. 183

⁹⁵ Ndobegang., "Grassfield Chiefs and Political Chang in Cameroon", 1985, p11

Bamenda Grassfield thanks to the backing of the Germans. Talking about Galega, he did a lot to win the support of the Germans in order to maintain and protect his interest and that of his people. He miscalculated the company that was around Zintgraff for slaves, saw him as a slave dealer and offered to arrange slaves for him to take along.⁹⁶ This corroborates the fact that, the Germans saw traditional rulers as labour recruiters for the German administration.

Though traditional rulers used their power and authority to recruit labour, it was a means of protecting their own interest and that of his people and land. For Abumbi to have abandoned the war against the Germans and trekked to the Bamenda station to sue for peace was an indication of the love, care and protection he had for his people. He knew he could no longer resist the Germans, so to save his land and people, he opted for peace. Galega I on his part went ahead to persuade Zintgraff not to visit other kingdoms so that he alone benefits from the administrative and political protection of the Germans. He claimed that the *fon* of Bafut was very cunning and visiting him might be detrimental to his mission.⁹⁷ All these are indications of the intermediary role traditional rulers played between the Germans, their people and other chiefdoms in the Bamenda Grassfield. For Galega, his aim was to colonize all the political, economic and military benefits that would come with the presence of the Germans in the Bamenda Grassfield. This is an indication that, traditional rulers were not only forced to be part of the German administration. Some of them willingly (Galega I) accepted to be incorporated into the German modern system of administration while others did so for the protection of their people and yet others for selfish reasons.

Galega I was confirmed part of the German administration when Zintgraff noted that; Galega was “a real chief” on whom one can reckon on as a good friend of the Germans.⁹⁸ To further show the strong bond of collaboration between Galega and the German administration represented by Zintgraff, Zintgraff wrote; “I must not put Garega (Galega) my friend to shame by not coming back, and building my house elsewhere. I gave them my oath and to make it stronger, we rubbed each other with cam wood.”⁹⁹ The oath between the two parties was a sort of colonial web used by the colonial administration to entangle traditional rulers (represented by Galega) and make them remain loyal and answerable to the colonial administration. It should equally be noted that, cam wood in the culture of the Bali people

⁹⁶Chilver., “Paramountcy and Protection”, p.483

⁹⁷Ndobegang., “Grassfield Chiefs and Political Chang”, p 77

⁹⁸Chilver., Zintgraff Explorations of the Grassfield, sited in Ndobegan’s “Grassfield Chiefs”, p.77

⁹⁹ Ibid, p 78

signifies a bond between two persons.¹⁰⁰ The German administration through Zintgraff used traditional rulers as a means to an end.

The outcome of the colonial web used in entangling traditional rulers to collaborate or integrate them with the Germans was the establishment of a trading and an administrative station in Bali. This station facilitated the exploitation of the interior and exposed other *fondoms* to collaborate with the Germans in order to facilitate administrative procedures. With the construction of a station in Bali, Galega would act as the eye of the German administration in the day to day running of the territory and supply all what was needed by the Germans to ease administration. This opened the way for the forceful unification of some Bamenda Grassfield tribes especially villages of Metta under Galega, subject to German rule.¹⁰¹ Here, traditional rulers were seen as guards and custodians to German rules.

In the same line, the Germans tricked traditional rulers in order to achieve their goals especially traditional rulers that were recalcitrant to German rules. Amidst the strained relation that existed between the German and the people, Germans still went ahead to trick traditional rulers into accepting their bid. The traditional ruler of Akorkwea village in Momo was tricked by the Germans to summon his people for peace. Instead of talking peace to the people when they assembled, the Germans arrested and imprisoned them. The report further revealed similar malicious acts in Bonaten where Angara, the resistance leader, was wounded and incapacitated. His replacement which was supported by the Echaka people continued with the protest against the Germans. They were rounded up by the Germans and either imprisoned or executed and their villages scorched down.

Echoes of the German violent pacification campaigns led the people of Adjì, Apong, and Fawnbot all from Momo not to resist the German assaults but rather to collaborate with the Germans. They offered them food and supplies but when they faltered in the supply of labourers, they were confronted and their villages shattered. Such acts were also perpetuated against the people of Tedji. The Germans had offered them clemency and friendship if they returned to their burnt villages. A summary account of German pacification massacres in Ngie was presented by A. D. T. Weed, Assistant District Officer (ADO) for Bamenda Division who indicated that with the exception of Adjì and Apong villages whose traditional ruler readily succumbed to the Germans, "... every single house was burnt throughout the whole country for one reason or the other, either for their initial resistance or flight or for not complying with some consequent order".

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Lobga Jude.

¹⁰¹ Chilver., "Paramountcy and Protection", p.485

Undeniably, German attitude which in some cases ordered traditional rulers to set fire on the houses of their subjects was embarrassingly humiliating and demoralizing. Weed further reports that "... the chief of Fawnbot who refused to supply labour for road making was forced to take a torch and set fire to every house in his village himself (Ab (1923) 28:19-21). It is further reported that all the Ngie chiefs were imprisoned for up to three months with the exception of the traditional ruler of Etuwi and Adji for being loyal.

Pavel left *Baliburg* on 8th January 1902 with 5 officers, 150 African soldiers and 600 carriers and travelled to Bambui where he was received by the *fon* of Kom, the chiefs of Bambui, Bambili and Mejang who all declared their loyalty to Germany in appreciation for the defeat of Bafut that had been a source of nuisance in the region for a long time. Bafut regularly raided these villages and so its defeat was a source of relief to the neighbours. Traditional rulers saw the Germans as partners to combat their enemies while the Germans used them to bring German rule closer to the people which was a move toward integrating these villages.

The Germans created large administrative districts by grouping several pre-colonial independent political entities that were under the command of traditional rulers and placed them under the authority of a single traditional ruler like in the case of Bali and her Meta neighbors. This singular act of the Germans brought disagreement among traditional rulers, leading to the concept of paramountcy experimented in the Bamenda Grassfields where over thirty chiefdoms, mostly villages of the Widikum area were grouped and put under the authority of *Fon* Galega of Bali.¹⁰²

The Germans created chiefs and sustained chieftaincies in areas where traditional rulers did not exist.¹⁰³ This was in order to ease administration and bring the German modern system of administration closer to the people through traditional rulers. These rulers were not only created in the Bamenda Grassfield but in most part of the country where the Germans found themselves. Examples were the Endeley chieftaincy in Buea and the Atangana Chieftaincy who were elevated to paramountcy positions and imposed on the Ewondo and Bane people of the center region by the Germans.

Gerschiere described such colonial-invented chieftaincies as neo-traditional chieftaincies.¹⁰⁴ The aspect of creating and protecting traditional rulers is intimated by

¹⁰² E. M. Chilver., "Paramountcy and Protection in the Cameroons: The Bali and the Germans, 1889-1913" in Gifford Prosser and Wim Roger Louis (eds.) *Britain and Germany in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule*, New Haven, Linden, Yale University Press, 1967, pp 485-489

¹⁰³ NAB, File No 48 1a/1920/3, *Nature of Chieftainship in the Cameroons*.

¹⁰⁴ Gerschiere., "Chiefs and Colonial Rule", p 158

Awasom who says that: “European colonization tended to re-enforce the authority of traditional rulers particularly those of centralized societies, thereby adding an untraditional dimension to their powers”¹⁰⁵ This confirms the important role traditional administration (under the authority of traditional rulers) played in the colonial era and how it was held in high esteem by the colonial administration for administrative exigencies. The German did everything within their powers to protect traditional rulers not for protection per say but as a means to an end for colonial administrative purposes. This was because the Germans benefited from the services of these rulers to administratively run their colonies.

The Germans saw traditional rulers as despots and this explained why they did everything possible to infiltrate the traditional system of administration in order to change these rulers from despots to modern administrators. According to the Germans, the reverence, power and authority commanded by traditional rulers made them despotic. The meticulous protocol, majestic, strong and powerful air exuded by Abumbi I, the *fon* of Bafut, struck Zintgraff and he described him as an African despot.¹⁰⁶ This suggests that the *fon* of Bafut like other traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield had strong authority over his area of jurisdiction. Also, it goes to buttress the fact that, the Germans met strong and well-established traditional institutions in the Bamenda Grassfield under the administration of traditional rulers. This annuls the assertion that traditional rulers in Africa in general and Cameroon in particular were strengthened by the Europeans and had no institutions until the coming of colonialism. Seeing the influence these rulers had on their people, the Germans decided to transform traditional rulers to work in respect to modern system of German administration. This was because they knew that getting to the population through traditional rulers was easier, reliable and faster.

The Germans offered licenses to traditional rulers to carry out certain activities especially in the domain of security in relation to the use of ammunitions. Dane guns somehow proliferated in many *fondoms* of the Bamenda Grassfields courtesy of traditional rulers. An example was the *fon* of Bum, Kwanga who indulged in slave trade and raised the sum of £100 to buy five Double Barrel guns from the German Administration based in Bamenda. Tum was one of the main royal emissaries who journeyed to Bamenda to push through the transaction and bring back the guns.

¹⁰⁵Awasom., “Traditional Rulers”, p. 35

¹⁰⁶ Translated parts of the book from German to English edited by E.M. Chilver in *Zintgraff's Explorations in Bamenda, Adamawa and the Benue Lands, 1889-1892*, Buea Government Printer, 1966, p.12

In giving out the guns, the Germans gave cartridges that had to be judiciously checked after every three months.¹⁰⁷ This security measures went on for close to a year and in no single instance was the *fon* found to be at fault. This relative confidence in the *fon* made him to earn from the colonial administration double barrel shotgun licenses and the right to use the guns for his personal security as well as poaching.¹⁰⁸ This means that for any traditional ruler to own a gun, he had to be authorized and constantly checked to make sure the gun was used for the right purpose. Traditional rulers were seen as irresponsible people who constantly needed to be follow-up to make sure they did the right thing at the right time. Alternatively, the colonial administration was scared of the effects of traditional rulers owning a gun which could spark rebellion.

The place of traditional rulers in German administration did not end at the level of errand boys, they equally benefited from the protection of the German to own arms. Again, the protection these rulers got had strings attached to it. Though they could own a gun, they could not use it as they wished. Their hands were tied on the usage of the gun because an account had to be given why a cartridge was missing in the gun as a result of regular check of the state of the gun were made by the Germans. Lack of trust on the nature of collaboration between traditional rulers and the German administration explain why rounds of checks were organized to verify the usage of the guns entrusted under the care of traditional ruler. They operated under the control of the colonial administration thereby making them part of the German colonial modern administration.

IV-The Organization of Traditional Rulers under German Administration

Traditional rulers continued to control most of the important rural survival strategies: allocation of land, natural resources, communal labour practices and in some instances law and order. Their strength as rural leaders were derived not only from their command over their communities, but was also firmly rooted in colonial policies of indirect rule or what Mamdani calls decentralized despotism. It was common for traditional leaders and rulers who occupied top positions in the structural organization of traditional rulers to be given extensive powers, especially powers of coercion. They became local-level lawmakers, tax collectors, police commissioners and judges. An example was the *fon* of Nso who because of his position and the 10 percent tax rebate paid to him, he forced Nso traditional rulers to pay taxes for non-existing people. Nso rulers who could not meet up with the tax money were

¹⁰⁷Tako Nixon K., *The Bum-Sawi Paramountcy Crisis in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon*, 2006, p7

¹⁰⁸ Ibid p.7

persecuted.¹⁰⁹ Chief Lambi of Djottin was jailed in 1912 for alleged embezzlement of tax money master minded by the *fon* of Nso.¹¹⁰

Apart from tax collection, Noni rulers also became labour recruiters from 1906. They assisted the Germans in the recruitment of labour for the plantations. The labour came from slaves, tax defaulters, criminals and other unwanted people of the society. Such labour was largely recruited from the Noni village chiefdoms because the Nonis were considered and treated as *virtum* or strangers within the Nso *fondom*. However, compensation for the labour was paid to the *fon* of Nso and not to the Noni chiefs who did the recruitment and in his chiefdom. This act of compensation to the Nso *fon* instead to Noni chiefs was a manifestation of paramountcy within traditional administration.¹¹¹

Customary law became a mechanism for upholding the colonial order; perhaps even to the extent that the colonial order became the “customary”. Many traditional leaders effectively transformed themselves from custodians of the people into custodians of the colonial order because of the position and power they enjoyed. This not only eroded their support base, but also over emphasized their coercive functions. After signing treaties with traditional rulers, the German administration embarked on a mission of officially recognizing traditional rulers. Those that were recognized were integrated into the colonial administrative machinery and given official papers and insignia which symbolized German authority. A recognized traditional ruler had the power to exercise his duties under the German administration with the backing of the German administration. They were given a German flag to fly in their palaces, a hat and a uniform as a symbol of German authority.¹¹²

After giving them the symbols of German authority, traditional rulers were classified in to three categories. There was the *Oberhäuptling* (paramount chief), *häuptling* (chief) and *underhäuptling* (sub-chief).¹¹³ The traditional ruler of Bali, Galega, was made an *Oberhäuptling* under German administration in the Bamenda Grassfield. The items (flag, hat, uniform) given to traditional rulers no matter the position he occupied in the German classification of traditional rulers bound them to accept and respect German overrule and to

¹⁰⁹Nfi Joseph., *Intercommunity Relations and the Politics of Identity in the Nso Chiefdom, Bamenda Grassfields, Cameroon*. Journal Research in Peace, Gender and Development (JRP GD) Vol. 4(4) pp. 63-69, July, 2014

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p 67

¹¹¹ Ngwa., “Paramountcy and the Control of Land in the Bafut Fondom, 1901-1974”, M.A. Dissertation, University of Yaounde I, 2013, pp 72-78

¹¹² Ndobegang., “Grassfield Chiefs and Political Chang”, p 97

¹¹² Ibid p 79

¹¹³ Kpwang and Sama., *la chefferie “traditionnelle” dans les sociétés de la grande Zone Forestière du sud-Cameroun 1850-2010*, Harmattan Cameroun, 2011, p75

stop any form of interference/ opposition to German administration and exploitation of the land. Also, it obliged them not to interfere in trade dealings of the Germans and to supply labour for German projects. These were all efforts geared at bringing the people under the full control of the German administration.

As recognized traditional rulers under German administration, their duties covered the collection of taxes, maintenance of law and order, justice and the provision of labour. Traditional rulers used the German police (*polizeigewalt*) to enforce their authority over the population which bound the people to comply for fear of the police which could be used on them by the traditional rulers.¹¹⁴ Recognized and crowned traditional rulers were fully made part of German colonial administration and empowered to use the German police. It should be noted that the people who inhabited localities controlled by appointed traditional rulers respected them not because they loved them but for fear of the use of the brutal German *polizeigewalt* on them. When the French took over the territory, they decided to transform traditional rulers into administrative machinery known as *commandement indigène*.¹¹⁵ Though out of our scope, it buttresses the fact that the French continued with what the Germans had put in place as regard traditional administration with little or no modification.

This explained why after adopting the use of uniforms with epaulettes on traditional rulers as was the case in German administration, the French through the decree of 25th May 1925 made the wearing of uniform by traditional rulers official. Still in the same light of maintaining what the Germans had put in place, the French administration signed another decree on 27th December 1933 making traditional rulers the sole intermediaries of the colonial administration in the rural areas.¹¹⁶ This presentation shows the power, authority and position traditional rulers held under German colonial rule. They were fortified and empowered by the Germans preparing them for subsequent administrations. The involvement of traditional rulers in administration today is thanks to the preparation received by their traditional rulers during the German colonial era.

The collection of taxes was added to the list of duties and obligations traditional rulers had to respect in 1909. To make them official tax collectors, they received books which indicated or acted as proof that they had to collect taxes and at the end of the day, these rulers

¹¹⁴ E. Ghomsu., “la problématique de la collaboration : Les chefs traditionnels dans l’administration Coloniale allemande au sud-Cameroun 1884-1914”, cited in Kum’aNdumbé III (Ed-) *l’Afrique et l’Allemagne de la colonisation à la coopération 1884-1986, le cas du Cameroun*, Yaounde, Editions Africavenir, 1980, pp 152-155.

¹¹⁵ D. Abwa., *Commandement européen, “commandement indigène” au Cameroun sous l’administration Française de 1916 à 1960*, Thèse de Doctorat d’Etat, Université de Yaoundé I, 1994.

¹¹⁶ Ibid

kept 5-10 percent of the taxes collected for themselves. This act of keeping part of the tax collected motivated them to do better.¹¹⁷ Giving traditional rulers a flag, hat, uniform and a book was unofficially making them auxiliaries to the German administration since there was no legal document backing them as part of the administration. Apart from being tax collectors, they were expected too to supply labour that will maintain roads, rail way and bridges. Foot path that led to rest houses and the entire building itself were under the care and supervision of traditional rulers. They made sure labourers were supplied to constantly clean these parts and the houses. Here, traditional rulers acted as supervisors and guards of German infrastructure.

Traditional rulers did not only provide labour and other support material for the smooth functioning of the German administration. They equally provided land for the building of infrastructure and host most of the German offices. An example is the chief of Bali, Galega who provided labourers and carriers. He equally gave land for the construction of a German station in Bali (the first in the Bamenda Grassfield) which acted as a base for the German military, economic and administrative operations in the Bamenda Grassfield. Also, Achirimbi of Bafut gave land at Agyti for the construction of COTEC by the Germans. To crown it all, any form of disobedience by traditional rulers to the obligations given to them by the Germans was met with serious military crackdown thanks to the station which had soldiers on standby. The forceful use of traditional rulers as agents of German administration and the dissatisfaction of the people toward German rule explained why there were pocket of resistances on German occupation of the Bamenda Grassfield notably the people of Mankon, Bafut, Kom, Nso and others.

The treaties signed between the Germans and traditional rulers formed the bases of an alliance between traditional rulers and the German administration. It equally gave traditional rulers some degree of authority and participation in the administrative affairs of the Bamenda Grassfield under German rule. With this, traditional rulers acted as executors of German decisions and orders. Power initially commanded by traditional rulers was now transferred to the German administrators whose orders were bound to be respected by all.

Traditional rulers who could wage a war to claim land as had been the case before the coming of the Germans could no longer do so without the permission of the Germans. They were rather requested to “hold his forces in unconditional readiness” for any war Zintgraff deemed necessary to undertake. Above all, traditional rulers transfer their power and authority

¹¹⁷Ndobegang., “Grassfield Chiefs and Political Chang”, p 97

¹¹⁷ Rudin., *Germans in the Cameroons*, pp 183-148.

to the Germans. Chilver says; "...transfer to Dr Zintgraff such powers as he (Galega) at present exercises in the (Bali) lands, namely the right over life and limb and the final decisions as to war and peace"¹¹⁸ In return for the loyalty and transfer of authority to the Germans, Galega benefited from or had to be compensated; "...the establishment, recognition and protection of Garaga's (sic) position as the paramount ruler of the surrounding tribes of northern Kamerun will be secured."¹¹⁹ The reward Galega received for accommodating the Germans was indication / remunerations for services rendered to the German administration and this boosted efforts toward the integration of traditional rulers.

Galega and the Germans went into an agreement which ended up in the total transfer of power and authority from traditional rulers to the Germans. The purpose of this treaty was "to bring Bali ... to such power and influence as will enable it to lead the tribes in northern Kamerun."¹²⁰ This treaty formed the bases of the alliance and total cooperation between German administration and traditional rulers of the Bamenda Grassfield represented by Galega. The 'protection' treaty ended the independence of Galega and other traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield and made them tools of German administration as auxiliaries.

One thing that pushed traditional rulers to cooperate with the Germans was fear and to avoid a military attack on their *fondoms*. To avoid further attacks, traditional rulers had to respect the terms of the treaties signed with the Germans be they verbal or written. To live up to the terms of the agreement, Galega in June 1897 provided the first batch of labourers who left with Zingraff to the coast and a second batch coming after a week. The payment received by Galega and other benefits motivated and paved the way for the integration of more traditional rulers into the German modern system of administration. When Galega joined his ancestor, Fonyonga II continued with the cooperation established by his father with the Germans and was later made paramount ruler over thirty-one villages.¹²¹

Traditional rulers exploited the relationship with the German administration for their own benefits and acquired tremendous gains in prestige and influence. Their integration altered the local balance of power because smaller chiefdoms were swallowed. This was in situations where villages were grouped and placed under the control of a single ruler. The case of Bali and the 31 villages of Batibo under the command of the Bali chief is an example. The Germans antagonized grassfield chiefs against each other (divide and rule) in order to maintain control over the local population. The result was a strained relation between

¹¹⁸Chilver., *Zintgraff's Explorations*, pp 30-31

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p 31

¹²⁰ Quoted in Ndobegang., "Grassfield Chiefs" p. 82

¹²¹ Ibid, p 83

traditional rulers and their people because the people saw their integrated traditional ruler as a representation of the harsh German colonial administration in their land.

Traditional rulers served as communication channels between colonial state and local population. That is, they were transmitters of government action. Meetings for the smooth functioning and supply of required material and services were organized by traditional rulers. Some Europeans administrators disregarded traditional rulers up to the extent that they did not see them as collaborators but as persons fully submissive to the colonial administration there by confirming the argument sustains in this study that traditional rulers were reoriented and implicated into a new government dispensation as auxiliaries to German administration. Lombart confirms this assertion by saying :

*Les chefs n'ont aucun pouvoir d'aucune espèce, car il n'y a pas deux pouvoirs dans le cercle : l'autorité ..., il n'y en qu'une seule ! Seule de le commandant de cercle commande... Le chef indigène n'est qu'un instrument, un auxiliaire de transmissions.*¹²²

Total submission and docility on the part of traditional rulers meant he could be maintained as long as possible while the contrary was sanctioned by dismissal¹²³ This was aimed at clipping the winds of traditional rulers so that they remained loyal to the colonial administration and danced to the tune of the music played.

With the final occupation of the Bamenda Grassfield by the Germans, there was need for the German administration to specify the role, duties and responsibilities of traditional rulers. The task given to traditional rulers was effort aimed at preparing them for administrative functions with the German. Apart from the shortage of administrators, efforts at making traditional rulers part of modern governance under the Germans was aimed at pacifying them for the lost incurred as a result of the transfer or say lost of authority over their people and territory to the Germans. They now played the role of errand boys to German administrators. In order to have the support and backing of traditional rulers and their people, efforts were made to bring them closer to the corridors of administration through integration.¹²⁴ This explained why during the resistance against the Germans, some traditional rulers stood on the side of the Germans. This was because, they were favoured and protected by the Germans and saw themselves as part of the German administration. The benefits

¹²² Lombart J., *Autorité traditionnelles et Pouvoirs européens en Afrique noire*, Paris : Armand Colin, 1967, p.128

¹²³ Kpwang and Sama., la chefferie "traditionnelle" dans les sociétés de la grande Zone Forestière, p. 77

¹²⁴ E. Ghoms J., "Problématique de la collaboration : Les chefs traditionnels du sud-Cameroun dans l'administration coloniale allemande", in *L'Afrique et L'Allemagne de la colonisation à la Coopération 1884-1986 (le cas du Cameroun)*, Yaoundé, éditions Africa venir, 1986, pp 128-132

envisaged and enjoyed by traditional rulers that collaborated with the Germans encouraged them to cooperate with the Germans with the aim to continuously act as administrative intermediaries which gradually paved the way for their integration into the German administration.

The protection and respect received by traditional rulers was a gentle push in making traditional rulers part of the administrative machinery. The role they played warrant protection from the administration and this protection came with some benefits which had to be enjoyed on condition of cooperation with the end result being integration. This could be seen in the circular of Theodore Seitz a German Governor in Cameroon signed in 1909 inviting the German officials in Cameroon to respect traditional rulers in their districts.¹²⁵ Also, traditional rulers were exempted from “native obligations” like force labour because they made sure the people did the work. During the promulgation of the 1913 tax rate replacing that of 1903 by the Germans, traditional rulers were in charge of collecting taxes and could keep up to 10% of the amount collected as remuneration. Traditional rulers played the role of tax collectors which was later upgraded into tax supervisors.¹²⁶ This was proof of the importance of traditional rulers in the indigenous political system of administration in existence which the Germans exploited, modified and through motivations and protection, chiefs were made part of the administering machinery.

It was clear that indigenous rulers of an annexed territory were merely a caricature of their former state, deprived of all their powers and made to dance to the tune of the over lord. They supplied labour and provided detailed information about their territories and could be penalized for not carrying out their responsibilities¹²⁷ That is to say traditional rulers played the role of labour recruiters, informants, tax collectors, judges, among others to the German administration. The involvement of traditional rulers for the smooth functioning of the German administration empowered and gave traditional rulers the zeal to do better since some advantages were attached to the role they played. The benefits enjoyed from collaborating with the Germans went a long way to empower traditional rulers to move closer to the German system of modern administration which gradually paved the way for integration.

¹²⁵ Mbarga Nyate D., “Le déclin de la chefferie traditionnelle dans le sud Cameroun”, in *Juridis Périodique*, No 49, Janvier-Mars 2002, p.86

¹²⁶ Niba L. Mathis., “Nationalism in the Southern Cameroons, 1939-1959”, PhD. Thesis in History, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, September 1986, p 39

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, p 40

Conclusion

In order to facilitate the exploitation of resources, the Germans had to work to develop infrastructure for exploitation ranging from agricultural, railway system, roads, building among others.¹²⁸ To maintain such infrastructures and achieve the purpose for which they were built, the collaboration of the people was needed. Judging from the respect the people accorded to their traditional rulers, the German found in these rulers good partners who could facilitate German imperial motives. Through repression and other German policies, the people of the Bamenda Grassfield under their traditional rulers had to toe the line drawn by the German administrators. The respect for German administrative structures and procedures imposed on the people eventually sowed the seeds for future political action. This explains why, the struggles for re-unification and independence dominated the period of French and British administration in Cameroon from 1916-1960. This is because, the administrative role traditional rulers played during the German era spilt over to the post 1916 period.

No matter the effort of the Germans to make traditional rulers auxiliaries to the German administration, Bamenda Grassfields traditional rulers remained a dominant feature of the Grassfields. The involvement and role played by traditional rulers during the German era prepared them for administrative responsibility in the future. The duties and responsibilities given to traditional rulers by the Germans were aimed at making them part of the colonial administrative apparatus. Traditional rulers saw their power and authority fortified thanks to the role they played in the day-to-day running of the German administration.

Before the coming of the Germans, traditional rulers commanded a lot of power and authority within their communities. Their positions gave them the power and authority to influence and dominate the political, economic and socio-cultural life of the people. Chiefs exercised executive, legislative and judicial authority. With the power and authority commanded by traditional rulers in pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield, the German saw this as an opportunity to empower and protect them so they could spearhead their imperialistic motives since they had an influence on the people. They used unorthodox means like repression, intimidation among others to bring traditional rulers into German administration which went a long way to empower traditional rulers.

¹²⁸Harry R. Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons, 1884-1914*, p. 70. The unification of East and West Cameroon in 1972 abolished the division of Cameroon into West and East Cameroon and a unitary state was introduced which today has 10 regions with former West Cameroon being the South West and North West Regions.

The discussion in this chapter has underscored the fact that the coming of the Germans re-orientated the structure of power and authority excised by traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield. Traditional rulers who wielded a lot of power and authority became errand boys for the German administration. They became labour recruiters, informants, tax collectors, among others. All of this was aimed at making traditional rulers look like part of the administering body which would facilitate the exploitation of resources in favour of the Germans. During the stay of the Germans in the Bamenda Grassfield, traditional rulers worked willingly and or unwillingly to enhance the respect for German authority and its institutions in their respective areas of traditional influence. The Germans had through deliberate but also some inadvertent methods made Bamenda Grassfields traditional rulers feel as part of “modern” governance in the administration of the area.

CHAPTER 3

BAMENDA GRASSFIELD CHIEFS IN COLONIAL GOVERNANCE: THE MANDATE AND TRUSTEESHIP PERIOD 1916-1959

When the Germans were ousted from Cameroon after World War One, the territory was divided into two unequal parts and placed under British and French administration. Britain took what was called British Northern and Southern Cameroons. Northern Cameroon later joined Nigeria through a referendum while Southern Cameroon became what today is the North West and South West regions of Cameroon. This study focusses on one of the parts which was called British Southern Cameroon and corresponds to the Bamenda Grassfield, today arguably referred to as the North West Region of the Republic of Cameroon. In this chapter, focus is laid on British administration of the area and the efforts in making traditional rulers a part of the British colonial administrative and governance structure. In the course of this chapter, attention is paid to the role of education, educated elites, Christian missions, the influence of wealth and the contributions toward making traditional rulers part of the British modelled system of governance. The different mechanisms and strategies used by traditional rulers to continuously remain part of the administering structure and the quest for a House of Chief are issues highlighted in this chapter.

British colonial administration in much of Africa was based largely on the system of Indirect Rule, which was defined by the British Anthropologist Lucy Mair as “the progressive adaptation of native institutions to modern condition.”¹ By this definition, the main focus of indirect rule was to make traditional rulers part of the colonial apparatus which understandably was considered and described as modern. For the British, indirect rule which had been applied successfully in Northern Nigeria was a convenient method for local administration that could be extended to the Cameroons. In both cases, existing indigenous state systems had recognizably organized, well-structured political and administrative hierarchies and could be adapted for the purposes.²

Seen from this perspective, this chapter describes how the British systematically tried to introduce indirect rule into the Bamenda Grassfields. It describes the methods of

¹ Lucy Mair, cited in Busia, K.A., *The Position of the Chief in the Political System of Ashanti*. London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1968, p105

² Aganah A. M. Gamel., *The Effect of Chieftaincy Conflicts on Local Development: The Case of the Bawku East Municipality*, Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in Peace and Conflict Transformation, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tromso, Norway, 2006-2008, p4

introduction and mechanisms put in place to sustain, developed and adapted in the phase of challenges arising from human and other considerations. Throughout the mandate and trusteeship periods, changes were made in the way traditional authorities were used. Equally important to the colonialists were attempts to rid traditional authorities of what were seen as obnoxious and regressive or backward-looking practices. What was the outcome of this effort? What emerges is that the British were just as interested in making for “progressive, civilized” administration as they were in imitating the British system which by itself had their tradition based on the British monarchy. This perspective would become visible toward the end of the trusteeship period when traditional rulers would be considered as part of the emerging post-independence dispensation with the possible establishment of the House of Chiefs.

A- The Use of Chiefs in British Administration of the Bamenda Grassfield

As more territories were being brought under colonial control, the British were faced with cost and logistical issues associated with colonial administration when they took over from the Germans. Unable and unwilling to commit the resources necessary to administer its colonies effectively, the British resorted to a liberal policy aimed at identifying native traditional rulers and helping them to maintain their prestige and authority in all matters concerning the areas under their control.³ This was because, they lacked adequate trained administrators and in so doing they wanted to minimize cost and spare British tax payers for the running of overseas territories.⁴ Britain wanted to ease administrative procedures, to be able to access and exploit the vast and inaccessible nature of the terrain and draw traditional rulers closer into colonial institutions.⁵ The British adopted this strategy from choice and necessity.

From choice because the British believed in preserving the fabric of indigenous society as far as possible while adapting it to suit colonial modern governance. It was because of the existence of strong, powerful, dynamic and well-organized traditional institutions in the Bamenda Grassfield which the British did not want to destroy. As such, they adopted to collaborate with them. Britain saw this as an opportunity to associate with the traditional institutions as partners in administration since they exerted much power, influence and

³David E. Gardinier., “The British in the Cameroons 1919-1939”, in Prosser Gifford and Wm Roger Louis (eds), *Britain and Germany in Africa*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1967, p. 53

⁴Fanso., *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges*, vol. 11, p. 85.

⁵Fuhnwi Divine’s “Fon, Chiefs and People in Conflict in Bafut, North West Cameroon, 1900-1982”. Ph.D Thesis in History, University of Yaounde I. 2011, p.30.

authority over their subjects in the day-to-day running of local administration.⁶ The British adopted the strategy to collaborate and use traditional rulers out of necessity because; there were no other practical alternatives for them to carry administration closer to the people.⁷ Linked to the above, they lacked a good knowledge of the territory coupled with the harsh climate which they saw as the white man's grave. As such, alternative measures had to be implored which indirect rule suited. To avoid or limit resistance and other unforeseen realities with the natives following the Nigerian experiences, the best way to rule the people was through traditional rulers as partners in administration since traditional rulers knew the terrain and the administrative setup of their various polities.

The outcome of the liberal policy was indirect rule which was already in existence in Northern Nigeria under British rule as designed by Lord Lugard. By 1922, the Colonial Office instructed that indirect rule be introduced in the British Cameroons where the Bamenda Grassfields was part.⁸ The first phase of indirect rule was implemented between 1922 and 1913.⁹ It should be added that this strict hierarchical administrative structure started with a Governor General who was resident in Lagos, Nigeria, assisted by two Lieutenant Governors, Provincial Residents, and District Officers who represented the British administration that was in touch with Native Authorities and the people.¹⁰ Indirect Rule was a system of administration regulated by laws in which some powers were delegated to traditional rulers or group of individuals termed Native Authority to maintain law and order through Native Courts, collect taxes and to operate a Native Treasury.¹¹

During the early stages of Nigeria's history under British rule, traditional rulers played two distinct roles. These roles were later to serve as the foundations upon which further constitutional and political provisions would be made by the British for the increased participation of traditional rulers in all of her colonies not leaving out the Bamenda Grassfield. With the Governor at the head of the administration, the chain of command continued through the Lieutenant Governors in the Provinces, the District Officers in the Divisions, and the Native Authorities in the Native Administration. In order to simplify the

⁶Pratt, R.C., "Administration and Politics in Uganda, 1919-1945", in Vincent Harlow and E.M. Chilver, *History of East Africa, vol. II*, Oxford University Press, 1965.

⁷T. James., *The Chieftaincy institution of Manyu*, p 113

⁸NAB., File Cb 1919/1, W.E. Hunt, D.O, Annual Report 1920; H.R.H. Crawford, D.O, Annual Report Bamenda Division for 1919.

⁹Fuhnwi., "Fon, Chiefs and People in Conflict in Bafut", p 51

¹⁰Ibid

¹¹Che W. Mfombong., "Bamenda Division under British Administration, 1916-1961: From Native Administration to Local Government", M.A Dissertation, University of Yaounde, 1980, p.95

British administration and ensure success in their new task, the British decided that the best option was to identify influential traditional rulers and enhance their powers.

To achieve this, innovations had to be made in the judicial setup in the Bamenda Grassfield. Here, G.S Podevin, the District Officer for the area inaugurated an “Instructional (Grade C) court” in Bamenda. The court was an assembly of 27 traditional rulers of Bamenda who were summoned to be educated on the new Native Court Ordinance introduced from Nigeria. The outcome was the appointment of the *Fon* of Bafut, Abumbi I, as president and that of Bali-Kumbat as vice president.¹² This gave birth to 'Native Authorities' with established courts and councils where traditional rulers meted out punishment more or less according to modified native customs; such as was done by the '*Fons*' of Bali, Kom, Nso, Mankon, Bafut and others¹³. The Native Authority was a local traditional ruler appointed to administratively manage a particular area. He alone was charged with the responsibilities of local administration and governance within his domain assisted by other traditional rulers co-opted into the system.¹⁴

I- Traditional Rulers in Colonial Administration

Traditional rulers were co-opted into the colonial system of administration for various reasons. Firstly, it helped to offset the acute lack of British (European) personnel to effectively administer their vast empire as a result of finance and disease among others. Secondly, it provided a means of getting British colonial policies implemented through traditional rulers who enjoyed enormous loyalty from their people. Confirming the need for the incorporation of traditional rulers to help in British administration, the paramount ruler of Akuapem traditional area in Ghana, stated: “The colonialist in Africa had no option than to rule indirectly through the chiefs due to the lack of proper means of communication and the strong ethnic loyalty enjoyed by the chiefs.”¹⁵ Thus, traditional rulers were highly solicited by the British administration to aid in the day to day management of the different colonies under the British.

Also, traditional rulers were of great importance to British administration because they facilitated administrative procedures. Traditional rulers who had once enjoyed the

¹²P.V. Young., Resident Cameroons Province, Letter from Resident's Office Buea dated 19 June 1916 to the DO, Bamenda Division

¹³Ibid

¹⁴Wm. Cyrus Reed., The Role of Traditional rulers in Elective Politics in Nigeria, Student's Fifth Annual Graduate Paper Competition, 1928, p 5.

¹⁵Quoted in Aganah A. M. Gamel The Effect of Chieftaincy, pp4-5

respect and subordination of the people before colonialism continued or were fully brought back to enjoy some of the privileges as custodian of land under British rule.¹⁶ Traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield like other traditional rulers under British administration in Africa enjoyed this opportunity of aiding as administrators. This made the imposition or the application of indirect rule easy and smooth in centralized indigenous states like most of the chiefdoms found in the Bamenda Grassfield.

In non-centralized societies with diffuse authority and structures, the British appointed traditional rulers from the local population and gave them “warrants” to act as chiefs. Such traditional rulers were known as “Warrant Chiefs” because the office could be given to anyone be it an immigrant or an autochthonous inhabitant. Though this method facilitated administrative procedures, in the long run it created conflicts which resulted from camps building leading to dethronement among others as consequences.¹⁷ This was common especially in areas where a warrant chief was chosen from an immigrant family which the autochthons saw as an abuse to them for a “foreigner” to rule. In such a case, there was bound to be disorder which would affect the smooth functioning of British administrative procedures put in place since the people would not want to take orders from who they consider as an impostor ruler. This means that the co-opting of traditional rulers to act as administrators by the British be it in centralized or non-centralized societies created more problems. An example could be seen in the case of the people of Zhoa who formed camps in support of the one they wanted to be a traditional ruler against the wish of the British.¹⁸

In the administration of his own part of the booty taken over from the Germans, the British adopted a passive and pragmatic approach toward traditional rulers when compared to the Germans. Direct rule was bound to have profound effects on traditional institutions and its rulers since the people of the Bamenda Grassfields had much respect and value for traditional rulers. Aware of the attachment the people have toward traditional rulers, the British administration thought it wise to co-operate and integrate traditional rulers on the basis of functional interaction approach that preached dualism as a record tool. In this approach, the British adopted the policy of Indirect Rule to administer the Bamenda Grassfield.¹⁹ As a result of the approach of dualism as a record tool adopted by the British, traditional rulers in the

¹⁶Ngwa., “Paramountcy and the Control of Land”, MA Thesis, University of Yaounde I, 2013, p.85

¹⁷ Walter Achombong Ngri., “The Dynamism of Traditional Rulership in Oshie Chiefdom, Cameroon ca. 1918-2009”, Ph.D Thesis, University of Yaounde I, 2019, p. 81

¹⁸Protus Mbeum Tem., *Succession Crisis in Chieftaincy Institutions in the Northwest Region of Cameroon: The Case of Zhoa Chiefdom 1910-2008*, in *Global south SEPHIS e-magazine*, vol 9 No 1, January 2013, p. 28)

¹⁹It was noticed that, the reasons that made the British to adopt the policy of Indirect Rule were the same reasons that made the Germans to use traditional rulers in the administration of Cameroon.

Bamenda Grassfield by 1918 preferred British administration to that of the ousted Germans for fairness in administration among others and for the fact that the British could not punish an individual without trial.²⁰

The importance, role and the reign of traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield is presented by Fortes and Pritchard. They present the strength of African traditional rulers with those of the Bamenda Grassfield included as

*An African ruler is not to his people merely a person who can enforce his will, he is the axis of the political relation, the symbol of their unity and the embodiment of their ancestral values. He is more than a circular ruler in that, his records are spiritual and is derived from the distant past; the balanced segments which composed the political structures are guided by values expressed in supernatural symbols. In accordance to these revered grounds the European aristocrat can never venture, they have no spiritual or ritual guarantee for their authority.*²¹

Looking at the work of Fortes and Evans, it was noticed that traditional rulers be they in pre-colonial, colonial or post-colonial Bamenda Grassfield exercise powers and influence especially in the administration of their respective polities. Their judgment was considered to be perfect and immortal.²² Seeing the important role traditional rulers played as the incarnators of the customs and traditions of their people, not leaving out the prerogatives and powers they wielded,²³ there was need for the British to make them part of the governing body. This view of Nkwi is supported by Busia who affirms that;

*When a cihef was selected and initiated into his office, he became at once a judge, a commander-in-chief, a legislator, and the executive and administrative head of his community. it was not many offices, but a single composite to which various duties and activities, rights and obligations were attached.*²⁴

The motivation for the integration of traditional rulers as part of the governing body into the British modern system of administration was due to the important role these rulers and their acolytes or administrative agents played in the administration and the challenges the British would have faced bringing administrators from Europe.

²⁰Victor B. Amaazee; Traditional Rulers (Chiefs) and Politics in Cameroon History, 2002, p.28

²¹ M. Fortes and Evans Pritchard (eds.)0, African Political System, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967, p 16. Traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield from their rule and position are seen as supernatural beings who are revered and exercise their duties far beyond the ordinary man.

²²Walter Achombong Ngri., "The Dynamism of Traditional Rulership in Oshie Chiefdom, 2019, p. 75

²³P.N. Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy: A Student of Inter-Chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfields*, North West Province of Cameroon; Yaounde, SOPECAM, 1987, p. 39

²⁴ K.B. Busia., *Africa in Search of Democracy*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967, p. 23

To avoid resistance from the people, the British preferred to use traditional rulers as administrators. It is noted that resistance to the penetration of colonial rule into some parts of the Bamenda Grassfield was because the people saw their traditional rulers as symbols of unity. Any attempt to use them as stools or to manipulate them by whosoever was not taken lightly. So, any disrespect for them be it by the people or the colonialist met with resistance. To get to the people, colonialist had to pass through traditional rulers and relied on them to support the day-to-day administration of the Bamenda Grassfield.²⁵ The British administration sometimes invented or strengthened relationship between different traditional rulers and integrated them into their local administrative apparatus by placing them between the local colonial administrators and the population. Taking into consideration the challenges among others as mentioned above, there was need for traditional rulers to be integrated as part of modern administration under British rule in the Bamenda Grassfield.

II-As Native Authorities

With the creation of native authorities, there was bound to be follow-up to know exactly what was happening in the colony with the implementation of indirect rule under the authority of Native Administration. This follow up was done through assessment exercises carried out by British administrative officers in the division between 1923 and 1926.²⁶ The result of the assessment reports carried out led to the creation of Native Authorities Areas. The creation of Native Authority Areas was done according to historical and ethnic affinities existing among the people.²⁷ As a result of the vastness of the terrain coupled with the existence of many traditional rulers in the Division, the created Native Authority Areas were shared into three categories. They were areas where Native Authorities consisted of a single or more than one traditional ruler, areas consisting of a council of traditional rulers or elders and areas where native courts constituted an authority.

The regulation of indirect rule was done thanks to Native Courts. Through Native Courts, Native Court Ordinance put in place four grades of courts being courts A, B, C and D. Membership into these courts were reserved for traditional rulers and other dignitaries. The existence of the Native Court Ordinance triggered the creation of Native Authorities managed strictly by traditional rulers. Those recognized to run as NA were empowered with executive powers to maintain law and order, operate a native police, issued orders on tax collection,

²⁵ Ngri., "The Dynamism of Traditional Rulership in Oshie Chiefdom, 2019, p.77

²⁶ Fuhnwi., "Fon, Chiefs and People in Conflict in Bafut, p51

²⁷ Ibid

labour recruitment, public health and community development.²⁸ The empowerment of traditional rulers as native authorities gave them power to act as the executive legislative and judicial aims of the administration. Seeing the important role traditional rulers played in the functioning of British administration, E.J. Arnett, the Resident of the Cameroons in a memorandum issued on the 23rd February 1926 asked that some traditional rulers who were already exercising executive powers be gazetted as sole Native Authorities while some became composite NAs.²⁹ An example of a traditional ruler gazetted in 1927 was Abumbi, the *fon* of Bafut. He was gazetted as the president of NA and president of the Native Court, assisted by Vubangsi the traditional ruler of Babanki.³⁰

As a recognized gazette traditional ruler, Abumbi had five other traditional rulers of the Bafut NAA under his control or administration. It must be said that, his appointment as president of NA and Native Court was not appreciated by all the traditional rulers under his British given area of jurisdiction as NA. This led to disagreement between him and the chiefs placed under his administration by the British. This explained why some traditional rulers preferred to pay their taxes directly to the Divisional Officer in Bamenda while others paid theirs into the treasury of the Ndop Native Authority Area as a sign of rejection of the authority of Abumbi as president of NA and Native Court. From the above, it is evident that traditional rulers in British administration in the Bamenda Grassfields were the main actors in the day to day administrative running of the territory. Empowering these rulers as local administrators under British rule was part of the integration process as well as preparing them for future services to be rendered to the colonial and post-colonial administrations at the departure of the colonial masters.

Indirect rule was applied among others because, in the process of instituting colonial administration, the British understood that traditional rulers and their councils dominated local administration.³¹ Recognizing that traditional rulers were at the center of economic, political and socio-cultural activities, they decided that it would be a cheap and pragmatic policy to rule the natives through their own leaders. The key issue for Lord Lugard was finding the best rulers and policy choice to carry out the harmonious dual mandate. The association of traditional rulers with the colonial administration is a call for concern as it has

²⁸ V.G Fanson., *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges: The Colonial and post-colonial Periods*, vol. 2 Macmillan publishers LTD, Cameroon, Limbe, 1989, pp. 84-85.

²⁹ NAB File AB2, E.G. Hawkesworth, A.D.O., Assessment Report on Bafut Area, Bamenda Division, Cameroons Province, 1926

³⁰ Fuhnwai., "Fon, Chiefs and People in Conflict in Bafut, p52

³¹ Victor Julius Ngoh., *The Political Evolution of Cameroon, 1884-196*, Portland State University, 1979, p. 80

discredited traditional institutions and traditional rulers who were once revered. This is because traditional rulers played the role of errand boys in colonial administration which does not tie with the culture and tradition of the people of the Bamenda Grassfield. The role they played as agents of colonial administration made them to be referred to as unworthy partners in development especially in post-colonial Bamenda Grassfield. They were seen as stools of administration.³² Though they were seen as stools, these rulers used the situation in which they found themselves in British colonial administration to enrich themselves at the detriment of their people which of course resulted to conflict of authority especially among traditional rulers of the same area.³³

The role of the Native Authority was in two-fold. First, he was the last link in the colonial administrative chain and it was through him that decisions made at the center were enforced locally. As an agent of the British central administration, Native Authorities was subordinate to the District Officer in the administrative ladder. However, in the area of local government, the role of the Native Authority was changed somewhat. Here, the British established the general guidelines but left much of the actual policy making to the individual Native Authorities³⁴. So long as the Native Authority operated within the established boundaries, the District Officer functioned as an advisor to him.

In order for a traditional ruler to become a Native Authority, he had to be recognized as such by the Governor. Officially, British policy was to select the senior and or a courageous man and make him a chief or traditional ruler and subsequently Native Authority of an area.³⁵ An example was seen at Oshie where with the coming of the British, Emamba and his descendants retreated a second time to their huts in the forest thinking it was the Germans making their return to the village. Adang Engu Anuangwe who had welcomed the Germans did same for the British and because of his courage; they made him the traditional ruler of Oshie. With his new position, he used the talking drum and communicated with Emamba that the white men were peaceful and friendly.³⁶

For fear of the white man, Emamba the crowned traditional ruler and his followers accepted Adang as traditional ruler of Oshie and referred to him as *Ofuh Kara* meaning the

³² Interview with Fru Mathias, 69 years, retired teacher, September 2018, Mankon.

³³ Interview with Che Kokakong, 68 years, bulder and prince of Mankwi, September 2018, Mankwi. He narrates how his father told them stories of the excesses of the *Fon* of Bafut because he was made NA president, Fuhnwi., "Fon, Chiefs and People in Conflict in Bafut", p53

³⁴ Michael Crowder and Obaro Ikime., "Introduction" West African Chiefs: Their Changing Status under Colonial Rule and Independence, New York Africans, 1970. Pp,7 - 29.

³⁵ Lord Frederick J. D. Lugard., The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa London, Frank Cass, 1965, p 213.

³⁶ Ngri., "The Dynamism of Traditional Rulership in Oshie, 2019, p. 81

white man's *fon*. The approach of selecting influential traditional rulers to head the traditional administration used by the British was done strictly in British Southern Cameroons. This process was complicated with the diverse types of traditional rulers in northern Cameroons linked to Northern Nigeria. In the North, an aristocratic and autocratic hierarchical system of traditional rule was clearly designated and the senior traditional rulers, the Emirs, could easily be identified. In the South and precisely in the Bamenda Grassfield, traditional rulers rarely ruled alone. They derived their authority from their position "in council" in collaboration with other traditional institutions. Thus, the very act of selecting and gazetting influential traditional rulers who acted as the eyes of the British administration interfered with the very notion of the traditional ruler ruling not above society, but rather in it which led to challenges and conflicts between NA heads and other traditional rulers. This means that integration efforts multiplied or ignited conflicts among traditional rulers as would be seen in subsequent chapters.

In the view of the British, the purpose of native administration was to facilitate administrative procedures, strengthen villages and inter village cooperation and solidarity facilitates the exploitation of resources among others³⁷. Conflicts over authority in native administration were inevitable in most chiefdoms in the Bamenda Grassfields. Non-gazetted traditional rulers tussled for authority and refused to respect the gazetted traditional rulers. In order to bring the situation under control, and avoid in-fighting among traditional rulers over authority and to build more homogenous administrative units, the British in the 1930s decided to reorganize native administration as a move to fully integrate traditional rulers in local administration void of conflicts.

III- Re-organization of Traditional Administration in the Bamenda Grassfields

As a result of disagreements over authority among traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfields, the British advocated for a new native administrative structure and policy between 1930 and 1940 where authority would be built, in accord with the wishes of the people. This was because, the British noticed that, native authority heads imposed on the people were not working as they thought since traditional rulers who were not gazetted were interested in being part of the administering body (efforts to be part of modern administration). As such, failures in the respect of administrative set-up, fight among traditional rulers to be part of the governing body (to be integrated), unified administration and economic reasons among others triggered the modification of Native Authority. The

³⁷Mfombong., "Bamenda Division under British Administration, 1916-1961, p. 123

outcome was the reorganization of native authority in which other traditional institutions and not only the traditional ruler as was the case were included in the administrative structure with well-defined functions recognized by law.³⁸

With the reorganization of native administration between 1931 and 1935 by Sir Donald Cameron, the Governor of Nigeria, indirect rule was redefined. The reorganization referred to indirect rule as “The means to enable local people develop in a constitutional manner from their own part guided and restrained by their inherited traditions, moulded or modified on the advice of the British.”³⁹ The redefinition of administration left in the hands of traditional rulers in 1933 was legally backed by three ordinances enacted by Governor Cameron. They included Native Authority, Native Courts and Protectorate Ordinances.⁴⁰ As a result of the reorganization, the Bamenda division was divided into seven Native Authority Areas in 1926, thirteen in 1927, twenty-two in 1935 and twenty-three in 1938.⁴¹

The reorganization necessitated the transfer of villages from one NAA to another. Note should be taken that Bali was among the NA least affected by the reorganization exercises simply because none of her neighbors was willing to joint her. And this explains why Bali Native Authority’s influence was not felt like the others and equally explains why it was among the poorest NAs in the Bamenda Grassfield. It could have been as a result of German influence which gave absolute powers to the chief of Bali at the detriment of other village chiefs in the process of integrating traditional rulers.

In the implementation of the ordinance, the Bamenda Grassfield was reorganized into sixteen Native Administrative Units and this reorganization was approved by Cameron, the Governor. This approval brought in structural and administrative changes in the Bamenda Grassfield in general and in the Bafut Native Authority Area in particular. For example, in the reorganization of the Bafut NA recommended by R.J. Hook, Divisional Officer for the Bamenda Division⁴², the Bafut NAA was made up of seven-chiefs-in council who were the traditional rulers of Bafut, Babanki, Babanki-Tungoh, Bambui, Bambili, Bafreng (kween) and Mendankwe⁴³ The reorganization was in a bid to make each traditional ruler to feel he is part and parcel of British administration though some of them still enjoyed considerable power and influence especially in terms of remuneration. In collaboration with other traditional

³⁸ Fuhnwi., “Fon, Chiefs and People in Conflict in Bafut”, p54

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Native Authority Ordinance No 43 of 1933

⁴¹ Ndobegang., “Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change”, p. 136

⁴² Intelligent Report submitted to the governor of Nigeria in 1933, Hooks recommended the association of villages of the Bafut NAA, cited in NAB, File Ab/3d, R.J. Hook,

⁴³ Fuhnwi., “Fon, Chiefs and People in Conflict in Bafut” p. 54

rulers in council, the head of the native administration made sure everything was coordinated as stipulated by the laws of the land. This was in a bid to reduce the autocratic power of the *fon*.⁴⁴

Looking at a particular case in the Bamenda Grassfields, the British helped Abumbi I to consolidate control not only over Bafut but the entire Bafut NAA. In 1932, Abumbi I was in charge of an area of about 870 kilometers square with a population of over 20,000 people as Native Authority head.⁴⁵ As president of native court, he made his power felt throughout the entire Bafut NAA. Aletum holds that “the British colonial administration revived Bafut traditional ruler who was clipped by the Germans”.⁴⁶ With his restored dignity, the *fon* of Bafut exercised certain powers and discharged certain duties within the NAA. He had to maintain peace, order and supervised building projects. His power and influence became greater when he was made vice president of the South-East Federation of native authority area. This was as a result of the merging of the Bafut NAA with that of Ndop and Banso to form the South-East Federation with headquarters at Bamunka, Ndop.⁴⁷ He later became president when Banso withdrew and then chairperson of the Bafut area council. This gave him power to control within and out of his *fondom* thereby empowering him as one of the administrative arm of modern administration under British rule.

Chief Vugah of Kedjom Keku and others who constituted part of the South-East Federation wrote letters of dissatisfaction over the supremacy of Achirimbi II as head of NA and treasury to the British administration when he took over from his father, Abumbi. They were warned of suspension if they refused to co-operate with Achirimbi. The warnings issued to traditional rulers who fail to respect constituted authority (as the case of Achirimbi) put in place by the British that traditional rulers represented the British administration and were clear indications of integration efforts made by the British.

Backed by the British, Achirimbi's influence was felt all over the South-East Federation.⁴⁸ No one could oppose his authority as the head of traditional administration since he had the support of the British. He had political, economic and socio-cultural powers in the administration of his *fondom* and the entire NAA. His superiority, strength and influence which were backed by the British could equally be seen in his salary which was more than

⁴⁴ M. V. Ambe., “Chiefs and the Economics of Colonialism: The Impact of Colonial Rule on the Economic Basis of Chieftaincy in the Bamenda Grassfields, 1984-1961”, p. 19.

⁴⁵ For details, consult Ngwa's “Paramountcy and the Control of Land”, 2013, pp.84-86

⁴⁶ Aletum., *Political Conflicts within the Traditional and Modern Institutions of Bafut-Cameroon*, p. 97.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.15.

⁴⁸ Ngwa., “Paramountcy and the Control of Land”, 2013, p.85

that of the other traditional rulers of the same federation as presented in the table below.⁴⁹ The position of Achirimbi as the head of native administration under the British was respected by all other traditional rulers who were part of the federation. These were efforts and strategies used by the British administration to integrate traditional rulers into the British modern system of administration.

Table 2: Salaries of Natural Rulers in the Bafut Native Authority Area of the Bamenda Grassfields 1936

No	Name of Traditional Ruler	Remuneration received
1	Achirimbi II of Bafut (District Head)	£ 60
2	Vubangsi (Vuga II) Kijem Keku (Big Babanki)	£ 24
3	Azefor Chief of Bafreng (Nkwen)	£18
4	Asik Chief of Kejem Kitingo (Babaki Tungaw)	£18
5	Chief of Mbu (Bambui)	£9
6	Fosuh chief of Menda (Bamendakwi)	£9
7	Afongochi Chief of Mbeli (Bambili)	£9

Source: Samah “Achirimbi II *Fon* of Bafut”, p. 15

Native courts equally felt a pinch of the reorganization as there was the establishment at Tubah of a central Native Court with grade “D” powers while the seven villages that made up the Bafut NAA each had a court with limited powers. The system was crowned with a court of appeal with more traditional rulers co-opted to assist in court proceedings. One of the innovations that draws our attention is the fact that the Native Authority Ordinance of 1933 widened the membership of Native Authority in council and in the courts by involving subordinate traditional rulers and elders in the administrative machinery.⁵⁰ With the reorganization of the traditional setting, traditional rulers found themselves in almost a similar situation as was the case before colonial rule. All of the reorganization was aimed at integrating traditional rulers as part of colonial governance. In the process of making traditional rulers part of modern administration, the British placed them in an upgraded mould. Upgraded because though it resembled the system where chiefs and the elders sat in

⁴⁹ Samah. “Achirimbi II of Bafut”, p. 15.

⁵⁰ NAB, File Cb/1935/1, Annual Report for Bamenda Division, 1935, also cited in Ngwa D. Fuhnwi., “Fon, Chiefs and People in Conflict in Bafut” p. 54

council to deliberate and took decisions for the proper administration of the *fondom*, it was not the same case with the presence of the British as colonial masters. This time, chiefs were answerable to British administrators unlike the pre-colonial era where chiefs had the last say. With the reorganization, the British sort to create fewer but larger NA units in which traditional rulers would assume wider functions. To achieve the targeted objectives (making traditional rulers exercise wider functions), there was need for them to be educated couple with the demands of educated elites to improve on governance.

IV-Improving Native Authority (Chief's) Performance through Education

With the rising pressure for the improvement in local administration, the British had to set up centers to educate the people, preparing them as administrators especially children of traditional rulers. The idea of schools for sons of traditional rulers dates back to 1932 when the Resident issued a memorandum to all divisional officers of the Cameroon province in which he stated;

*If this province is to make any progress in the future, there are two ends at which we must aim (a) as many people as possible must be taught to speak good English, (b) all the chiefs should have been educated at government or native administration schools. As to (a) this is being done. As to (b) will you please inform me to what extent boys who are likely to succeed to chieftdoms are being educated in the schools and what prospect there is that the end will be attained in the years to come.*⁵¹

With this memorandum, the sons of traditional rulers were to attend native administration or government schools. To further show interest in the education of the sons of traditional rulers, the Resident insisted that where distance was a barrier to education, sons of traditional rulers could attend school just for a few years in order to have a simple training on administration, governance procedure, economics and finance, arithmetic and the use of estimates.⁵² Western educated elites equally influenced the role of traditional rulers especially in British administration during the nationalist period as would be seen as this study unfolds.

The introduction of education with stress on the education of sons of chiefs was a means of preparing princes who would take over the throne. This was aim at inculcating the British colonial system of administration into the would-be traditional rulers through education and a mechanism geared at preparing them for integration into the British modern system of administration. To emphasize on education, the D.O. of Bamenda wrote a circular

⁵¹Quoted in Ndobengang's Grassfield Chiefs, p 137

⁵² Ibid, p 138

in 1932 which he told traditional rulers that “no opportunity is being lost in pointing out to chiefs and their elders the disadvantage at which their successors will be if not educated in administering an ever-growing body of literate or semi-literate people.”⁵³ In essence, the D.O. was insisting that traditional rulers should send their children to school because the population which their successors would be ruling is gradually becoming educated. As such, it will be difficult for an illiterate traditional ruler to rule educated people.⁵⁴

The insistence on traditional rulers to educate their sons could be understood to mean that the British at each point in time were preparing successors of traditional rulers to fully take part in modern administration. This explained why emphasis is laid on the education of sons of traditional rulers. The introduction of education was a method to fully integrate future traditional rulers into the British system of modern administration and at the same time, preparing them for future administrative responsibilities since they could not predict the future of the colony. To confirm the interest of the British in education which was focused on preparing future traditional administrators, the D.O. for Bamenda said “it is impossible in most units to discover the successor to chieftdom. The chief does not make his announcement even to his council until in his death bed.”⁵⁵ This seriously weakened the British from determining who will be the next traditional ruler so that they could prepare him for administration.

The traditional ruler of Babanki openly told the British that his successor was not yet born though he had more than 20 sons. As a remedy to such challenges of knowing who would become the next ruler, the D.O. noted that “it is obviously impossible to educate them all and at the moment we can only hope that chiefs will choose those of good character to be educated and broadminded enough to select successors from among them.”⁵⁶ From the above statement, it is obvious the British had as interest to westernize traditional rulers which in order words introducing or integrating them into the British system of modern administration. Educationally, efforts were made by the British and traditional rulers themselves to be part of modern administration by creating schools and the fact that traditional rulers accepted to send their sons to school. To further buttress the argument sustained in this study and the interest of the British in educating the sons of traditional rulers, a district Officer wrote to the Resident

⁵³ Ibid p. 138

⁵⁴ Illiterate here means traditional rulers who do not master and put into practice the British modern system of administration in the administration of his fendom.

⁵⁵ For details consult Ndobegang “Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change”. P 138

⁵⁶ NAB, file No Ia/1932/2, June 29th 1932

expressing his disappointment on the change of choice of an heir to the throne by a traditional ruler. He says:

*... I must confess to a certain disappointment as it had been previously rumoured that the choice would fall upon another son who has been to school and appears intelligent and of character. Defang (the heir-to-be) is about 30 years old, speaks little or no English and has hardly been out of his father's compound. His chief accomplishment is carving in wood and ivory...*⁵⁷

This was an indication that the colonial administration prepared those they thought could adequately rule the people as a result of their collaboration with such individuals. In essence, they would rule in accordance with western principals as collaborators.

V- Traditional Rulers in the Economy

Chiefs made sure all aspects of the day to day life of their societies functioned well. Women played an important role in the survival of each *fondom* and so, were considered as the brain, strength and machine of the society. Women were the productive and reproductive labour in their local communities. Seeing their role, traditional rulers played the role of protectors of the productive and reproductive labour force. Traditional rulers repeatedly appealed to colonial authorities to use state power to help keep women under control.⁵⁸ Requesting for protection of the productive and reproductive labour force from the administration meant the strength of the entire village depended on the economy. For the productive and reproductive force to be protected as requested by traditional rulers, they had to dance to the music played by the colonialist which was accepting to be part of the administering body. Relying on the chiefs for the maintenance of order in the rural areas, the authorities were inclined to side with them, taking legislative and administrative measures to strengthen patriarchal dominance.

From time to time, single women living in colonial towns were rounded up by the police and forcibly returned to their villages. This was in response to traditional ruler's complaint that female migration to the Copperbelt towns was threatening both their authority over women and food production. Rounding up women back to the village were strategies or measures implemented to block migration of women to the towns. Requesting the support of the colonial police to protect the reproductive class had to be reciprocated by accepting to be part of the administering body.

⁵⁷Ndobegang., "Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change", p 139

⁵⁸Koning P., *Chieftaincy, Labour Control and Capitalist* 1996, p.330

The attempt to recruit female tea pluckers in the tea estate in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon immediately gave rise to a serious confrontation with the local chief, who feared female employment on the estate would endanger traditional patriarchal control over female labour and might result to food shortage.⁵⁹ We see traditional rulers as the live wire of the society, making sure they protect the people who live in their polities to avoid shortage as a result of the emigration of the productive and reproductive force. Traditional rulers acted as mediators between labour and capital and for fear of resistances, the colonial administration backed traditional rulers in their fight against female labour and food shortage if allowed to work in the plantation. This gave a sense of protection to these rulers who were confident to collaborate with the British with the hope that they were protected. This gave room to integration.

Traditional rulers did not only act as protector of the reproductive force. In collaboration with the colonial administration, they introduced projects for the betterment of their *fondom*. Fonyonga of Bali in collaboration with the British administration mobilized labour from his people to facilitate the construction of a 16-mile road from Bamenda to Bali market. Thanks to the collaboration between Fonyonga and the British administration in the construction of this road, in 1927, the first car reached Bali.⁶⁰ Through communal projects organized by traditional rulers, development projects were introduced in the different communities in collaboration with the colonial administration. To benefit from more developmental projects, traditional rulers had to collaborate. These collaborations were efforts aimed at integrating traditional rulers as part of modern administration in order to benefit from more developmental projects.

Besides communal projects carried out in close collaboration with the colonial administration, traditional rulers were assigned to collect taxes. In 1928, the British administration reinstituted the lump sum taxes and traditional rulers were in charge of its collection. With the power given to traditional rulers as tax collectors, most of them interpreted their positions in native administration to mean that they were given a free hand to do as they pleased as integral parts of the colonial administration. This explains why most traditional rulers abused the exercise of tax collection especially through the lump sum tax assessment either through extortion or over-assessment.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ndobegang., "Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change", p. 130

⁶¹ NAB, File 1b/1941

To further show that traditional rulers were made part of the colonial administration as a result of their role in the economy, complaints about extortion and over assessment by traditional rulers were presented to the British administration and as collaborators, the British administrators protected and sympathized with traditional rulers claiming that there was no need to intervene since taxes were not high and traditional rulers just needed a little more for himself.⁶² In Bafut, subjects of the traditional ruler complained that they had paid tax twice in a year and no receipts were given and the traditional ruler was on their throat to pay a third time.⁶³ A similar case of extortion and favouritism was seen in cases where traditional rulers did not even assess some individuals in order for them to pay taxes.⁶⁴ The British went as far as warning some traditional rulers of suspension if they refused to co-operate with a NA head.⁶⁵ Traditional rulers enjoyed the protection of the British administration as partners and collaborators and used their positions within the local administrative structure to make their presence felt in modern administration. The advantages they enjoyed empowered them and gradually made them to confirm themselves as indispensable tools to the smooth running of the colonial and successive administration as part of the governing body. NA controlled the sale of commodities as meat, palm wine, food items.

Trade was one of the factors that boosted the integration of traditional rulers into the British system of modern governance. With the disappearance of slave trade, legitimate trade took over the scene. Goods like palm oil, palm kernel, ivory among others flooded the entire colony. This led to the growth of an exchange economy which Almond and Coleman called “the commercialization of land and labour”⁶⁶ It led to a shift from a subsistence economy to a money economy based on cash nexus, individual profit and wage employment which was more beneficial to traditional rulers. In return, items like salt, clothes, shirts, hurricane lamps were imported and sold to the people. Seeing the benefits from the “commercialization of land and labour”, traditional rulers could not let go the colonial administration. As such, they derived strategies to cooperate in order to satisfy the colonial administration so as to make wealth for themselves and make their influence felt by neighbouring chiefdoms. This strategy

⁶² Ndobegang., “Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change”, p. 131

⁶³ Ngwa., “Paramountcy and the Control of Land” 2013, pp 84-86

⁶⁴ Ndobegang., “Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change”, p. 131

⁶⁵ With the merging of the Bafut NAA with that of Ndop and Bansa to form the South-East Federation with headquarters at Bamunka, Achirimbe became the President and at the same time the chairperson of the Bafut area council. This position gave him power to control the entire territory which was not appreciated by some traditional rulers headed by Vugah of Big Babaki. In a letter expressing their dissatisfaction of Achirimbi as head, the British administration threatened to suspend them if they fail to respect his position as president of the South-East Federation.

⁶⁶ Gabriel Almond and James Coleman (eds)., *The Politics of the Developing Areas*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1960, p. 281

was easy and fast through collaboration which led to integration for better cooperation and benefits. It became complicated and warranted total commitment and collaboration with the Europeans administration when trade by barter was embraced from 1944 because of inflation. Inflation came as a result of shortage of imported articles which made money cheap.⁶⁷

Traditional rulers still had greater opportunities than the rest of the people in the economic domain because of the privileges they enjoyed thanks to the colonial system put in place. Agriculture especially the cultivation of coffee which was a cash crop empowered traditional rulers and made them influential. For traditional rulers who succeeded as coffee farmers, they exercised authority over the rural population and enabled them to compete with the western educated elite during the early stage of nationalism. Coffee was made available by the colonial administration and they equally were the buyers of the product. Since traditional rulers had collaborated with Europeans in other domains, they were equally defended in the production of coffee.

Traditional rulers were better placed than commoners to mobilize the resources that coffee cultivation required when it was introduced in the Bamenda Grassfield. For example, traditional rulers like Fosu of Bamendankwe had 300 coffee stems in 1937 and Achirimbi of Bafut in 1938 had 600 stems of coffee while other traditional rulers considered the cultivation of coffee as not compatible with their status as traditional rulers.⁶⁸ Some traditional rulers were not that interested in the cultivation of cash crops because they still benefited from their positions as local administrators and maintained some of their pre-colonial sources of revenue which made them powerful and influential. In 1932, European planters through their syndicate pressured the divisional officer in Foumban to submit a plan to the Governor to restrict the population from coffee cultivation in the Grassfield except for traditional rulers. The Divisional Officer said:

*The different experiences to date in this region prove that the Bamileke has not yet reached the point where he can handle the cultivation of arabica coffee. Because of the dangers which hemileia arising from poorly maintained farms could have on the economic future of Foumban subdivision which is now specialized in the cultivation of this crop, there is room to authorize only chiefs who are quite intelligent to understand and quite active to supervise to grow the crops.*⁶⁹

⁶⁷ For details, consult Fuhnwi “Fon, Chiefs and People in Conflict”, pp 61-62

⁶⁸ NAB, File No Qc/g 1922/1, Coffee Industry Bamenda

⁶⁹ Ndobegang., “Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change”, p. 170

The report singled out traditional rulers who could be given preferential access to coffee cultivation claiming they were more intelligent, understanding and ready to cooperate with the colonial administration for supervision of farms and the eradication of hemileia, a disease that affects coffee. This same report made traditional rulers watchdogs that had to report any unauthorized Arabica coffee cultivator to the colonial administration. This stemmed from the collaboration that existed between traditional rulers and the colonial administration which favoured integration. Because of collaboration, integration was necessary to foster collaboration and effective administration.

As the custodians of land, they controlled extensive land holdings which they transformed into coffee farms. Using their powers as custodians backed by the administrative officer, traditional rulers were advised to apply for land titles in order to avoid any claims or disputes.⁷⁰ The support received from Europeans planters encouraged traditional rulers to venture into other agricultural products which improved their financial strength and social status. The authority they wielded was thanks to the financial benefits from export agriculture as a result of cooperation with the British. This facilitated efforts at integrating traditional rulers since many of them joined the agricultural domain to empower themselves knowing wealth signifies authority. Thanks to the system of empowering traditional rulers put in place by the colonial administration which stressed on the implementation of native administration, more or less drew traditional rulers closer to colonial administration hence integration. The recruitment of workers into most of the farms from the Bamenda Grassfield by traditional rulers was backed by the nature of traditional political and administrative organization of the area under traditional rulers.

B-Socio-Cultural Issues and Traditional Rulers Under British Administration

The introduction of Christian missions in the Bamenda Grassfield contributed to integration efforts. Some villages in collaboration with the colonial administration imposed the white man's religion to weaker villages using the local language. Christian missions used strong and influential traditional rulers to bring good news to other villages. This was common in Kom and Nso. Apart from the purely colonial imposition of the Nso overlordship in other domains of life, the British through the Nso *fondom* ignored Noni language, history and culture. This was done through religious teachings in vernacular schools which functioned in *lamnso* since 1922. Religion taught in Noni was in *lamnso* by devoted catholic

⁷⁰ Jean-Louis Dongmo., *Le dynamisme Bamiléké, Cameroun, Vol I : la maîtrise de l'espace agraire*, Yaounde, CEPER, 1981, P 24

clergy and teachers such as Paul Verdzekov who later became a bishop. No effort was made to use neither the Noni language nor any of its cultural aspects in evangelization. Indigenous catechists were from Nso and did not want to learn the Noni language. A series of colonial reforms blurred the people of Noni from excising their culture and relation. They were forced to learn the Nso culture and tradition in the practice of Christianity.

As seen above, Nso became the colonial master of the Noni chiefdom and was integrated into the Nso colonial administration under the influence and control of the British colonial administration as far as Christianity was concern. Christianity brought by colonial rule therefore contributed to the forceful integration of chiefdoms which could lead to conflict due to a series of colonial reforms. Ignoring the Noni language and depriving them of their rights over their land and autonomy over the management of their own local affairs in all domains was an attempt to wipe out or incorporate into Nso all what was Noni with the support of the British.

With the support of the British, the people of Nso consolidated their domination over Noni chiefdom not only through Christianity but in other domains of life which was a good ground for the breeding of conflict. While the British did everything possible to integrate traditional rulers into the British modern system of administration, traditional rulers themselves acting under the influence and protection of the British integrated chiefdoms placed under their jurisdiction. The forceful integration of chiefdoms by paramount chiefs with the support of the British created conflict like that between the Nso and Noni. The people of Noni could not accept that the Nso language be used in their land for Christian teaching. To show their dissatisfaction, they opted to secede from the South East Federation.⁷¹ It was the same case with traditional rulers in the Bafut *Fondom* who constantly wrote to the British administration protesting the over lordship of Abumbi over them as native authority head.

In Momo, the influence of Christianity led to the change of names of some individuals who embraced Christianity with the argument that their names do not reflect their belief in Christ⁷². In Oshie, Chief Etunyi Anyangwe was made to accept christianity under the Basel Mission because he accepted to collaborate with the colonial administration. As such, his name was change from Etunyi Anyangwe to Mathias Etunyi Anyangwe. Still under the

⁷¹ NAB, file no 206/146

⁷² From the discussion I had with Zacharia Ndi, he made me to understand that his name was changed from Ndi Mbi to Zacharia Ndi when he accepted baptism and later made the catechist.

influence of the Basel Mission as a result of integration, he offered a piece of land at Oshie for the construction of a mission school.⁷³

From the position in which the German had placed his *fondom* before the coming of the British, Fonyonga enjoyed a lot of advantages as NA of the Bali area. He enjoyed close ties with missionaries sometimes to the consternation of the administration. In 1923, Bali had the best developed Basel Mission School in the area and received approval from the British administration to run a Native Administration school built with labour provided by Fonyonga.⁷⁴ These opportunities were enjoyed thanks to the collaboration established between traditional rulers and the colonial administration which Christian missions took advantage of in order to spread the faith which facilitated integration efforts.

I-Traditional Rulers as Sources of Revenue

Wealth signifies authority and so for traditional rulers to make their authority felt in their respective polities, they did everything possible to financially empower themselves with the full support of the British administration as part of the governing body. Wealth was made through tributes payment, tax rebates, confiscation and sale of property, gifts, salary among others. The wealth traditional rulers acquired made them influential, popular and respected thereby guaranteeing their positions as agents of local administration.

In Africa in general and Cameroon in particular, the payment of tributes was in fact an instituted practice especially in centralized traditional societies as seen in the Bamenda Grassfield. Refusal to pay tributes was a violation of political institutions which led to conflicts which in most cases ended in court. Each village chief attached importance to tribute according to the prevailing local situation and resources available. Robin Law uses the example of Dahomey to paint a picture of the importance of tribute in African states as they were symbols of acknowledgment of the sovereignty and legitimate claim of a superior group over a conquered people within a given territory.⁷⁵ In the same line with R. Law, Ormrod Gulbrandsen using the example of South Africa and its North-Western Tswana kingdoms says, through gifts of cattle as tributes, the king used his socio-political powers to incorporate

⁷³ For details, consult Achombong "The Dynamics of Traditional rulership in Oshie", 1918-2009, p.89

⁷⁴ Ndobegang., "Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change", p. 131

⁷⁵ Robin Law., "Ideologies of Royal Power: The Dissolution and Reconstruction of Political Authority on the 'Slave Coast', 1680-1750," *Africa* 57 (3), 1987, pp. 323

immigrants into his *fondom* who constantly paid tributes to him.⁷⁶ The importance of tributes in the Bamenda Grassfield is summarized by R. Engard as thus:

*In Bafut, power is acquired and enhanced by effective management of a redistributive network of kin and clients. (tribute) is part of a strategy for the creation of symbolic capital- the obligations which may be built up over time and periodically collected in the general category of 'king things' (njoo nufoa or njòo ntòò) lit. 'things of chiefship' or 'things of the palace.'*⁷⁷

Failure to pay tributes was an indirect way of war declaration and no traditional ruler could accept such insubordination from a subordinate chief. With the support of the British administration, traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield maintained their pre-colonial sources of income apart from tax rebates and other financial support from conquered tribes.

Tributes were among some of the pre-colonial demands. Traditional rulers till date still confiscate property of recalcitrant natives, demanded the payment of tributes among others to villages under their command. Most cases of request for tribute payments ended in court. A case in point was the *fon* of Bafut Achirimbi who took Nanoh, a traditional ruler of Obang, to court over payment of prolonged tribute. Achirimbi claimed the sum of twenty-five pounds as land rent and tribute of fish and oil which was due him for two years. He equally added the sum of twenty-five pounds as damages for an iroko tree which Nanoh fell from the *fon's* forest reserve without Achirimbe's authorization.⁷⁸ In the hearing, Achirimbi justified his claim of the 25£ saying, the palm oil and fish saved as rents for the land on which the Obang people settled and exploited. If they don't want to pay tributes for economic exploitation, they should pay rents or leave his land and go back to Widikum, their original settlement.⁷⁹ After serious deliberations, the Native Court found Nanoh guilty of violating native laws and customs. As such, he was asked to pay damages claimed by Achirimbi.

However, Nanoh rejected the court judgement on claims that no chief in the Bamenda Province had ever made such claims and appealed to the District Officer⁸⁰ but lost the appeal. Out of anger and dissatisfaction, he and his people wrote to the Secretary for the Eastern Provinces in Enugu. The letter went thus:

⁷⁶ Ornulf Gulbrandsen., "The Rise of the North Western Tswana Kingdoms: On the Dynamics of Interaction between Internal Relations and external Forces," *Africa* 63 (4), 1993, pp 552-564, cited in Ngwa D. Fuhnwi's "Fon, Chiefs and People" p 95

⁷⁷ Ronald K. Engard., "Dance and Power in Bafut (Cameroon)," in *Creativity of Power*, Edited by Arens W. and Kamps I, Washington, Smithson Institute, 1989 p 135

⁷⁸ Bamenda Regional Archives (BRA) Fine N° 361 (223), Cibil Suit No 31/50: A claim for 25£ damage on account of Iroko fell not for their domestic use but for sale, 10 July 1950, Bafut, Bamenda.

⁷⁹ BRA, File N° 261 (223), The Claim of Land Rents and Tributes by the Chief of Bafut, 17 October 1950.

⁸⁰ Ngwa., "Paramountcy and the Control of Land", M.A, 20013, p.99

We have been sued by Bafut Chief for tributes comprising oil, fish, etc. things plaintiff can buy by himself being a paid chief under native administration. Plaintiff demands also land rents from us while we are natives of the soil. We view this treatment as direct oppression and tyranny and refuse to pay We request you advise Resident order urgently Bafut Central Court suspend enforcement of Resident's review judgement until you investigate our detailed explanation in our petition to avoid violence Native laws and customs are made by people not chiefs alone and where we denounce one to be atrocious and request its immediate removal and abolition, there is no earthly reason why government officials should without cogent reasons back big chiefs against widespread protest if peace should prevail. All these forceful acquisition of our products and god given land the chief terms tribute and under this cruel rule we have been subjected since the advent of British administration. if these unwarranted so called tributes are not stopped but enforced on us we shall stop paying tax as we cannot afford to give him the oil and fish from which we obtain the money to pay our tax for nothing and then struggle again for other means to meet the payment of tax being so poor.⁸¹

Our interest here is not what Nanoh wrote to the secretary but the reaction of the administration in the name of F.R. Kay, the Acting Resident for Bamenda, to his letter as seen below. It indicated the total and full support of the British administration to the claims of Achirimbi who was an influential figure in native administration. It therefore means that the British collaborated with influential traditional ruler in administrative procedure for better administration. In his letter as a response to his boss in relation to Nanoh's complain, the Acting Resident advised the Secretary for the Eastern Province thus:

Petitioner and people are members of Widekum migration conquered by Bafut some 150 years ago. It is common knowledge that the vassals of Bamenda fons have always paid tributes and services.... Petitioner and his people do not contest the right of the Fon to tribute, a thing the Fon of Bali collects from a number of hamlets of the Widekum migration living on land he exercises rights as overlord... so he does not say the tribute is not due, he says it is an anachronism... I submit that it is unwise to take any administrative action in matters of such complexity in the absence of any evidence that the Fon (of Bafut) seeks to impose harsh and unbearable tribute on his subchiefs.... They (Nano and his people) must acknowledge Fon as their landlord through this very small annual tribute. It is native law and custom and I am not going to be the first resident to stop such tributes. It is not a custom that causes any hardships on anybody, nor is it repugnant to natural law land equity.⁸²

⁸¹ NAB, File No 1b/1954/1, Chief Nanoh to S.D.O, 23rd October 1950

⁸² NAB, File N° 1b/1954/1 Acting Resident to Secretary, Eastern Province, 6th December 1950

A similar case came up in 1951 when Achirimbi sued the people of Banji to court for unlawfully killing and confiscating a leopard rather than presenting it to him the paramount ruler. Achirimbi claimed reparation should be done with the sum of 250£ and unfortunately for the Banji traditional rulers, the administration ruled in favour of Achirimbi and he was sentenced to three months in prison for not respecting instituted law.⁸³ The support Achirimbi received from the colonial administration as the president of NA working in close collaboration with the British administration helped him to generate more wealth for himself. He made wealth thanks to the support of the British administration that stood by him empowered him as part and parcel of the administering body. Their presence and active participation as administrators greatly influence the decisions of the British administration.

Traditional rulers saw themselves as the administrators of the people empowered by the colonial administration through integration. Goodliffe, the acting resident for Bamenda, refused to outlaw annual tribute payments by formerly subjected people because tribute payment to him had been part of the culture of the people.⁸⁴ These tributes economically empowered traditional rulers as integrated agents in colonial administration.

The native system of administration which was under the direct control of traditional rulers was one of the sources through which traditional rulers acquired wealth. As a result of the shortage of British administrators, traditional rulers were made to act as the administering officers. As compensation for the services rendered to the British administration, each of the native authority area had a substantial portion of the N.A. revenues allocated for the payment of traditional rulers and their councilors. The payment received by traditional rulers according to the British acted as a substitute to slave-raiding and trade, extortion, fines and bribes which perverted local justice.⁸⁵ With their financial strength, traditional rulers fitted into the colonial administrative structure as part of the governing body.

One of the sources of wealth that made traditional rulers influential thanks to the colonial administration was the authorization to retain part of the money collected as taxes. Tax rebates was the most common source of income for them and the higher the amount of taxes collected, the higher the rebate. The wealth gotten from taxes and other sources empowered traditional rulers as agent of the colonial administration. Their empowerment could be seen as a gradual process of preparing them for post-colonial administration. In the Bamenda Grassfields, traditional rulers of Bali, Kom, Nso and Bafut were considered

⁸³Ndobegang., "Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change", pp 218

⁸⁴ NAB, File N° 1b/1954/1, Acting resident, Bamenda to Governor, 1st September 1950.

⁸⁵ A.H.M. Kirk-Greene., ed., *The Principles of Native Administration in Nigeria: Selected Documents 1900-1974*, London, Oxford University press, 1965, pp 92-93, cited in Ndobegang's "Grassfield Chiefs", p 209.

important rulers in the Bamenda Division and were allocated good salaries coupled with other advantages they enjoyed as N.A. The table below presents the salary situation of some traditional rulers in the Bamenda Division.

Table 3: Salaries of Some Traditional Rulers in the Bamenda Division from 1944-1948

Village	Amount Received in 1944	Amount Received in 1945-47	Amount Received in 1948
Traditional Ruler of Bali	106£	111£	96£
Traditional Ruler of Bafut	150£	178£	78£
Traditional Ruler of Kom	141£	158£	150£
Traditional Ruler of Nso	229£	250£	200£

Source: Ndobegang “Grassfield Chiefs and Colonial Change in Cameroon”, p 212

The four “big” traditional rulers as they were regarded had a salary far better than those of other traditional rulers in the area. They earned up to 12% of total tax receipts from their area of jurisdiction. With a drop-in tax income, the salary of the four traditional rulers were reduced which attracted the attention of the Resident and he called on the D.O. for Bamenda to explain. The fact that the resident felt the drop in the annual salary of traditional rulers up to the extent of requesting for an explanation why their salaries were dropped are indications of the close ties that existed between the colonial administration and traditional rulers and the role these categories of persons played in the administrative machinery.

For fear of riot and refusal to take part in administrative and court proceedings which was placed under the care of traditional rulers as agents of local administration, the Resident did everything within his powers to make sure the salaries of traditional rulers were maintained to an acceptable level. An instance where rioting occurred as a result of cuts in salaries of traditional rulers could be seen in Bangwa. In Bangwa, court sessions were paralyzed because traditional rulers refused to sit as court members on small salaries⁸⁶. Traditional rulers complained of high cost of living, lack of economic resources, useful agents for local administration, among others which facilitated good and modern governance were

⁸⁶Ndobegang., “Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change”, pp 212-213

some petitions advanced by traditional rulers.⁸⁷ From the petitions from traditional rulers and the demand for an explanation on salary cuts by the Resident, it was clear that traditional rulers ran the day to day affairs of the colony in the name of the British. This was possible only through their integration as part of British modern administration. It was equally an indication that efforts were made by both traditional rulers and the colonial administrators to make traditional rulers comfortable as part of modern administration.

Justifying the fact that traditional rulers equally fought for better salaries because all of their time was spent on administrative work and no time to go back to cash crop production, Galega II of Bali, a N.A and his councilors petitioned for an increase in his salary. They said:

We the Bali N.A. councilors in council on behalf of the elders of this area, earnestly place this our humble petition demanding for an approval of the salary of His Highness the Fon of Bali (for the) reasons given below:

-Now that the present cost of living is extraordinary (sic) hard, his poor salary (of 86£ p.a.) is far too low beyond our expectation and we beg that it be approved (to be) 360£ per annum as a measure to march up and give him facilities to maintain his present prestige as the Fon of Bali honestly.

- He has to equip (equip) himself with sufficient books to equip his vocabulary.

- He is social and need(s) to improve his standard of living...⁸⁸

In order to be treated as a N.A. and be at parity in terms of salary with the rulers of Kom, Nso and Bafut who carried out similar duties and functions in British administration, there was need for a letter of complain as we were told by an elder of the Bali palace.⁸⁹ This letter does not only talk about increase in salary but it equally raises the issue of purchase of books to improve the vocabulary of the ruler. This is an indication that, since the British wanted the successors of traditional rulers to be educated in order to improve on the quality of services rendered to the people when he takes over the throne, it was but normal that once in office, these rulers should continue the learning process so as to better up services provided on behalf of the British administration as partners.

The position of traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfields was backed by the administration with the argument that, they ruled over large populations and so deserved higher financial recompense for the duties they performed as native authorities. To support this, the D.O. for Bamenda said:

The Fons of Bamenda have a status which is unique in the Eastern provinces... and they need special treatment. It is therefore idle talk to say that the

⁸⁷ Ibid p. 213

⁸⁸ NAB, File 1a/1945/1 of 12 May 1948, from the Bali N.A. to the Commissioner, Eastern Provinces.

⁸⁹ Interview with Buma Mathias, 62 years, council member, December 2018, Nsongwa.

*distribution of remunerations should be done evenly or according to custom because ancient custom (in the Grassfield) recognized chiefship by gifts of labor, portions of harvests, women and the like. European money has introduced new problems of adjustment which we should help to solve.*⁹⁰

The status of traditional rulers was confirmed by the British administration as N.A. which empowered them as part of the administering body. In order to continuously have the support of traditional rulers for the effective administration of the Bamenda Grassfields, the British administration had to adequately salarize them since “the mouth that chews do not talk”.

Looking at the protection given to traditional rulers by the British as Native Authorities which fortified their financial strength, 27% of general taxes form N.A. funds were paid to traditional rulers as salary. In the Bamenda Division in particular, a reasonable fraction of native treasury funds was used in the payment of traditional rulers between 1929 and 1933 as indicated in the table below. This was an indication of the important role traditional rulers played in the day-to-day running of the administration entrusted under their care by the colonial administration. So, efforts at integrating traditional rulers into the British modern system of administration were made through financial support in order to motivate them to render more services to the British administration.

Table 4: Yearly Salaries of Traditional Rulers as Percentages of N.A. Revenues for Bamenda Division from 1929-1933

Year	Total N.A. Revenues	Total N.A. Taxes	Amount paid to Traditional Rulers	% of taxes
1929-1930	7815£	4698£	1282£	27.3%
1930-1931	7956£	4801£	1265£	26.3%
1931-1932	7040£	4751£	1285£	27.0%
1932-1933	6234£	4320£	1188£	27.5%

Source: Ndobegang “Grassfield Chiefs and Colonial Change in Cameroon”, p 211

Generally, traditional rulers continued to earn salaries as long as they held important positions in local administration. This was to prove that, they were part of modern

⁹⁰ NAB, File NO 1a/1943/1, a report from the D.O. of Bamenda to the Resident, 5th of August 1944

administration and were remunerated for the services rendered to the British colonial administration as part of the governing body.

Historians documented that African pre-colonial institutions shaped modernization in Africa. Thanks to their continuity in the periphery, especially in rural areas which dates back to the 19th century when Europeans massively came into Africa for colonies. This continuity as was the case before colonialism resulted from the scarcity of European officers in African soil. As a result, colonialists sought the cooperation of traditional rulers to administer the colonies more effectively⁹¹. The empowerment of traditional rulers contributed to effective administration in colonial Africa which continued to exert and play an important role in post-colonial Africa⁹². In the Bamenda Grassfields as it was in Uganda and some other African countries, the British understood the importance of traditional rulers in the building of schools, roads and other facilities. As such, they relied on them for administration and many other activities⁹³. Mary Chihana⁹⁴ observed that "Kaunda ensured that each tribe had a say in governing the Southern African nation. He went a step further and introduced to parliament the House of Chiefs which made recommendations to the governing body on tribal boundaries and was generally responsible for resolving any tribal conflicts".

In Zambia, the House of Chiefs which was the highest ruling body was also represented in the ruling party's central committee, an integral part of both the United National Independence Party (UNIP) and Kaunda's government as observed by Chihana. But it should be noted it ceased to exist when the UNIP was voted out of office in 1991.⁹⁵ With the coming of Inonge Mbikusita Lewanika, daughter of Litunga to power in Zambia, there was the restoration of the constitutional respect for traditional rulers. This gave traditional rulers the power to control both government and the royal system of power and privileges because of the great role they played in administrative procedures. The coming to power of Inonge Mbikusita was a booster to the influential role of traditional rulers in modern administration in Zambia which spreaded to other parts of the continent.

⁹¹Low, D.A., "Uganda: The Establishment of the Protectorate, 1894-1919", in Vincent Harlow and E.M. Chilver, *History of East Africa, vol. II*, Oxford University Press, 1965.

⁹²Rouveroy van Nieuwaal, E. Adriaan B. van., "Modern States and Chieftaincy in Africa", *Journal of Legal Pluralism*, 25, 1-41, 1987.

⁹³Pratt, R.C., "Administration and Politics in Uganda, 1919-1945", in Vincent Harlow and E.M. Chilver, *History of East Africa, vol. II*, Oxford University Press, 1965.

⁹⁴Maxwell Owusu., *Self-Government or Good Government: Traditional Rule and the Challenge of Constitutional Democracy and Development in Africa*, The University of Michigan, Department of Anthropology, 2006, p.5

⁹⁵ Ibid, p6

II-British Influence on Traditional Matters in the Bamenda Grassfields

When the British colonial government introduced native administration, there was bound to be follow-up to make sure instituted traditional rulers and their rule was respected for the smooth functioning of the administration through traditional rulers. This was in order to follow up traditional rulers and position them to respect laid down rules for better administration. In Zhoa, a village in Menchum division today, two candidates emerged laying claim to the throne after the death of the traditional ruler, Zun Meh Achokum, son of Njueinde, and Anjei Sein, nephew of Beng Meh Sein. They both claimed their right to succeed, but neither of them was welcomed by the people. None of them satisfied the conditions of inheritance in the chiefdom. Also, none could prove that he was related to or came from the same patrilineal family of the 'disappeared' traditional ruler as stipulated by tradition. Zun argued that since his father had once been a traditional ruler, he had the right to the throne.

This justification was questioned because his father was not from the royal family and only took advantage of the advanced age and death of Beng Meh Sein in usurping power. Hence, the rota system was only a weapon to foster his quest for the throne. Anjei on his part disputed that he was brought up in the palace by his uncle Beng Meh Sein and not only seen as a son but won his confidence and was designated heir apparent. Of the two, Anjei drew very little attention from the people who made it clear that inheritance in Zhoa was not maternal. As the dilemma raged on, some kingmakers favoured Zun while others stood for Anjei. With the wrangling going on, the Weh Native court brought sanity, as claims of Anjei were quashed and that of Zun upheld by Chief Ndze Bie of Weh who presided over the case.

Looking at the case in Zhoa, we see the traditional ruler through native courts instituted by the British under the care of traditional rulers taking decisions to prevent blood shed. Hence, the ensuing feud between Zun and Anjei could only be abated thanks to the creation and intervention of the Weh Native Court by the British in 1921. With the verdict of the court, the people of Zhoa had no choice but to accept Zun on the premise that he would amend the wrongs of his father coupled with the fear of the intervention of the British if the decision of her representative (native court) was not respected. The Zhoa succession crisis presents the part played by the British in the establishment of native courts. Through the court, the chief of Weh was able to temporally maintain peace in the succession disputes of Zhoa.⁹⁶

⁹⁶Protus Mbeum Tem., *Succession Crisis in Chieftaincy Institutions in the Northwest Region of Cameroon: The Case of Zhoa Chiefdom 1910-2008*, in *Global south SEPHIS e-magazine*, vol 9 No 1, January 2013, p. 28)

The British administration acted as the police force for the protection of traditional rulers and the culture and traditions of the people of the Bamenda Grassfield. An example is seen in the Zhoa area under Zun, the traditional ruler. He transferred the palace from Weanenghe to Weachekea against the wishes of his elders. It is believed that this act was not only in total violation of the customs and traditions of Zhoa, but abominable and caused much havoc to the well-being of the people. It is reported libations carried out in the new shrine were not accepted by ancestors and the gods. As a result, infertility loomed among women except the wives of the chief. The people concluded that the chief had bewitched other women so that his descendance should flourish in the chieftom.

Apart from the above, his son was accused of transforming himself into a tiger to eat all goats in the village. In the fight with the tiger, two warriors were wounded. In a struggle to relieve them of their pains, it was believed that the substance administered on the wounds of the two warriors by Zun was poisonous which led to their death. The general believe was that Zun had succeeded in avenging the death of his son the supposed tiger.⁹⁷ Tension increased and was further intensified by the sudden death of a young man returning from his raffia palm plantation in which the people interpreted as the handiwork of Zun. Countless efforts through the elders to meet with Zun at Weanenghe Palace failed. The British administration was alerted through the D.O. as a result of mounting tension. The D.O. dispatched policemen to protect Zun while planning to visit Zhoa. The presence of the policemen in Zhoa brought memories of the punitive expedition launched by the Germans in 1910. The police arrested anyone they could laid hands on and took to Zun's compound where they were flogged pending the arrival of the D.O.⁹⁸ Looking at the case of Zhoa, the British acted as the police force to protect Zun the traditional ruler and reinforced his rule as the eye of the administration in Zhoa regardless of the numerous charges against him.

The DO for Bamenda immediately convoked judges of the Zhoa Native Court to adjudicate and sanction Zun if found guilty of torture and other atrocities meted out on his people as reported to the D.O. He was guilty of going against the customs and traditions which he as custodian was supposed to protect. As punishment, he paid goats, pigs, fowls and wine and alongside this, he was asked to beg for forgiveness from his people.⁹⁹ Despite the efforts of the British administration to make Zun collaborate with his people for effective administration, Zun who thought being the ruler was having a place at the sun remained

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 29

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 29

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 28

adamant to collaboration. The effect was his dethronement and exiled to Wum championed by the British administration in collaboration with the elders where he later died.

In the case of Oshie, in 1918 when the British arrived and took over the German station (now transformed into a toilet gate as seen in plate 3), Emamba and his descendants retreated a second time to their huts in the forest thinking it was the return of the Germans. Adang Engu Anuangwe welcomed them as was the case with the Germans. Without asking to know who was in charge of the traditional administration of the village, the British went ahead to name him the traditional ruler of Oshie.¹⁰⁰ For fear of the British, the Oshie people accepted Adang Engu Anuangwe as their traditional ruler referring to him as *OfuhKara* meaning the “Whiteman’s *fon*”.

Plate 5: The German Station at Oshie Transformed into a Rain-gate



Source: Author’s photographic collection, August 2018

The transfer of authority from Emamba to Adang orchestrated by the British colonialists degenerated into a power tussle between Emamba and Adang.¹⁰¹ After imposing Adang on the people, they grouped Oshie traditional rulers under the Ngunu Native Authority Area.¹⁰² As if it was not enough, the British further divided the area into several

¹⁰⁰ Walter Achombong Ngri., “The Dynamism of Traditional Rulership in Oshie Chiefdom, 2019, p. 81

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 82

¹⁰² File N° Ja 9/1922/23 attributions of Native Authorities.

administrative Sub-Units symbolized by Native Courts Areas under the control of Native Authorities with Adang being part with the assistance of council members.¹⁰³ Here we see the influence of the colonial master in the choice of a traditional ruler that favoured the British. This was because the British certainly saw in Adang a collaborator who could easily facilitate the smooth functioning of British administration if brought into the British administration.

In Bafut, the *fon* told officer Podevin in 1918 who equally expresses the feelings of other traditional rulers that: “you are now my master and what you order me to do I will do but if the Germans come back, what is going to happen to me if they find out that I have made this statement and signed it.”¹⁰⁴ This is an indication of the active role traditional rulers played in the Bamenda Grassfields under British administration as integrated auxiliaries to facilitate administrative procedures. Worried of the consequences of collaborating with the British, traditional rulers needed protection. This protection was granted to many a traditional ruler by the British administration as seen in the case of the traditional rulers of Bum.

In 1935, the traditional ruler of Sawi, Ngwieh Nakun was accused by the *fon* of Bum, Kwanga for misappropriating tax funds of three persons. The *fon* of Sawi pleaded guilty and was detained by the *fon* of Bum in the *kwifon* lodge at Lakabum for two days¹⁰⁵. The detention of the chief of Sawi in Lakabum was a blow to Sawi’s nominal authority. Acting behind a hurt pride, Sawi spreaded the story that the Bum *fon* owed him £15. Bum took offense and sued chief Ngwieh in court on March 1937. In the presence of the Assistant Divisional Officer (A.D.O) for Bamenda Division, Smith at the court proceedings, he stated that “the *fon* of Bum was held in respect and the court was reluctant to admit that he was at fault.” Sawi was thus accused of refusing to pay taxes and slandering the *fon*. Chief Ngwieh was ordered by the court to pay £10 very much against his wish. This situation created tension but because the British colonial administration had classified traditional rulers, empowered some while giving some authority to administer others, calm was restored.

In the Bamoum land, Sultan Njoya pledged his total loyalty, support and surrendered his land and people to the British in a letter addressed to the King of Britain. In this letter, he solicited the British come to his aid among other requests as seen below

The Great All-Powerful King of all the English, I Njoya King of Bamoum send my humble salutations to the Great King of the English who puts the evil men to flight and the troublesome to prison. I thank the Great English King for

¹⁰³ Regional Archive Bamenda File No Cb 1932/2 Annual Report to the UN, 1940

¹⁰⁴ NAB, file C26/1918, Native in British sphere of occupation, p 4

¹⁰⁵ http://www.era.anthropology.ac.uk/Era_Resources/Era/Kingdom_Bum, retrieved April 6, 2005.

sending his strong soldiers to free my country. I have seen the English and I know that they are good and strong people and that all black men follow them. They have delivered me from the hand of the Germans who are men of darkness, who have no belongings, who are liars, who trouble the people continually. I have collected all my people and they all wish to belong to the King of the English, and to his sons and the sons of his sons. May he take them into his hand as a father takes his children may he show them wisdom and help and teach them to be strong even as the English themselves. I wish to follow the King of England and to be his servant together with my country that my land may be freshened with dew and that the Germans and all unclean things may be driven out. All my people, my old men and my old women, my men, and my girls the weak and the strong desire this. May the God of the English help them in the fight, may the Great King remain strong in his town, may his life be long and his descendants numerous. The Germans have troubled us and made our hearts cold and foolish. If the evil that they have done could be weighed it would be more than one thousand kilos. I and all my people beg that we may be delivered from their hands. There is a very small thing in my hand which I wish to offer humbly to the English King. It will be nothing in his eyes. It is the chair in which I and my fathers have always sat and which is my strength and power. Also the two large elephant tusks which are on each side of it. There are no other such tusks in the country. The chair and tusks are as nothing to the Great King, but they are all I have. I, Njoya, and all my headmen and all my people I agree (sic) to the English flag which hangs in my town and I give greetings three times and give my land and all that I have to the English.¹⁰⁶

Njoya promised to offer his throne which is the symbol of his power and authority to the British in his letter. This is an indication that he was ready to surrender his country and all within that land to the British for them to manage the way they deem necessary which is termed total and unconditional surrender of the Bamoum land to the British. This signifies an invitation and full surrender of Njoya and his entire *fondom* into the hands of the British. This total and unconditional surrender is further confirmed when Njoya using a literal devise says “I, King Njoya, I’m like a woman and you whites are like men. What else can I do but to obey”?¹⁰⁷ This was a union call between both parties (British on the one hand and traditional rulers on the other) as stated in the Bible, the two has become one.¹⁰⁸ So too, traditional rulers through integration became one with the colonial administration and became part and parcel of the administering body.

¹⁰⁶ NAB, file No IB 1916/1 *The Chief of Bamoum 1916, Njoya to the King of England*, 25th December, 1915, Amaazee, *Traditional rulers (chiefs) and politics in Cameroon*, pp. 23-24

¹⁰⁷ Adamu Ndam Njoya., *Réformateur du Royaume Bamoun*, Tounai Belgique : Casterman S.A., 1978, p. 106

¹⁰⁸ Gnensis chapter 2 :21-24 in Good News Bible with Deuterocanonical/Apocrypha, New Translation, Claretian house Younde, march 1993, p. 4

III-Responses of Traditional Rulers towards Colonial Administration

In French Cameroon, the focus was to execute pro-French policies with the help of traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield. Under British administration, traditional rulers were made Native Authorities and they played a double role. They were the last link in the colonial administrative chain and through them, decisions made at the center were enforced locally. Traditional rulers ran the day-to-day administration of their respective N.A. unilaterally as long as they operated within their established boundaries. This was because the British had established general guidelines, but left much of the actual policy making in the hands of Native Authorities with the District Officer acting as an advisor.¹⁰⁹

The first step undertaken by the British administration when they took over the administration of the Bamenda Grassfield was to secure the confidence, loyalty and support of influential, courageous and powerful traditional rulers.¹¹⁰ They did this in order to establish the system of Indirect Rule associated with other administrative units like Native Authorities. Through this process, the four administrative units were demarcated into several administrative sub-units symbolized by Native Courts Areas. These courts were administered under N.A. assisted by a battery of advisory council who were traditional rulers of that area¹¹¹ According to indirect rule system of administration, traditional ruler were part of the local advisory council which constituted the administering body.

Road maintenance was under the control and supervision of NA through traditional rulers. Locals were called up to contribute unpaid labour for the upkeep of roads and administrative buildings. This policy of calling up the locals through traditional rulers to maintain roads and other facilities was in accordance with sections of the Nigerian Roads and River Ordinance of 1916 extended to the Cameroons in 1925 since both territories were under the control of the British¹¹² By this law, traditional rulers were forced to call out their citizens to keep the roads and other administrative structures clean and refusal to respect the order of the ruler backed by the British attracted a fine. This was preparing traditional rulers on how to manage the labour force and maintain infrastructures put in place as agents of the administration.

¹⁰⁹Michael Crowder and Obaro Ikime., "Introduction" West African Chiefs: Their Changing Status under Colonial Rule and Independence, New YorkAfricans, 1970. Pp,7 - 29.

¹¹⁰ Che Mfombong W., Bamenda Division under British Administration, 1916-1961. From Administration to Local Government, MA Thesis in History, University of Yaounde I, 1980, p.58

¹¹¹ Regional Archive Bamenda File No Cb 1932/2 Annual Report to the UN 1940

¹¹² Quoted in Fuhnwi "Fon, Chiefs and People in Conflict", p. 61

The Bamenda division after reorganization by the British had NAA of which five NAA were under the care of a single traditional ruler as NA. As mentioned above, NAs had executive, judicial, fiscal and partly legislative powers and had the right to grant statutory authority. They collected court fees, fines and taxes paid into the Native Treasury.¹¹³ To avoid tax fraud, tax discs were issued to traditional rulers of the Bamenda Grassfield from 1925.¹¹⁴ An example of traditional rulers that represented the people of the Ngunu Native Court were those of Ikweri Banya, Bakwa, Konda, Bako, Ngwo and Oshie.¹¹⁵ This process was aimed at facilitating administrative procedures thanks to the efforts of the natives and the British who collaborated with traditional rulers to ease administrative procedures. In a dramatic indictment of German rule, the District Officer of Ossidinge, W.E. Hunt, manipulated 34 traditional rulers to affirm that the Germans were guilty of arbitrary beatings, forced labour, unlawful seizure of property, raping of women and arbitrary hangings.¹¹⁶ These rulers could only accept to put forth such a strong case because they had the protection of the British administration. This meant that, traditional rulers were protected and had the backing of the British as agents of the day to day running of affairs of the British administration as partners.

Traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield acted as land providers for developmental projects. With the invitation of the British-Indian multinational enterprise and Estates and Agency Company Ltd (EAC) in 1955/56 by the British administration to open another tea plantation in the Ndu area, this dream could only be realised with the collaboration of traditional rulers. The EAC eventually concluded that the soils and climate at Ndu were suitable for estate tea production. Accompanied by two local parliamentarians, an EAC negotiation team approached the traditional ruler of Ndu, His Royal Highness William Nfori, and requested him to allocate land for the creation of a tea estate. The two deputies tried to convince the chief of the benefits of estate tea production: it would stimulate local development and halt the growing flow of labour to the coastal plantations. The chief told the negotiation team that although he highly favoured any project that would stimulate local development, he nevertheless feared that employment on the estate might have a negative

¹¹³ NBA, File No Ab/32 (a)1924: Ngunu Tribal Area, Bamenda Division Assessment Report, 1924

¹¹⁴ Anthony Ndi., *Southern West Cameroon Revisited 1950-1972*, Paul's Press, Bamenda, 2013, p.9, quoted too in Ngeri's *The Dynamics of Traditional rulership*, p.88

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Achombong "The Dynamism of Traditional Rulership in Oshie", p 87

¹¹⁶ Governor General Nigeria to Secretary of state for the colonies on 28th July 1918, enclosing a letter from P.V -Young the (resident) of 17-6-1918 caring W.E. Hunt's letter of 7-5-1918 D.O. of Ossidinge, enclosing the testimony of 34 chiefs of Ossidinge (Mamfe) division. This is found in Co 750/27536, status of inhabitants in British Cameroons

effect on his subject's loyalty to traditional value systems and authority patterns. He therefore made the allocation of a vast area of approximately 1,660 plots for estate tea production¹¹⁷

IV-Traditional Rulers in the Nationalist Struggle in the Bamenda Grassfields

Traditional rulers knew that one day the British would leave the territory. As such, they took dispositions in order to preserve power so as to continuously exercise administrative authority over their respective areas as had been the case before now. In 1949 a colonial administrative reform divided Bamenda Division into four federations with the aim of bringing administration closer to the people. Nso was placed in the South East Federation with the *Fons* of Bafut and Nso having permanent seats in Council. This went a long way to consolidate the position of the two traditional rulers and reassuring them and other traditional rulers that they were part of the colonial administration through integration.¹¹⁸ From this juncture, traditional rulers made several efforts for their presence to be felt in the fight for nationalism in British Southern Cameroons with the hope that at independence, they would champion the administration of their respective polities.

With the hope that they will join in piloting pos-independent administration, traditional rulers rally behind educated elites in the fight for nationalism. They equally hope and prayed that they would be integrated into the would-be independence state of British Southern Cameroon if it would be granted. When things did not turn out the way traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield had expected, there was bound to be disagreement between them and the western educated elites. This is because; traditional rulers knew that since they were of great importance to colonial administration, they would champion the fight for nationalism. Contrary to their expentations, the out come was antagonism between traditional rulers and educated elites who seems to spear head the fight for nationalism. In order to continuously remain part of modern administration, traditional rulers had to sort for other methods of making their presence felt by joining forces with the educated elites so as to be part of the fight for nationalist politics in the Bamenda Grassfields as would be seen in the following lines.

Through associations formed by educated elites, traditional rulers expressed and backed the wish for the separation of Southern Cameroons with Nigeria. They equally fought for the political participation of traditional rulers, resentment of Nigerian domination of the economy of their territory, demand for legislative and executive powers among others. Be it

¹¹⁷ Koning P., *Chieftaincy, Labour Control and Capitalist* 1996, p.330

¹¹⁸ NAB, file no 206/146

out of their making or as a result of a tap on the back of traditional rulers by the colonial administration or western educated elites, it was clear that, traditional rulers in Southern Cameroons in general and the Bamenda Grassfield in particular played an important role in nationalist affairs. This was thanks to the role they played in colonial Bamenda Grassfield as integrated members of modern colonial administration.

In the Richard's constitution, it was required that two Native Authority members be sent to the Eastern House of Assembly at Enugu.¹¹⁹ Traditional rulers saw the Richard's constitution as a source of strength and a mechanism aimed at bringing them closer to colonial administration hence full integration at independence. This is because, as members of NA, they knew their positions in the Eastern House of Assembly at Enugu were guaranteed. At the end, the Richard's constitution did not protect the interest of traditional rulers as they had thought. Ndobegang says "Although Cameroonian chiefs were not actively engaged in opposing the Richards constitution, their interests were also threatened."¹²⁰ This threat could be seen in the obnoxious Ordinances which gave colonial authorities the right to expropriate land without compensation and the right to appoint and depose traditional rulers. This was opposed to the culture and traditions of the people whose traditional rulers were held in high esteem talk less of a foreign power deposing them. Also, land was owned by the people entrusted under the care of their ruler, so taking land away from them without compensation was stepping on the toes of traditional rulers which literally meant deposition. This and some other factors pushed traditional rulers to join the nationalist train in the fight for liberation with the hope that better opportunities and full integration into modern administration would come at independence.

The hope for full integration and participation was expressed by traditional rulers in the various meetings held in preparation for a new constitution. In the meeting held at Mamfe in June 1948 and in Victoria in 1949, out of the 60 participants in the meeting of Victoria, 27 were traditional rulers¹²¹ with a good number coming from the Bamenda Grassfield. Looking at the number of traditional rulers who attended the Victoria meeting, it was clear indication that they were engaged in the fight for representation and subsequent integration into modern administration in the would-be independent southern Cameroons. The privileges enjoyed by traditional rulers as N.A. in native administrative structure motivated them to be fully engaged with the hope of better tomorrow as local administrators.

¹¹⁹ LeVeine., *The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1964, p199

¹²⁰ Ndobegang., "Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change", p 2881

¹²¹ Eyongetah, Tambi and Brain., *A History of the Cameroon*, London: Lohgmans, 1974, p. 128

Traditional Rulers and the Quest for Identity through Pressure Groups and Political Parties

With the creation of pressure groups, the position of traditional rulers was equally threatened. The Cameroon Youth League stood for the elimination of traditional rulers into local administration. On its part, the Cameroon National Federation formed in May 1949 in replacement of the C.Y.L. together with traditional rulers rejected a radical change to the power and authority exercised by traditional rulers in local administration.¹²² The C.N.F. continued to support traditional rulers, claiming their rights and privileges should be maintained and called for an end in the appointment and deposition of traditional rulers. With the support from pressure groups, traditional rulers felt strengthened and motivated, hoping that better opportunities in local administration and subsequent integration were ahead with pressure groups.

As a result of support from pressure groups coupled with the stand of traditional rulers who wished and insisted on being the focal point in local administration as had always been the case, there was need for the intervention of the administration. Colonial officers persuaded traditional rulers, indicating the benefits if they accepted and stand for limited reforms in local government organization. They went as far as giving vague promises in exchange for traditional rulers who would accept reforms.¹²³ For traditional rulers to be persuaded by the colonial administration to accept changes as a result of pressure from educated elites was an indication that, traditional rulers saw themselves as equals to the colonial administration and as such, were not supposed to be pushed around by educated elites. This was as a result of the right, powers and responsibilities the colonial administration had placed on traditional rulers (through integration) who now saw themselves as partners, equals and the engine of the colonial administration. They had the backing of the colonial administration and was amplified in 1949 when the Bamenda division was raised to the status of a province.

When the Bamenda division was raised to the status of a province, traditional rulers saw this as a protective mechanism from the threats of educated elites since this status warranted a resident governor who had supported them from the onset and would certainly stand by them now in the course of the implementation of new reforms. The refusal of traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield to accept reforms might have certainly influenced the Resident for Bamenda Province, Mr. Brayne-Baker to support that local reforms be

¹²² Ndobegang, "Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change" p 285

¹²³ Ibid, p. 286

introduced slowly in the Bamenda Grassfield.¹²⁴ The support toward traditional rulers must have been as a result of past cooperation between them and the British administration. This move by the Resident who was the head of the administration boosted efforts and reassured traditional rulers that they were part of modern administration. Ndobegang echoes that the resident for Bamenda Province remarked, “The office of Resident in Bamenda served to reassure traditional rulers that educated councilors could not by-pass them simply because of their educational status.”¹²⁵ This was a reassuring message which empowered traditional rulers as partners in colonial administration.

At the end of the Second World War and in the immediate post-war period, the colonial administration and educated elites had seen the need for a change in the system of local administration that was in the hands of traditional rulers. In 1948, a committee of the Eastern Regional House of Assembly in charge of studying the role of native administrative system noted that, local administration had some advantages but had demonstrated an inability to broaden its base and to attract educated and progressive Africans as part of the administration. It recommended that more educated men should be involved in local government.¹²⁶ It equally advised that elections should be used to select people into Native Authority Councils and amalgamate Native Authority Areas for more revenue.¹²⁷ All of this was threats to traditional rulers who knew the literate and dynamic educated elites would be voted. These recommendations were a challenge to the power, position and authority of traditional rulers. As such, there was opposition from traditional rulers on new reforms. This explained why there was serious opposition from representatives from Cameroon when the Eastern House of Assembly recommended through a bill that elections should be used for the selection of local government councilors because of the hostile nature of traditional rulers toward the introduction of reforms.¹²⁸

Traditional rulers knew that they would be sidelined and pushed out of local administration if this bill pushed through. An informant told us that traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield were reluctant to accept the recommendations especially on the structure and composition of the N.A. because it was not customary for traditional rulers who were held in high esteem to stand for election, taking into consideration the non-respect of authorities

¹²⁴ Ibid, p. 287

¹²⁵ Ibid, pp 287-288

¹²⁶ Eastern House of Assembly, Memorandum on Local Government, Policy in the Eastern Provinces, 16 July 1949, cited in Ndobegang's “Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change”, p 283

¹²⁷ Ibid, p 283

¹²⁸ Chem-Langheë, “The Origins of the Southern Cameroons House of Chiefs.” in *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 16 :4, 653-673, 1983, p. 665

when it came to politics.¹²⁹ Their fear also came as a result of the fact that these changes might cause them to loss power and prestige, a reduction or elimination of the motivations (salaries) and stipends received not forgetting that they may lose other economic privileges they enjoyed.

In the mist of fear of the unknown, traditional rulers opposed the introduction of new reforms. In order to continuously make their influence felt, traditional rulers created the house of chiefs. Even before the creation of the house of chiefs, the relationship between assembly men and traditional rulers was strengthen with the crisis in the Eastern House of Assembly. The crisis slowed down the aspirations of educated elits as the house was dissolved which led to a delay of the reforms traditional rulers were against their introduction.

After the dissolution of the Eastern House of Assembly, the nine assembly men who represented Southern Cameroons traveled from palace to palace visiting traditional rulers, updating them on the state of the crisis and the way forward. To traditional rulers, they saw the briefing sessions as evidence of the loyalty and respect they deserve as natural rulers from the people. Rendering account to them was an automatic and an unquestionable thing. Traditional rulers saw this act of the assembly men as a stepping stone for a cordial relationship which should lead to collaboration and full integration into modern governance with the departure of the colonial master. To them, it was a duty assigned to the council men by traditional rulers to manage the crisis and bring them feedback. This explained why Sehm III, the traditional ruler of Nso, metaphorically told the assembly men “Go forth as my hunting dogs to ensure separation from Nigeria¹³⁰” when he was briefed on the situation of the crisis on ground.

Equally, 10 traditional rulers from the Bamenda Grassfield (with three of the so called four “big chiefs”) endorsed a note to be taken by a delegation to the London Constitutional Conference in July 1953, supporting the K.N.C. for separation with Nigeria.¹³¹ Visualizing the merits of full participation in administration if separated from Nigeria, traditional rulers mounted pressure for the motion to pass.¹³²

¹²⁹ Interview with Abumbi, Fon of Bafut.

¹³⁰ Chem- Langheë., “Southern Cameroons Traditional Authorities and the Nationalist Movement 1953-1961”, p. 40

¹³¹ Ndobegang., “Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change”. P. 309

¹³² Among some of the advantages would be the creation of a house of chief which would give them political and economic strength above educated elites and stop or halt the reforms on change in local administration. Also, traditional rulers knew that with an autonomous region, all structures which had protected their powers and privileges would be maintained not forgetting the fact that Ibo domination would be stopped.

Traditional rulers fought for the preservation of their position with the new status given. With the assurance from Gibbons, the touring commissioner in a meeting with traditional rulers represented by the *fons* of Bali, Bafut and Kom in May 1954, the hopes of traditional rulers were restored as active partners in administrative affairs in collaboration with educated elites. When Brayne-Baker the acting commissioner in June 1954 announced that the post of Resident for Bamenda would be revisited later, it was a bitter pill and a disappointment to traditional rulers. Their hopes toward the creation of a house of chief which would fortify them administratively were going down the lane. As such, they mounted resistance to the pronouncement of Brayne-Baker. These were all moves to preserve power and authority as integrated partners in colonial administration.

Reactions from politicians and traditional rulers of looking at the issue of a Bamenda Province which comes with the appointment of a Resident in a later date was clear prove of their dissatisfaction and seen as a move to sideline them from the British modern system of administration. In protest, traditional rulers alongside some politicians criticized the change of opinion. S.T. Muna insisted the decision to revisit the appointment of a resident to a later date had to be taken only after the opinions of traditional rulers were consulted.¹³³ The traditional ruler of Bali reminded Gibbons of his promise and assurance of a Province for Bamenda on May 1954 in a meeting with them while Chief Nghah of Wum as a result of dissatisfaction, mobilized his people against J.C. Kangsen and denounced Nkwain as an assembly man. They were seen as traitors who contributed to the loss of the status of a Province with a Resident for Bamenda.¹³⁴ The wish of traditional rulers was to create an atmosphere where by their aspirations and interest would be felt and respected. They saw this coming through the creation of an autonomous Bamenda Province which would come with the full participation of traditional rulers in administrative affair supported by the British.

The protest of traditional rulers was supported by R.B. Cardale, a colonial official who wrote to the Commissioner warning and insisting on the dangers of annoying traditional rulers in the event of an annulment of the status of a Province with a Resident for Bamenda. He said it could destabilize the system of administration leading to a conflict. He stresses on the dangers of alienating traditional rulers in the following words:

Hitherto the administration had managed to get things done in close association with the chiefs and progress toward democracy has taken place with their acquiescence... chiefs still have very great local influence... and

¹³³ Ndobegang, "Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change" P. 303

¹³⁴ Ibid, p 304

*local assemblymen (are not likely to be) elected without obtaining the support of the chiefs in the constituencies. The success obtained by the K.N.C... was due to the support of the chiefs and village Heads. At least 50% of the personnel of the five Native Administrations is composed of chiefs of one kind or another. The Chiefs when asking for the retention of a Resident are remembering that the post was created... as a result of their representations... because the importance of Bamenda had at last been recognized.*¹³⁵

Traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield had the feeling that a Province and the position of a Resident were a protection and a link in their efforts to be made and maintained as part of the British administering body. As such, they fought to remove any obstacle along the way that would jeopardize their quest. Having a taste of power and authority as part of modern administration, they did not see themselves sitting at the observer's position to execute command.

To further show their dissatisfaction, traditional rulers held a meeting at the end of September at the Nso palace. In that meeting, they openly declared they would not allow Bamenda Province to be abolished. They labeled assembly men "sellouts" and told them their election into the assembly was thanks to their efforts in mobilizing the population and as such, important decisions taken without their consultation were not acceptable.¹³⁶ Their fear was their position and opinion in future if they let go the opportunity of having a Province for Bamenda. One thing which is clear was that, traditional rulers fought to make sure their interest and opinion was felt as part of the administering body in British administration.

The pressure mounted by traditional rulers was expressed in a letter written by representatives of the council of the five federated Native Authorities in the province together with the council of K.N.C representatives in September 18th, 1954 in disagreement to the abolition of the status of Bamenda as a Province. This was because traditional rulers wielded power and authority on the local population. As mentioned before, when traditional rulers (despite pressure mounted on educated elites to protect their interest) discovered that their positions and influence in administrative decision were fading out, they sought for an alternative on which their voices could be heard. This they saw through the creation of a house of assembly and a house of chief which would manage its accounts as was the case in Northern and Western Regions of Nigeria. They equally believed these houses would give them power to make decisive decisions on sensitive matters concerning administration.

¹³⁵Ibid, p.305

¹³⁶ Ibid, p 308

V- The Creation of the House of Chiefs in the British Cameroon

In England, the monarchy is one of the greatest and most respected institutions in contemporary world. Royalty is respected and never to be hijacked by any one for whatsoever reason or by a political party. Every English person knows that as one of the canons of being English, the respect for the monarchy is paramount. The House of Lord stands as the representation of the monarchy and still remained a credible advisory body and mediator in English politics. In recognition of the role the House of Lord played and still continued to play in English administration, the British could not sideline traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield. This was because traditional rulers had similar statues with the monarchy, were feared and revered by the people as is the case with the English man when it comes to the monarchy.

Judging from the above, since the House of Lord spoke on behalf of the monarchy and acts as a credible advisory body and mediator in English politics, the British equally accorded such respect for traditional rulers by grouping them into N.A. so that their power and influence could be felt in all domains of life in the Bamenda Grassfield. They empowered traditional rulers through the creation of N.A. Indirect Rule under the administration of traditional rules through N.A. was consider as a replica of the House of Lord which traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield gradually transformed into the House of Chiefs. The British saw the creation of a house of chief as an institution which would help the British to be of better service to the people of the Bamenda Grassfield. Through this mechanism, the British cherished and exploited the fact that traditional rulers were always considered as an impartial figure in society.¹³⁷ As such, the House of chief was a necessity.

Aware of the importance of a house of chief for traditional rulers in modern administration as it's the case with the House of Lord in England, considerable attention on its creation in the Bamenda Grassfields drew attention. This was after a meeting held by traditional rulers on the 26th of September 1954 at the Nso palace called by the *fon* of Nso. As attendants were the traditional ruler of Bali, Bafut and Kom who were believed to be the "big chiefs" representing the entire Bamenda Grassfield.¹³⁸ The main point discussed during the meeting was the abolition of a Province for Bamenda which traditional rulers were made to believe the K.N.C was responsible.¹³⁹ Chairing the meeting, Achirimbi, the traditional ruler of Bafut, echoed how they (traditional rulers) gave a mandate to educated politicians during the

¹³⁷Geschiere Peter., "Chiefs and Colonial Rule in Cameroon: Inventing Chieftaincy, French and British Style," in Africa, International African Institute, Vol. 63, 2nd April 1993, pp. 151-175

¹³⁸Chem- Langheë., "The Origins of the Southern Cameroons House of Chiefs", p. 668

¹³⁹Chem - Langheë., "Southern Cameroons Traditional Authorities, p 44

Mamfe conference to take to London. This mandate required them to request for a Province which would come with an assembly and a house of chief which they failed to do.¹⁴⁰

The chairperson told traditional rulers in attendance that, this act on the part of the elites was a sign of disrespect and betrayal. Instead of bringing back a house of chief from London as was requested, they brought back a Native Authority representation. He went further to say the decision was “deadly against our wishes” and saw no need to trust the elites who acted without consulting them, the traditional rulers.¹⁴¹ From the statement of the chairman for the meeting, one could feel the pains of traditional rulers who sound rejected and would do anything within their power to regain their strength and authority. Deep in them, they knew the house of chief would solve all their worries and make them influential in all domains. Reasons why they decided that any traditional ruler who would allow the KNC-KPP win the 1958 elections, he would not be admitted into the house of chief.

The quest for a house of chief continued in the course of the meeting. Speeches of the different traditional rulers who took the floor insisted in the creation of the house of chief. On his part, the traditional ruler of Nso, in the course of the meeting said, “If we do not fight hard these small people, the Assembly men... will override us and abolish our native laws and customs.”¹⁴² In an appeal to all traditional rulers, the four traditional rulers called for a united front to defend their interest. At the end of the meeting, these rulers adopted a number of resolutions. Among them was that all candidates seeking to be representatives of N.A in the house of assembly as well as politicians requesting the support of traditional rulers to get to the top would sign an agreement with traditional rulers. One of the terms of the agreement was that, within six months in office, they would push forward the motion for a house of chief in order to avoid a vote of no-confidence from traditional rulers.¹⁴³ This marked the turning point on the issue of the creation of the house of chiefs. Having been in the corridors of power under British administration, traditional rulers could go to any length to maintain their positions as integrated members of colonial administration.

Any politician who wished to mount the political ladder had to toe the line drawn by traditional rules. This explained why in August 20th 1957 after returning from London, Galega II summoned a meeting with traditional rulers of the Bamenda Grassfield to brief them on what transpired during the constitutional talks. He appreciated himself, Foncha and his KNDP

¹⁴⁰ For details, consult Ndobegang “Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change” p.311

¹⁴¹ Ibid

¹⁴² Minutes of Conference of *Fons* and chiefs of Bamenda Province, Nso Palace, 26th September 1954, cited in Ndobegang.

¹⁴³ Ndobegang’s “Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change”, p.312

for single-handedly contributing to effort aim at having a house of chief. The aftermath was carpet crossing by some traditional rulers from the KNC to KNDP in appreciation to the role of Foncha toward their fight for a house of chief. This was also in respect of their decision adopted in one of the meeting held at the palace Nso. It sounded the quest and role played by traditional rulers, colonial administration and elites to involve traditional rulers in modern administration, our focus.

Aware of the consequences of the threat posed by traditional rulers who were influential natural rulers, John Ngu Foncha the secretary for the KNC for Bamenda who doubled as a representative of the southeastern Federation of N.A. called for the establishment of a house of chiefs in a motion tabled on the 30th November 1954 during the first session of the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly which started on October 26th, 1954. In the motion, Foncha presented traditional rulers as the long-established authorities who deserved their rightful place in administration because they contributed to order, peace and good governance. He presented traditional rulers as absolute authorities, closest to the people and a bridge between the people and the administration in all developmental projects. Foncha concluded that a house of assembly without a house of chief meant “the commoner had grown above the chief’s authority; dictate to the chief... a direct encroachment to this long and recognized authority.”¹⁴⁴ Foncha in his presentation insisted that if traditional rulers are alienated, they would in their numbers fight for their right as the custodians of the culture and traditions of the people since they are promoters of peace, prosperity and equally symbolize unity among the people. Owing to the fact that this motion came after the resolutions adopted by traditional rulers from the meeting at the Nso palace, one can suggest that traditional rulers played an important role in the day-to-day running of affairs in the Bamenda Grassfields owing to the fact that attention and emphasis was on them as part of decision makers. This could only be possible with the support of the colonial administration thanks to integration.

In response to the call for a house of chief, the colonial administration promised to look into the issue of the house of chiefs in the next constitution. Endeley on his part later claimed only a small minority of the Southern Cameroons population was representing traditional rulers coupled with the financial situation which did not permit the territory to run a house of chiefs. As such, he rejected the motion which traditional rulers saw as a stumbling

¹⁴⁴ Ibid

block to their full integration into modern administration.¹⁴⁵ In order to draw traditional rulers closer to himself and for other reasons, Foncha created a new political Party, the Kameroun National Democratic Party (KNDP) and had as one of its objectives the respect for traditional rulers and the creation of a house of chiefs¹⁴⁶

With the creation of the KNDP and taking into consideration some of its objectives, the aspirations of traditional rulers were reawakened and they rallied their support behind the party knowing it represented their interest which could lead them their lost glory as modern administrators. Traditional rulers continued the fight for a house of chiefs up till May 1957 when *Fon* Galega II of Bali (representing traditional rulers) alongside other delegates traveled to London for constitutional talks which ended up in the granting of a house of chiefs (with advisory powers only).¹⁴⁷ The position of the KNDP shaped the relationship between traditional rulers and western educated elites. Traditional rulers saw a green light at the end of the tunnel with the KNDP which was an indication they would be part of decision makers in modern administration. Judging from the reaction of traditional rulers toward efforts for a house of chiefs, it was evident that anyone who stood on their part would be crushed.

In Endeley's policy statement, it was clear that traditional rulers were pushed out of full and active political and administrative matters. In response to him, traditional rulers openly told him that as traditional rulers, they had the right to interfere with and correct the affairs of the country when things were going radically wrong. They went further to say, "chiefs and their people did not want to be integrated with Nigeria but to secede from it. They want to secede and concentrate on the much harder work of self-government and independence outside the Federation of Nigeria"¹⁴⁸ Traditional rulers took the advantage to demand for a stronger house of chiefs with more powers and to select traditional rulers who should be members of the house of chiefs. They rejected the idea of the house being a mere advisory body. Since traditional rulers acted as vote banks and could influence the outcome of events, there was no possibility that anyone who stood against them could succeed. This among others explained why Endeley lost his position to Foncha. Foncha had the support and backing of traditional rulers because his aspirations were their wishes which would enable them to hang on to the reigns of power and authority in an unpredicted post-colonial

¹⁴⁵ The general feelings among traditional rulers at this point was that educated elites that came from the Bamenda Grassfield had sold Bamenda to the Bakweris, the birth place of Endeley who was the head of the K.N.C, the active and ruling political party at that time.

¹⁴⁶ LeVeine., *The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence*, 1964, p. 205

¹⁴⁷ From lectures and notes received during my studies as a student in the secondary and high school in Longla Comprehensive College mankon, 2002-2004

¹⁴⁸ Che-Langheë., "Southern Cameroons Traditional Authorities", p. 52

economy. This tells us that traditional rulers were influential as would do everything within their powers to manipulate the outcome of events especially to their favour as far as administration was concerned.

Conclusion

All over the Bamenda Grassfield, the British understood the importance of traditional rulers in the administration and governance of the area. The values, policies and institutions used in the management of economic, political and social affairs contributed in bringing traditional rulers closer to the colonial administrators. Thus, the British relied on traditional rulers for local administration and the day to day running of their activities. Historians have argued that African indigenous institutions headed by traditional rulers shaped modernization in Africa as well as in the Bamenda Grassfield thanks to the resilience and continuity in traditional administration. Looking at the importance attached to traditional rulers by their people, the British tried to adapt their administrative policy in order to involve traditional rulers and this was quite understandable.

As has been mentioned in this chapter, traditional rulers acted as collaborators in colonial administration as a result of shortage of European officers on the ground, lack of funds and the influence of the local milieu. In order to effectively control the colonial people, the help of traditional rulers as local administrators was sought to facilitate administrative procedures. This collaboration empowered traditional rulers and gradually led to their active participation in colonial administration. Traditional rulers were empowered and given authority to administer as Native Authorities. The power and influence exercised by traditional rulers shaped the role of these rulers in post-independence administration in the Bamenda Grassfield. These traditional rulers would seek to be integrated in whatever post-independence arrangement were made so as not to be kept away from having or maintaining their clout in the period following independence.

CHAPTER 4

BAMENDA GRASSFIELD CHIEFS AND GOVERNANCE DURING THE POST- INDEPENDENCE PERIOD, 1960-2013

In October 1961 the British Southern Cameroons achieved independence by joining the already independent Republic of Cameroun within the framework of a new country christened the Federal Republic of Cameroon. The Bamenda Grassfields became a part of the Federated State of West Cameroon in the new Republic. The coming into existence of the Federal Republic in which there were two federated states that had lived the experience of administration under British and French veiled under the guise of Mandated and Trusteeship Territories of the League of Nations and later the United Nations came into this joint relationship carrying along the colonial administrative and governance arrangements which had characterized each portion since 1916. No doubt that the administrative and governance route taken by the emerging Federal Republic of Cameroon, appeared in its early days to be a continuation of the former colonial systems.

Focussing especially on the Bamenda Grassfields, this chapter refreshes the mind of the reader about the way the chieftaincy institution was involved in local and state governance with the end of colonial rule. It describes how following independence, there was a systematic sidelining of traditional rulers in local administration to the embarrassment of chiefs of British Cameroons origins. Since the way chiefs were used in administration and local government in British Cameroons was quite different from the experience that had prevailed in the former French Cameroons, note is taken of how fast the post-independence government very quickly moved to abolish the West Cameroon House of Chiefs, which was the highest structure of governance in the British Cameroons and in which traditional chiefs were visibly dominant.

This chapter shows how traditional rulers were involved in administration and all facets of governance including the mobilization of local and external resources for welfare of their people to form developmental associations in order to improve on the living condition of their people.

From the abolition of the West Cameroon House of Chiefs to the seemingly non-recognition of the role of traditional chiefs in local governance, signs were evident that traditional rulership would have no fixed role to play in local governance. How were traditional rulers sidelined in local government and administration? What was expected of traditional rulers in so far as local administration and governance were concerned? How did the politicization of

chiefs contribute towards the erosion of the influence of chiefs in national politics and later start the process of their being used as tools by government officials and politicians? Although chiefs were made a part of the local rural administration, their importance was steadily watered down. New and other hybrid roles were created for chiefs by the new government wherein the specificity of Grassfields chiefs was no longer evident. The chapter concludes that, under the new post-independence dispensation political and other very subjective and partisan roles were inauspiciously assigned to chiefs, thereby further dealing a cruel blow to the institution of chieftaincy and traditional leadership.

A-Traditional Rulers and Post-Independence Administrative Re-organization 1961-1972

After the 11th February 1961 plebiscite, there was a need for a new constitution in order to define the structure of the new Cameroon. Through the efforts of the various representatives of the two states French and British Cameroons at Foumban in July 1961, a constitution was drawn.¹ According to the constitution, the newly created Federal Republic was made up of two states, East and West Cameroon. The federal government was composed of ministers headed by the president. Among the ministerial portfolios, there was the ministry of territorial administration which today in its derived format is charge with the use of traditional rulers in local governance. What is of interest to this study is West Cameroon which had its own administrative institutions.

The federal state of West Cameroon constitutes what today is referred to as the North West and South West Regions of the United Republic of Cameroon. But note should be taken that the focus of this study is on the Bamenda Grassfield which constitute part of West Cameroon. In this part of the territory, local administration was under the Ministry of Local Government which was later baptized as the Ministry of Interior.² At this stage, local administration shifted from Native Authorities to Local Councils managed by elected councilors.³ The absence of traditional rulers was felt in local administration since they played an important role in the evolution of the state of West Cameroon through full participation in the fight to be part of the administering body. In order to bring, involve or integrate traditional rulers as part of the governing administration, the 1960 chieftaincy law was passed in the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly. The intention of the assembly

¹ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, National Year Book, 1968

² NAB, File Ja/a/1957/1, Ministry of Local Government Department, West Cameroon, Local Government Reform

³ Ibid

men was to use traditional rulers as administrative auxiliaries in West Cameroon.⁴ The law stipulated that, a register of recognized traditional rulers be kept in the records of the ministry of local government in Buea. Among the list of recognized traditional rulers from the Bamenda Grassfield forwarded to Buea was Achirimbe II of Bafut, Awemo of Bambili, Awungwafor of Bambui, Vubangsi Vugar of Kejom Keku, Shiti of Kejom Kitingo, Forsuh of Mendankwe and Ngufor of Nkwen.⁵ (See table below) It should be noted these rulers were motivated financially in order to ease administrative procedures. With this law, recognized traditional rulers could intervene in all domains of local administration since it was under their jurisdiction assisted by appointed members as recommended by traditional rulers.

Table 5: Recognized Traditional Rulers of the Bafut Native Authority Area and their Salaries at Independence

Name	Designation	Salary
Achirimbi	Fon of Bafut 'District Head'	£ 60 p. a
Vubangsi	Village Head Kejom (Babanki)	£24p.a
Azefer	Village Head Barreng (Nkwani)	£18 p. a
Asik	Village Head Kejom Kitingo (Babanki Tungaw)	£18 p. a
Cheifo	Village Head Mbu (Bambui)	£9 p. a
Fosu	Village Head Menda (Bamenda)	£9 p. a
Afongochi	Village Head Mbeli (Bambili)	£9 p. a

Source: NAB, Ab3d, R.J. Hook, An Intelligence Report on the Associated Village Groups Occupying Bafut Native Authority area of the Bamenda Division of Cameroons Province

In preparation for the administrative reorganization of the Bamenda Division, a law amending that of 1961 was passed by the permanent Secretary for Bamenda on April 1964. After the reorganization, some changes were made. An example was seen in Bafut where the Bafut Native Court Areas was changed to Bafut Area Group but the same traditional rulers were maintained⁶ which was putting new wine in old wine skin. Traditional rulers as stipulated by the amended law were given the laxity to run administrative affairs as long as peace would be maintained. This was an assurance they were part of the administering body

⁴ NAB, Southern Cameroon Official Gazette of 1960, law No 7 of 1960 which seek for the recognition of traditional rulers in the administration of Southern Cameroons

⁵ Fuhnwi Divine N., "Fon, Chiefs and People in Conflict in Bafut, North West Cameroon, 1900-1982", Ph.D Thesis, University of Yaounde I, 2011, p 118

⁶ Ibid

which motivated them to work for peace in order to gain more grounds and popularity as part of the administering body.

As recognized and registered local officials, traditional rulers had the power to recover any property lost in a competent court. This means that any property confiscated in a native court judgement was handed to the chiefs. In the same line, anyone who usurped the position or functions of a chief or appropriated property of a recognized traditional ruler or challenged his authority was guilty of an offence and thus liable to imprisonment of a year or a fine of one hundred pounds.⁷ With the definition of the property of traditional ruler comprising all regalia and anything attached to him by virtue of his office, the government of West Cameroon consciously or unconsciously reorganized and structured the position of traditional administration. This move protected the interest and authority of traditional rulers which was a great step to making them part of the post-independent administration. All of this gave traditional rulers the feeling of belonging as part and parcel of administration under post-independence rule.

The law equally defined traditional rulers as members of a tribe, clan or local community whose authority and control were recognized. Recognized because, they were duly installed by those vested with the power and authority to do so as stipulated by native law, custom and tradition of the people. The Secretary of State for local government for West Cameroon was vested with the powers to grade traditional rulers. Apart from the respect for culture and tradition in the installation of such a ruler, section 5 of the 1960 law stated that, the name of such a traditional ruler had to be among those recognized by the Secretary of State for Local Government. This reorganization was a sort of guarantee of the place of traditional rulers as part of administration because their power, influence and presence were felt by all those they governed, back by the West Cameroon administration. The authority of chiefs was reinforced through the different laws and as recognized traditional ruler, they could not be dethroned in a law court neither could a non-recognized traditional ruler placed charges and be recognized after a law suit.

Since the power of *kwifon* or a variation of that name was inhibited by the colonial administration with the pretext that they were corrupt and anachronistic, at independence, there was need for an institution that could help traditional rulers to be more productive in their administrative activities. *Kwifon* at this stage was relegated to the position of offering sacrifices. In order to re-enforce the power and authority of chiefs, there was need for a

⁷Ibid, p 119

traditional society that would act as the police to maintain peace and order in villages. It was echoed that time had come for Africans to build up forms of authority for the village that would help traditional rulers maintain peace, order and security. Since this could not be given back to *kwifon* who had played this role and because of criticism on its mode of operation, the post-independent administration authorized the creation of traditional councils.⁸ This is seen as a re-enforcement mechanism and a means to consolidate the power and authority of traditional rulers as agents of post-colonial administration which to the rulers was the foundation stone to their full integration into the post-colonial system of administration.

I-The Traditional Council

The traditional council was a body of men appointed on the recommendation of the recognized traditional ruler to work in collaboration with the chief in the day to day administration of the land. As was prescribed by the Prime Minister, the traditional council charged with the day to day running of the village and its decisions were to be respected by all. Maintain peace and order in the entire village and settle disputes in relation to inheritance of property. They were charged with the duty of settling disputes linked to inheritance because neither the courts nor the administering authority was adequately informed on the relation that existed between the people like the traditional council which mastered unwritten traditional laws of the village.⁹ It had to revise old and out dated laws and adopt new traditional laws that foster human development.

To the powers bestowed on the traditional council, the Prime Minister stated that: “Nowadays people put on clean clothes and it no longer suffice to ask them to sit on the stones in a chief’s palace. It is the Traditional Council to stop this as the *fon* cannot on his own decide to do away with any form of tradition.”¹⁰ As the supreme governing authority, the P.M. re-enforced the power of traditional rulers through the traditional council which went a long way to empower them as collaborators working toward the full integration of traditional rulers into the post-colonial administration.

II-Traditional Rulers in Post-Independence Administration and Governance

Traditional rulers play an important role in the general administration of the Bamenda Grassfield. Chiefs are at the heart of public relation which is an important phase in management and business administration in their polities. Through public relations, chiefs

⁸ Fuhnwi., “Fon, Chief and People”, p 125

⁹ Ibid, p. 126

¹⁰ Ibid.

through the council acted as intermediaries between their people and the outside world. That is to say, nothing happened in their chiefdom without their knowledge and approval. Through public relation, traditional rulers acted as mediators in the resolution of conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfield. Since traditional Bamenda is marked by numerous internal conflicts and inter-tribal wars, traditional rulers played an indispensable and instrumental role in the management and resolutions of conflicts in collaboration with the administration.¹¹ Inter-tribal conflicts like that of Bali-Bawock, the Bali Kumbat -Bafanji, the Bambili-Babanki, the Babessi-Bambalang, -Mbesa-Oku among others came to an end thanks to the efforts of traditional rulers in collaboration with post-colonial administration as partners in governance for the preservation of peace.

Generally, in almost all the conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfield, traditional rulers, be them among the conflicting parties or not played a crucial, influential and indispensable role in reconciling the conflicting parties in order for peace to reign. But for the timely intervention of neighbouring chiefs in collaboration with the administration as mediators, the conflict between the people of Bambili and Babanki-Tungoh would have degenerated into a full-blown war.¹² The traditional rulers of Bambili, Babanki-Tungoh, Bafut, Mankon and Nkwen met at the Bafut council hall on the 13th of February 1965 to discuss on the way forward for the resolution of the Bambili and Babanki-Tungoh conflict. In this meeting, traditional rulers adopted a series of resolutions aimed at putting an end to the crisis. At the end, Foncha who was the vice president of the Federal Republic of Cameroon in attendance signed the adopted agreements putting an end to the conflict.¹³ In the same line, *Fon* Gilbert Njong of Mbesa and *Fon* Sintieh II of Oku came together in 2007 to resolve the 70 years old Mbesa-Oku conflict. The involment of traditional rulers in conflict resolution was a sign and a gaint step toward their involvement in modern administration.

In post-colonial Bamenda Grassfield, traditional rulers acted as tax collectors thanks to the taxation ordinance which empowered the resident or D.O. to appoint tax collectors. The ordinance stipulated that payment of taxes will be done to the village head. He would hand to the tax clerk names of tax defaulters and follow-up would be made for such persons to pay their taxes through summons.¹⁴ In Bafut, traditional rulers like Ntoh Bawum and Talah Banji were in charge of tax collection. Whatever was collected was taken to Achirimbi II, the chief

¹¹ Evelyn Ngengong Tangie., "From Friends to Enemies: Inter-Ethnic conflict amongst the Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields (North West Province of Cameroon)", C. 1950-1998, M.A. thesis, University of Tromso, Noreay, 2007

¹² Interview with Awemo Joseph, 58years, carpenter, 20th September 2019, Mbabili

¹³ Ngengong., "From Friends to Enemies, 2007

¹⁴ NBA, File kb/b 1963, 1 Taxation Policy.

tax collector and paramount ruler of Bafut. He was the first local authority in council within the Bafut Area group and all what he received as taxes from his chiefs was transmitted to the treasury.

The involving of traditional rulers in the collection of taxes was a reminder to traditional rulers of the services they had rendered to the colonial administration to facilitate colonial administration and that, they would continue in that line as facilitators to post-colonial administrative procedures or call it auxiliaries to post-colonial administration. The constant involvement of traditional rulers in administrative affairs could be as a result of the satisfaction derived from the services rendered by traditional rulers in colonial Bamenda Grassfield. Involving them as part of the administering body in post-colonial administration would bear more fruits in the day-to-day administrative procedures.

As was the case during the pre-colonial and colonial era, local authorities (who were in most cases chiefs), were responsible for the maintenance of law and order. Local authorities reported crimes that were likely to disrupt the peace of the territory to administrative officers and/or police who could call on the local authority to take any action in order to prevent the escalation of the scene and the restoration of peace. He was empowered to arrest anyone who vomited trouble and charged before the competent court with or without a warrant of arrest.¹⁵ Punishment could be meted out on individuals who mismanaged natural endowments of the land by the local authority. Giving traditional rulers the right to stop crime and even arrest those who were likely to bring disorder in their area of jurisdiction was enough prove that they were an extended hand of the administration. In other words, they were integrated to facilitate administrative procedures in the presence or absence of the post-colonial administration on the ground. One important area where traditional rulers were influential was land management. As custodians, the distribution and redistribution of land was under their care in collaboration with post -colonial administrators as seen below.

In relation to land control, traditional rulers played an influential role into the access, use and management of land, landed property and resources within their polities. Before colonization, land belonged to the community. Chiefs managed land on behalf of the community's welfare, and the land remained a communal - customary – possession. In short, traditional rulers are the distributor and redistributor of land (See appendix III). According to most villages in the Bamenda Grassfield customary land law, rights of land use were acquired through birth, succession or marriage. But land ownership was communal and entrusted under

¹⁵Fuhnwi., "Fon, Chiefs and People", pp 121

the care of the *fon* who was regarded as the landlord.¹⁶ After independence, land was still managed by traditional rulers though with little modification. The allocation of land to strangers was the prerogative of traditional rulers. For someone who did not belong to the community, access to land was possible in exchange for items negotiated and collected by the traditional rulers through his representatives¹⁷.

In addition to their roles in customary courts, traditional rulers played a great role on the Land Consultative Board as seen in Article 13, 14 and 15 of Decree No 2005/481 on 16 December 2005¹⁸ (See appendix IV and V). In this capacity, traditional rulers proposed uses for rural spaces, give their opinions on land concessions, interpret the law and adjudicate complaints over land titles. They equally choose land for collective village projects and made recommendations on the management of land governed by the national domain¹⁹. Although technically a minority on the Land Consultative Board, traditional rulers had dominated these commissions by their stature, charisma, and authority. Their approval is cautiously courted by any applicant who intends to register land as a prerequisite for land inspection. This ‘courting’ can take the form of money, gifts in kind or even political support and comprises one of the key sources of the traditional chiefs’ influence. The extent of power and legitimacy exercised by traditional rulers is of considerable importance to land governance which has earned them a place as part of the administering body.

For the post-independence administration to have involve chiefs in land matters, traditional rulers in all this aimed at maintaining their position, power and influence. The government’s involvement of traditional rulers in administration especially politically was aimed at using them to control the local population. Francis Adigwe noted:

*Another way or means the government used to control the local population and which is peculiar to African was the intervention in succession or chieftaincy disputes by the central government to favour nominees who supported the party in power. The nominee was expected to use his position to influence elections so as to secure victory for the ruling party and the government.*²⁰

¹⁶ Goheen., *Men Own the Fields*, Cited in Ngoran’s “Land tenure, Land Use and Legal Change”, 1997, p.12

¹⁷ Ngwa., “Paramountcy and the Control of land”, p88

¹⁸ Journal Officiel de la Republique du Cameroun 1st January 2006, pp. 1574-1576

¹⁹ Rochegude, A. and C. Plancon. “Decentralisation, foncier et acteurs locaux” Foncier et Developpement.”, May 5th, 2009, p. 8.

²⁰ F. Adigwe., *Essentials of Government for West Africa*, Ibadan, University Press Limited, 1984, pp. 22-23.

This way, traditional rulers in the grassfield found themselves between the hammer and the anvil. That is between their subjects on the one hand and the state on the other hand.²¹ The relationship between most chiefs in the Bamenda Grassfield and their subjects was influenced by the political choice each ruler made. This was because, in most cases, the subjects will prefer the opposition party while their chief in order to remain in office and enjoy favours and gifts, go for the ruling party. The support given to the ruling party went a long way to draw chiefs to the corridors of post-colonial administration for political gains.

Modern administrators through the party in power saw traditional rulers as sure vote breakers and sure tickets to rural votes and so demanded their allegiance and support.²² Taking advantage of the respect and love accorded to chiefs by the natives, politicians would want to lure chiefs to their camps since having the chief is a guarantee to having the support of the people. Going contrary to the wish of the chief is a sign of disrespect which is not acceptable. As such, modern administrators have capitalized on this to use traditional rulers as vote brokers. With the help of the administration, the position of traditional rulers as part of the administering body is consolidated to the point where they command so much power, influence and authority in the general administration of the polities as custodians. In order for them to secure rural votes, those in power (post-colonial administrators) had to give traditional rulers the opportunity to exercise their authority as compensation for services rendered through their people in maintaining them in power.

Historically, traditional rulers acted as the custodians of the community's property, responsible for the distribution and redistribution of land. They equally negotiated outside deals, mediated between the state and citizens. With the advent of the 1974 land laws, the role of traditional rulers has remained ambiguous which had destabilized the key upon which the power of traditional authorities rested since they exerted a lot of influence in land management.

III-Administrative Reorganization of the Bamenda Grassfield 1972-2013

The people of the Bamenda Grassfield easily identified themselves with traditional rulers as their representatives more than politically elected or appointed representatives. This is because traditional rulers lived the daily expectations, needs and challenges of their people judging from pre-colonial, through colonial to post-independence administrations. At

²¹ Kaptué., "Pris entre le Marteau et Enclum", p. 10.

²² F. Jude., "Chieftaincy in the Era of Democratic Transition in Africa. A Comparative Study in the Chiefdoms of Tshivhase and Bali". M.A Dissertation, University of Pretoria, 2003, pp. 90-91.

independence, there was a cry for democracy, inclusive and good governance to be strengthened and wish that the representative(s) of the people be present in political decisions making.

Inclusiveness meant that access to administrative management and decision taking should be equal for all and that the social and educational needs of certain groups within the society are taken into account. This was and could be possible through an effective reorganization of the administrative structures in which power and administrative decisions are reorganized with elected or appointed representatives involved in administrative affairs. At independence, the unitary government reorganized the entire territory through decree, *arrêtes*, circulars among others, touching on some aspects and structures formally under the authority of traditional rulers. These arrangements weakened or enforced the power and authority of traditional rulers and they were obliged to move closer to post-colonial administrators. Their interaction with the post-colonial administration earned them the baptismal name auxiliaries of the administration in charge of running errands for the unitary administration.

With the new constitution of 1972 which stressed on a unitary state, it was clear that the president was not willing to share powers with neither local authorities nor his immediate collaborators. This could be seen in the abolition of the post of vice president and the dissolution of the federated state assemblies of East and West Cameroon, not forgetting the House of Chiefs. The constitution empowered the president to set up, regulate and direct all administrative services necessary for the full operation of his government.²³ The reorganization was fortified in 1972 with a decree on the 24th of July in which the territory was carved out into provinces. West Cameroon was divided into two provinces with the Bamenda Grassfield named the North West Province placed under the authority of a governor²⁴ who was directly answerable to the president. The splitting continued to divisions, sub-divisions and districts with little or nothing attributed or placed under the control or command of traditional rulers as auxiliaries of the administration.

In 1975, a decree was enacted reorganizing the Ministry of Territorial Administration, which has as part of its duty to take care of the affairs of traditional rulers.²⁵ In this decree, divisional officers were instructed to forward to Yaounde a list bearing the names of each traditional ruler, his population, traditional title and remarks of the D.O. The reorganization switched the day-to-day management of local governance and administration that were under

²³ Consult the constitution of 2nd June 1972, modified by law No 75/1 and 79/2 of 9th May 1975 and 29th June 1979 in the Official newspaper of the united republic of Cameroon (JORUC), 1979.

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Décret No 75-467 du 28 Juin 1975 portant réorganisation du gouvernement.

the Ministry of Interior for West Cameroon to the Ministry of Territorial Administration. The newly created Ministry of territorial administration was charged with the responsibility of handling the issues related to local governance and other duties under its competence. A chieftaincy service was created under the department in charge of communal affairs. This arrangement gave civil servants appointed to the decentralized territorial areas the powers to handle grassroot matters, a function occupied by chiefs.

The involvement of civil servants in the management of grassroot affairs formerly under chiefs influenced governance and administration in local communities. Prerogatives formally under the care of traditional rulers before the 1975 decree were now managed by the appointed administrators. The powers given to state officials protected by decrees and *arrêtes* drew chiefs closer to them and they could command and instruct traditional rulers on how to run their polities. This is because, before state officials were empowered by decrees and *arrêtes*, traditional rulers were in charge of grassroots administration so in order to fully have control over them as auxiliaries, chiefs had to be used. For example, in 1976, the then Divisional Officer for Mezam, Alexander N. Motanga, in a meeting with traditional rulers of Bafut asked Abumbi II, the *fon* of Bafut “have you suspended the land wards I asked you to suspend?”²⁶ The D.O. equally spoke to the traditional ruler of Bawum like a warning the son. He said:

*I take this particular opportunity to warn sub-chief Ntow that he has to stop his present activities ... there is no sign that chief Ntow has shown a change of attitude. All what you have been doing up till now should be forgotten because if you continue doing this it will be bad for you and the administration. we do not want any more of that.*²⁷

This and many others were clear examples of the disrespect of traditional rulers of the Bamenda Grassfield in post-independence administration. They were obliged to work according to the dictates of post-independence administration put in place if they wanted to be part of the administering body. These were strategies to swallow, control and bring traditional rulers close to the post-independence administration. This falls in line with the set-up put in place by the unitary government which gradually confirmed traditional rulers as auxiliaries.

Further administrative policies that gradually forced or pulled traditional rulers closer to the post-independence administration among others were the abolition of the house of chiefs in the unitary state drafted constitution. The constitution in its article 40 stated that;

²⁶ Fuhnwi., “Fon, Chiefs and People”, p. 164

²⁷ Ibid, p 165

“The House of Assembly of East Cameroon and the House of Assembly and the House of chiefs of West Cameroon shall cease to sit as from the entry into force of this constitution. They shall be abolished within a maximum time-limit of six months.”²⁸ These deprived traditional rulers of so many prerogatives enjoyed in colonial and the early stages of post-independence administration. These acts could be seen as a mechanism of preparing traditional rulers to gradually and systematically transfer authority to post-colonial administrators.

In the same line, the land ordinances of 1974 deprived traditional rulers and its institutions the right to intervene in land issues. Rather, the law prescribed and empowered D.O. and decentralized municipal administrators on how to manage land.²⁹ This administrative policy shifted traditional rulers who are custodians of land to the background. They could act as collaborators to state officials in land matters formerly under their care. Decisions on community land had to be endorsed by the state. Land owners around the suburbs of urban areas had to declare their right as owners of the land within a period of 5 years through effective occupation and other wise. Since land is wealth, power and authority, traditional rulers in order to continuously have a say in land matters had to flow with the decisions of the administration, thereby making themselves available at the beg and call of post-colonial administrators.

In 1974, there was yet another reorganization which focused on the area of jurisdiction under traditional rulers. The law on councils in 1974 transferred authority to manage municipalities, colonially referred to as Native Authorities Areas Councils that was under traditional rules into the hands of municipal councilors under the supervision of the mayor. The new council law stipulated that rural councils should be administered by a municipal administrator appointed according to regulations in force. He had to mobilize the community in all social and economic activities that would promote development.³⁰ The municipal administrator became the representative of his local community in all public activities and ceremonies,³¹ a role played by traditional rulers. To further make sure everything was controlled from the center, a decree was signed on March 25th, 1977 giving the supervision

²⁸ Decree No 72-DF-239 of 9 May 1972 relating to the publication of a draft constitution and its submission to a referendum, p.9

²⁹ Law No 73/3 of 9 July 1973, authorizing the President of the Republic to establish by Ordinance rules governing Land tenure and government-owned lands and property.

³⁰ Road construction, community work, collection of taxes and other responsibilities under the care of traditional rulers were transferred to municipal administrators which deprived them of financial benefits

³¹ Loi No 74/23 du 5 Décembre 1974 Portant Organisation Communale in Journal Officiel de la République Unie du Cameroun cited in Fuhnwi. “Fon, Chiefs and People”, p 178

powers over councils to the Ministry of Territorial Administration.³² All of this gave municipal councilors/administrators a vantage position over traditional rulers who were forced to follow their reformed position in order to suit the trends of post-colonial modern administration and governance. The last straw that placed the final nail on the coffins of pre-colonial and colonial influential role of traditional rules was the chieftaincy decree of 1977 passed by the post-colonial administration as would be examined in the lines below.

B-The Chieftaincy Decree

In July 10th 1960, a law which recognized the existence of traditional rulers along lines determined by the government in the Western Grassfields of Cameroon in general and the Bamenda Grassfield in particular was enacted. Following the ambiguity of the law, President Ahidjo modified it on 9th May 1972 and the 2nd of June 1975.³³ This modification led to a decree which gave birth to the July 1977 chieftaincy law which focused on the re-organization of traditional chieftaincies in Cameroon³⁴ (see appendix VI). This decree gave wider definitions and attributions to the powers of chiefs. It equally aimed at resolving litigations plaguing the chieftaincy institution and to put order and maintain good governance at the grassroots. It can be deduced that the multiplied chieftaincy conflicts faced by the chieftaincy institution which had their roots from the colonial period actually threatened the state as some of them were marked by violent manifestations.³⁵ To Van Nieuwaal dreading the threat chieftaincy could cause, knowing the role it played in African societies, the modern state co-opted and marginalized traditional rulers within its bureaucratic models and gave them the name auxiliaries as a means to resolve the threat posed by chieftaincy, and at the same time, use traditional rulers to consolidate its grip to power.

The central theme in the 1977 decree was that traditional rulers were territorially organized. Article 2-5 of the decree clearly classified traditional rulers into first, second and third-class chiefdoms, placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Territorial Administration.³⁶ First class traditional rulers were recognized by the circular of the Prime

³²Decree No 77-91 of 25th March 1977 determining the supervisory powers over councils, council unions and council establishments.

³³ Decree No. 77/245 of 15th July 1977 relating to the Organization of Chieftaincies in Cameroon in Official Gazette of the United Republic of Cameroon

³⁴Decree N° 77/245 of 15th July 1977 on the organization of traditional rulers in Cameroon.

³⁵ Kaze, "The Dynamics of Chieftaincy Succession Conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon, Ca. 1800-2013" Doctorat/Ph. D Thesis, University of Yaounde I, 2019, p 247

³⁶ N. B. Jua., Indirect Rule in Colonial and Post-Colonial Cameroon, *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde*, Bd. 41, 1995, p. 44

Minister as is the case with the traditional ruler of Buea.³⁷ (See apendix VII) Second class chiefs were placed under the authority of the Minister of Territorial Administration while third class traditional rulers were under the tutelage of the Divisional officer.³⁸

First class traditional rulers were to be those with two Second class traditional rulers under their area of jurisdiction and within the territorial limits of a divisional unit. Second class traditional rulers were to have the allegiance of two third class chiefs and their jurisdiction could not be larger than a sub-division. For third class traditional rulers, their area of jurisdiction was limited to a village or a "quarter" in a rural or urban area. Examples of traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield classified under the first-class, second and third classes are seen in the tables below. The table shows the different rulers and their classification as stipulated in the chieftaincy law of July 1977 in the Bamenda Grassfield.

According to the decree, traditional rulers had to act as auxiliaries of the administration. As auxiliaries, they had to transmit and implement directives of the administration to their people and follow up their implementation. Traditional rulers had to maintain law, order and facilitate economic and socio-cultural development of their respective areas not forgetting the collection of taxes and other funds according to regulations and conditions fixed by law.³⁹ The reorganization of the territory which equally touched on traditional rulers was aim at bringing administration closer to the people through decentralization

Table 6: Number of Fondoms and their Rangs in the North West.

Division	1 st Class Fondoms	Second Class Fondoms
Boyo	1	7
Bui	1	11
Donga-Mantung	0	30
Mezam	3	22
Mechum	0	21
Momo	0	15
Ngoketunjia	0	11
Total	05	117

Source: National Statistic Year book for 2014, p.11

³⁷ *Arrete No 106/PM du 25th November 2021 portant homologation de la désignation de Monsieru Esuka Endeley Robert en qualité de chef traditionnel de premier degre de Buea*

³⁸ Nkwi., *Traditional Government and Social Change*, p. 227

³⁹ Fuhnwi., "Fon Chiefs and People", p 180

Table 7:

Divisions, Chiefdoms, Names and Category of Traditional Rulers in the Bamenda Grassfields at Independence

No	Fondom	Administrative Location	Name of <i>Fon</i>	Category
BOYO DIVISION				
1	Kom	Fundong	Vincent Yuh II	1 st Class
2	Bum	Fonfuka	Kwang Peter Yai	2 nd Class
3	Mbessa	Belo	Njong Gilbert	2 nd Class
4	Belo	Belo	Peter Ndong Abang	2 nd Class
5	Anyajua	Belo	Nsom Johnson Chongsi	2 nd Class
6	Fundong	Fundong	Diang Zacheus	2 nd Class
7	Abuh	Fundong	Clement Fonkwah Mbeng	2 nd Class
8	Njinikom	Njinikom	Ngeh Francis	2 nd Class
DONGA-MANTUNG DIVISION				
1	Nkambe	Nkambe	Jabo Nfor Ibrahim	2 nd Class
2	Tabenken	Nkambe	Ngayi Diboti Polycarp	2 nd Class
3	Binka	Nkambe	Benchepe Nfor Adamu	2 nd Class
4	Binshua	Nkambe	Kimbi Edmong	2 nd Class
5	Mbot	Nkambe	Shey Banabas Mbunwe	2 nd Class
6	Watt	Nkambe	Ngorake Nfor	2 nd Class
7	Kungi	Nkambe	Yaya Musa Gamnje Boudi	2 nd Class
8	Mfe	Nwa	Vacant	2 nd Class
9	Sih	Nwa	Vacant	2 nd Class
10	Saam	Nwa	Bochie Bochie Friday	2 nd Class
11	Yang	Nwa	Andre Anjika	2 nd Class
12	Mbem	Nwa	Ngwim Samuel Ngebuin	2 nd Class
13	Ntong	Nwa	Yungi Yetoh Joseph	2 nd Class
14	Gom	Nwa	Nkatow George Njapnchak	2 nd Class
15	Lus	Nwa	Jato Partice Guwo	2 nd Class
16	Kwaja	Nwa	George Sholak Gembe	2 nd Class
17	Ntem	Nwa	Fowanko Timothy Nfonansi	2 nd Class

			II	
18	Abafum	Ako	Wadeke Kennedy Chuejubua	2 nd Class
19	Abuenshie	Ako	Amafe Powa Cyprian	2 nd Class
20	Akwafa	Ako	George Waziri Nseka	2 nd Class
21	Berabe	Ako	Foabo Emmanuel Mbamu	2 nd Class
22	Buku	Ako	Lenge Joshp Eku	2 nd Class
23	Ndaka	Ako	Umaru Tatu Gbwanya	2 nd Class
24	Nkamchi	Misaje	Richard Chefon	2 nd Class
25	Akweto	Misaje	John Kitita Kei	2 nd Class
26	Dumbu	Misaje	Jebo Augustine Jang	2 nd Class
27	Ndu	Ndu	Nformi Emmanuel Nfor	2 nd Class
28	Talla	Ndu	Ngala Dickson Ngwang	2 nd Class
29	Ngarum	Ndu	Jochim Docta Ngwang	2 nd Class
30	Ntundip	Ndu	Fon Nfor Peter Nfor	2 nd Class
BUI DIVISION				
1	Nso	Kumbo	Sehm Mbinglo I	1 st Class
2	Ndzendzev	Kumbo	Josehp Yuyun	2 nd Class
3	Nkar	Jakiri	Wirba Patrick	2 nd Class
4	Kilu-un	Jakiri	John Tamgin	2 nd Class
5	Ndzenrem-Nyam	Jakiri	Lukong Atnthony Mormah	2 nd Class
6	Nkor Kochi	Noni	Waii Joseph Nfon	2 nd Class
7	Djottin	Noni	Tayem Ngam Joseph	2 nd Class
8	Nseh	Nkum	Senyuy Oliver	2 nd Class
9	Mbiame	Mbvem	Shindzev Tatah III Jaff Shadrack	2 nd Class
10	Oku	Oku	Sintieh II Ngum Martin Yuosembom	2 nd Class
NGOKENTUNJIA DIVISION				
1	Bamunka	Ndop Central	Mebob Feunghi IV	2 nd Class
2	Bamunka	Ndip Central	Shomitang II Kevin	2 nd Class
3	Bamessing	Ndip Central	Richard Mutong II	2 nd Class
4	Bamili	Ndop Central	Edrisuh Nipu	2 nd Class
5	Babessi	Babessi	Yimuo Oliver	2 nd Class

			Nsondonembio II	
6	Babe I	Babessi	Fuekemshi Melo	2 nd Class
7	Bangolan	Babessi	Chafa Isaac	2 nd Class
8	Babungo	Balikumbat	Zofoa Aboubakar	2 nd Class
9	Balikumbat	Balikumbat		2 nd Class
10	Bafanji	Balikumbat	Gwefuni Fransua Nonoh	2 nd Class
11	Bamumkumbit	Balikumbat		2 nd Class
MENCHUM DIVISION				
1	Bafmeng	Fungom	Aneng Nya Francis	2 nd Class
2	Esu	Fungom	Kum Achuo II Kawzu Gilbert Chi	2 nd Class
3	Weh	Fungom	Bama II Nazarius Kpue	2 nd Class
4	Abar	Fungom	Bum Kang Aaron Kulo Johon II	2 nd Class
5	Badji	Furu-Awa	Galadima Andrew Nyangju	2 nd Class
6	Furu-Awah	Furu-Awa	Tembe Jonathan	2 nd Class
7	Furu-Bana	Furu-Awa	Eyah Fidelis Akau	2 nd Class
8	Benakuma	Menchum Valley	Azeh Wachong	2 nd Class
9	Midele	Menchum Valley	Ayo Wilson Ofon III	2 nd Class
10	Benade	Menchum Valley	Ihimbru Abraham Kudi	2 nd Class
11	Mukuru	Menchum Valley	Fotoh Athanasius Angie II	2 nd Class
12	Batomo	Menchum Valley	Anyi Ese Johannes	2 nd Class
13	Baworo	Menchum Valley	Himbru Ephraim	2 nd Class
MEZAM DIVISION				
1	Mankon	Bamenda II	Angwafor III S.A. N	1 st Class
2	Bafut	Bafut	Abumbi II	1 st Class
3	Bali Nyonga	Bali	Dr. Doh Nganyonga III	1 st Class

4	Chomba	Bamenda II	Forbuze Martin	2 nd Class
5	Mundum I	Bafut	Ndenecho F. T. II	2 nd Class
6	Nsem	Bafut	Mbinfor Isaiah Neba	2 nd Class
7	Mankanikong	Bafut	Atanga Muwa	2 nd Class
8	Mankwi	Bafut	Tala Simon Neba	2 nd Class
9	Mambu	Bafut	Mbah Wanki William	2 nd Class
10	Banji	Bafut	Vacant/Dead	2 nd Class
11	Bawum	Bafut	Ngu Nazarius Noth To-o II	2 nd Class
12	Mbebili	Bafut	Nebachi Muche	2 nd Class
13	Obang	Bafut	Nanoh Philemon II	2 nd Class
14	Mbankong	Bafut	Ngwamella'a II Elvis Neba	2 nd Class
15	Bambili	Tubah	AFungochi Awemo II	2 nd Class
16	Kedjom Ketu-Enguh	Tubah	Viyof Nelson Sheteh	2 nd Class
17	Bambui	Tubah	Angafor Mombo-oh III	2 nd Class
18	Kedjom Keku	Tubah	Vubangsi Benjamin Vutsibong	2 nd Class
19	Lamida Sabga	Tubah	Mallam Mamouda Sabga Abdoulaye	2 nd Class
20	Bamendakwe	Bamenda I	Forsuh Fongwa II	2 nd Class
21	Nsongwa	Bamenda II	F.E.N. Fonwade III	2 nd Class
22	Nkwen	Bamenda III	Ngufor III S.Z.	2 nd Class
23	Bawock	Bali	Quoimon Nana Wanda Theodore	2 nd Class
24	Pinyin	Santa	Tanni Godfred	2 nd Class
25	Awing	Santa	Fozo Puwagh II	2 nd Class
26	Akum	Santa	Ndikum Ngwashi George II	2 nd Class
27	Bali-Gham	Santa	M.S.T. Galabe II	2 nd Class
MOMO DIVISION				
1	Ngien Muwah	Batibo	Teche Njei II	2 nd Class
2	Zang-Tabi	Mbengwi	Jacob Agbor Tabi	2 nd Class
3	Mbengwi	Mbengwi	Njokem Thaddeus I Tawam	2 nd Class
4	Nyen	Mbengwi	Fominyen Ngwa R. II	2 nd Class
5	Gunekku	Mbengwi	Fomuki Patrick Nji	2 nd Class

6	Kai	Mbengwi	Dr. T. Mac Akam	2 nd Class
7	Batibo	Batibo	Tebo Afumba	2 nd Class
8	Ashong	Batibo	Mbah Christopher Mbafor III	2 nd Class
9	Bessi-Awum	Batibo	Mbah Richardson Forkum II	2 nd Class
10	Guzang	Batibo	Gwan Mbanyamsig III Charles Mbah	2 nd Class
11	Tiben	Batibo	Moudi Bernard	2 nd Class
12	Enyoh	Batibo	Fomba Richard Ayong	2 nd Class
13	Ngwo	Njikwa	Dr. Col. Anagho Ako Hans	2 nd Class
14	Oshie	Njikwa	Anyangwe Ericynol Yande	2 nd Class
15	Teze	Ngie	Atughap Justine E.	2 nd Class
16	Abegum	Widikum	Nkon Vincent Edum	2 nd Class
17	Angwi	Widikum	Fongum Gorji Dinka	2 nd Class
18	Ebendi	Widijum	Vacant/Death	2 nd Class
19	Barambichang	Widikum	Awuno Patrick	2 nd Class
20	Akanumnku Adorate	Bi Haman	Bi Haman	2 nd Class
21	Ekaw	Widikum	Agoh Moses Aboh	2 nd Class

Source: <http://www.northwest-cameroon.com/home.86-0.html>

I-Optimizing the Integration of Traditional Rulers into Modern Governance

For decades, many African countries have been engaged in a vast democratization process characterized by decentralization among other features. Decentralization is one of the leading political reforms that developing countries have undertaken in the past two decades since the end of the Cold War and it has been undertaken by most countries in Africa. In the past twenty years, majority of African central governments have initiated or deepened the transfer of power and resources to a range of sub-national government bodies like regions, divisions, districts and municipalities.⁴⁰ According to Alper Ozmen, decentralization can be defined as the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central

⁴⁰ J.T. Dickovick., et Al, Decentralization in Africa: *The Paradox of State Strength*, USA, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2014, p.30

government to subordinate or quasi-independent government organizations or the private sector.⁴¹

Apart from the above definition, several definitions have been advanced for decentralization. One of the most generally used definition of decentralization especially in Cameroon is the transfer of responsibilities and authority from higher to lower levels of government⁴²Decentralization in its current form in Cameroon is based on the constitution embodied in Law No. 96/06 of 18 January 1996. Law No.2004/17 of 22 July 2004 defines decentralization as the devolution by the State of special and appropriate resources to regional and local authorities for their economic, social health, education, cultural and sports development. It's true that the process of decentralization has not been satisfactory as expected by the people. Cosmas Cheka says, the pace of the process of decentralization in a given context unavoidably depends on the degree of favorableness of the legal environment and the dynamism of stakeholders involve ranging from the state, development partners, civil society and local authorities.⁴³ It is through decentralization (on paper as of now) that we see the place of traditional rulers as part of local authorities as defined in the 2004/17 of 22 July 2004 law.

The transfer of authority, responsibility and resources from central government to local authorities has been the wish of post- independence administration. Efforts have been made to involve traditional rulers who acted as administrators coupled with the fact that they form part of the local authorities as seen in the 22nd July 2004 law. Given the historical role of chiefs in local government, it is of no doubt that if the chieftaincy institution is fully involve into modern governance, they could play a major role in solving some socio-political challenges face today.⁴⁴This explain why efforts have been made and continue to be made to draw traditional rulers closer and make them part of modern administration using different processes, strategies and meachanisms with the classification of traditional rulers to ease administrative procedures as part of the process.

Colonial administrators in the Bamenda Grassfields kept traditional rulers at the forefront of socio-political and economic management of their various polities. With the

⁴¹ A. Ozmen., *Notes to the Concept of Decentralization*, European Scientific Journal, Vol.10, No.10, April 2014, p.14.

⁴²Tindo Saturnin Narcisse Kaze., "Decentralization as an Instrument of International Cooperation between Cameroon and Germany: A Development Study", Masters Dissertation in International Relations, IRIC, 2017, pp.89-92

⁴³C. Cheka., *The State of the Process of Decentralization in Cameroon*, Africa Development, Vol. XXXII, No. 2, 2007, p.7.

⁴⁴Kaze., "The Dynamics of Chieftaincy Succession Conflicts", p. 312

coming of the post-colonial administration, traditional rulers were not only threatened by the new political elites, but were transformed into a vacuum institution by the new state. After relegating them to the back seat or the lowest administrative units, they were branded auxiliaries of the administration. The fact that traditional rulers actually had a position and a name in the administrative ladder no matter how low it was, coupled with a salary (see appendix VIII on degree putting chiefs on salaries) were indications that they constituted part of the administering authorities in the Bamenda Grassfield.

As to what concerns remunerations, as auxiliaries, traditional rulers had to benefit from the services rendered to the state. These are in the form of monthly motivation or call it salary and other benefits such as rebates on poll tax collected and special duties. Note should be taken that the extra benefits or bonuses received by chiefs depends on the recommendation of the S.D.O or D.O. taking into consideration the output and dynamism of the traditional ruler. The monthly motivation was 100,000 FRS for first class traditional rulers, 75,000 FRS for second class and 50,000 FRS for third class traditional rulers. Given the fact that traditional rulers had extra bonuses upon the recommendation of the D.O. or the competent authority, it was clear that such authority could also recommend the dismissal of a traditional ruler. It is also an indication that they played an important role which warrant constant supervision and compensation as part of the governing body.

In Cameroon, the appointment of any individual stems from the discretionary power of the authority appointing. As a matter of fact, the appointment of an individual into any function by an administrative authority is a “government act” and cannot be contested even in the law court.⁴⁵ This in other words means that, once the administrative authority appoints a traditional ruler be-him legitimate or not, so far as the act is legal, such a decision cannot be contested. This could be considered as a legal backing for traditional rulers who had been appointed first, second and third-class chiefs. This very act of appointing them backed by the law was a way to facilitate administrative control and to place traditional rulers at the mercy of modern administrative authorities since they are part of the governing body.

The installation of a traditional ruler is backed with the presence of an administrative authority before he can officially exercise any active role as the traditional ruler of that clan. As a matter of fact, traditional rulers are accountable to the Senior Divisional Officer meaning they are a part of the system. Since a traditional ruler can be appointed, installed and is answerable to an administrative officer under his area of jurisdiction, there is a possibility that

⁴⁵Ordinance No.72/6 of August 26th 1972 on the Reorganization of the Supreme Court clearly spelled out right and duties of an administrator to the appointment of individuals.

he can or might suffer disciplinary sanction as a result of failure in exercising his function. Only he who is part of an organization can suffer sanctions implemented by that organization. Chiefs suffer sanctions from the administration because they are part of the administering body.

On discipline, the S.D.O evaluated the activities of traditional rulers taking into consideration their efficiency, output and the economic and social development of the areas under their jurisdiction. In case of short coming on the part of traditional ruler (inertia, extortion, laziness, non-respect of orders among others), sanctions ranging from warning, call to order, reprimand and even dethronement by the competent authority in conformity with the dispositions of another law passed could be implemented.⁴⁶ At this stage, it is clear that traditional rulers were controlled by the administration and not by traditional institutions as stipulated by the culture and tradition of the people. Authority and allegiance has shifted from some traditional institutions that acted as a check to the power and authority of chiefs to modern administrators. This means that they became part of the governing body and could only act in accordance with the laws set by the post-colonial administration.

However, if an authority failed or was misled in a decision taken in relation to the appointment or sanction of a traditional ruler, the decision could be revoked by a competent authority. As a result of these lapses, another law was passed on 27th of November 1980 which defined the competent jurisdiction in charge of affairs related to opposition raised on the occasion of the appointment of traditional rulers.⁴⁷ It further disqualified all lawyers and courts of common law and the administrative bench from entertaining suits linked to the appointment of traditional rulers. To further make sure order is maintained in matters of chieftaincy, the Prime Minister in an *arrête* on the 7th of February 1981 determined first class chiefdoms and appointed first class traditional rulers in the united republic.⁴⁸ These and more were all efforts aim at integrating traditional rulers as part of governance in Cameroon and the Bamenda Grassfield in particular.

According to Nantang Ben Jua, the post independent state has manipulated traditional authorities by seeking to convert traditional rulers to clients.⁴⁹ Relations between traditional rulers and post-colonial administration have taken on the semblance of parasitism, than symbiosis as was the case in the colonial state. The ability of the state to manipulate and

⁴⁶Law No 79-17 of 30th June 1979 Relating to Disputes arising from the appointment of Traditional rulers

⁴⁷ Loi No 80-31 du 27 Novembre 1980 dessaisissant les juridictions des affaires relatives aux contestations soulevées à l'occasion de la désignation des chefs traditionnels, 1980 in Ngwa D. F., "Fon Chiefs and People", p 181

⁴⁸Cited in Fuhnwi., "Fon Chiefs and People", p 181

⁴⁹N. B. Jua., Indirect Rule in Colonial and Post-Colonial Cameroon, p. 44

control traditional rulers has increased. This is because of the fact that traditional rulers depended on the state for financial needs while some are thirsty for political offices. No matter the reasons, one thing that is clear is that, efforts at integrating traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield into post-colonial administration was or is facilitated by a series of decrees and *arrête* passed by the post-independent state of Cameroon. No matter the role played by each traditional ruler, the wish of the modern post-colonial administration of the Bamenda Grassfield was to bring traditional rulers under their control for “better administration”

In Cameroon today, much of the controversy over traditional institutions lies in the debate over the incorporation of traditional rulers into governance structures as auxiliaries. Nevertheless, a growing number of African countries, including some of those that had previously attempted without success to strip chiefs of their power or to completely abolish traditional institutions, have realized the political currency that chiefs possess and are struggling to integrate chiefs as one of the fundamental institutions for development in order to effectively control rural “vote” and maintain political control over the people. Traditional rulers took the advantage of auxiliaries to work for political gains. (See figure 2 below)


II-Traditional Authorities as Auxiliaries of the Administration

The 1977 decree recognized and assigned roles to chiefs as an extension of the powers of the state within his chiefdom. The ruler was answerable to the *sous-préfet* who was the direct local representative of the head of state. Through this decree, traditional rulers guided the people, transmit the directives of the administration to their subjects, administer justice according to native laws and customs, collected taxes, ensure law and order among others.⁵⁰ The administrative officer in charge of different areas was to closely watch over the comportment of chiefs in the execution of their functions. This means that the functions of traditional rulers were defined by the D.O. This gave room for the latter to defy and or even dethrone a traditional ruler. It should also be noted decree stated that, Divisional Officers were to ensure a conducive working atmosphere for traditional rulers and the use of all the elements of discipline within the ambits of the administration to protect traditional rulers.⁵¹ This was an indication that as part of the administering authority through integration, traditional rulers had to be protected by the law.

⁵⁰Cheka Cosmas., “Traditional Authority at the Crossroads of Governance, 2008

⁵¹ Amaazzee, Traditional Rulers (chiefs) and Politics, p.84

Figure 2: Invitation to a Political Meeting



CHEFFERIE SUPERIEURE DE BANGANGTE
PARAMOUNT FONDOM OF BANGANGTE
B.P. (Box) : 11 Tel. Chefferie (Palace) : (237) 233 48 40 6
Bangangté Fax : (237) 233 48 40 6
Cameroun Dom. (Houste) : (237) 233 48 42 3

COMMUNIQUE RADIO/PRESSE

Sa Majesté NJI MONHLU SEIDOU POKAM, Roi des Bangangté, invite :

Tous les Chefs Traditionnels, les Chefs de 3^{ème} degré de son groupement, toutes les Associations, les opérateurs économiques des Régions sœurs exerçant à Bangangté, tous les responsables de sous-sections RDPC de Bangangté accompagnés de leurs militantes et militants, les Responsables des Partis Politiques alliés et toutes les Forces Vives de Bangangté.

A assister massivement à son meeting d'appel à l'élection de Son Excellence Paul BIYA qui aura lieu le **Jeudi 04 Octobre 2018 à 08 heures** à l'esplanade de la Chefferie Supérieure de Bangangté.

Au regard des réalisations palpables, visibles de S.E. Paul BIYA et de l'attachement que mon Peuple et moi avons pour l'Homme des opportunités, aucune absence des Bangangté et leurs amis ne sera justifiée.

Fait à Bangangté le 30 Septembre 2018
Le Chef Supérieur de Groupement Bangangté,
NJI MONHLU SEIDOU POKAM



Source: Kaze, October 2018, p. 314.

Protecting traditional rulers could lead to an *entente* between the administration and a traditional ruler for personal interest at the detriment of the people under the authority of the traditional ruler. As such, when traditional rulers are made auxiliaries of the administration in modern concept and application, we not only take him out of his real role (as the custodian, the divine authority, the administrator, high priest) but we also tempt him without realizing that he is being pushed to take on a priori stance for or against a section of his own people. Yes, he collaborates with the post-colonial administering body which might push him to take sides in order to continuously enjoy the benefits and protection of the administration as part of the administrative ladder. This among others is the reason the *MbogMbog* in Basaa country (in the coastal zone of Cameroon) refused to be associated with, or recruited into the Cameroonian political administration. The *MbogMbog* always insisted that as the core traditional institution of authority, it is concerned with something more cultural, spiritual and more subline which gives profound meaning to the Basaa as a people.⁵²

In the same light, this is the position of traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield, persons held in high esteem. With a lot of interference and manipulations which characterized traditional administration nowadays, chiefs rely on their positions as auxiliaries of the administration in order to benefit and mount political position and rank as administrators for general or selfish interest. Since they had enjoyed power and authority from pre-colonial to colonial era, in order to maintain their positions as influential part of administration to an acceptable level in post-colonial administrative arrangements, they had to play their way through whatever means at their disposal to mount political authority. As a matter of fact, integration gave them the opportunity to mount the administrative ladder as auxiliaries. Traditional rulers equally capitalized on their positions as auxiliaries to mount the political ladder in order to play frontline role in local administration. An example is the chief of Bangangte who called a meeting with an agenda to support the leader of the ruling party as seen above.

Some traditional rulers, backed by the post-colonial administration as auxiliaries, through their actions proved to the public that they are an active arm of the integrated post-colonial administrators. An example in Ndop was Martin Lufong the traditional ruler of Bamessing. He was accused of disrespect for culture and tradition, a womanizer and a reckless traditional ruler. He created a Native Court in his village without the approval of the

⁵²Tatah Mbuy., *Fons of Traditional Bamenda and Partisan Politics in Contemporary Cameroon: Reconstructing Identity and Cultural Meaning*, Imprimie de la CENC, Mvolye, Yaounde, 2021, p.13

post-colonial administration where he collected fines and fees for his personal interest at the detriment of his subjects.⁵³ It was alleged that he collected about two hundred and fifty pounds (£250) from his subjects under the pretext that it would be used for the demarcation of the boundary between Bamessing and Babanki Tungo but misappropriated or embezzled the money without giving an account to his people.⁵⁴ Worse still, Lufong discouraged parents from sending their girl children to school. Knowing he was an arm of the administration (auxiliary), he counted on the support and protection of the administration. Unfortunately for him, things went the contrary. With all of the above, he was kicked away from the throne for the atrocities he committed. In essence, through integration as part of the administering authority, traditional rulers were empowered to a fault which contributed in weakening the chieftaincy institution since he had to be protected by the administration in order to continuously control votes from the grassroots.

The audacity manifested by Lufong and other traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield was because they knew they had the backing of the post-independent administration that stood by them as a unit of the administering body through integration. To confirm the position of traditional rulers as auxiliaries, Sylvester Shekfu II, a traditional ruler and actor in the Kungi Chieftaincy Struggle, told the Honorable Nsakwa, an SDF parliamentarian that he could not be asking him and his people to oppose the government as an auxiliary of the administration.⁵⁵ This was because Nsakwa during the municipal elections of 1996 requested that Sylvester Shekfu II should join the S.D.F party.

Some traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfields have suddenly become drug dealers and royal killers just to get money. They abuse royal privileges to make themselves wealthy.⁵⁶ This is because they are protected by the administration through integration into the administrative circles. As auxiliaries, they saw themselves as an independent authority with full rights to run the affairs of their polities as it pleased them. Encountering position in their exercise of authority as integrated auxiliaries, traditional rulers resorted to other means of making their authority felt. This had played negatively on traditional institutions and on the person of traditional rulers as most of them pushed away from their thrones as a result of selfish desires caused by efforts toward their integration.

⁵³ Kaze., "The Dynamics of Chieftaincy Succession Conflicts p. 260

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 203

⁵⁵ Letter of *Fon* Sylvester Shekfu II Kungi of Weyi to the Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization dated 08/08/2003, requesting for his re-instatement as the Kungi chief cited in Kaze "The Dynamics of succession", pp 401-403.

⁵⁶ Kaze., "The Dethronement of Traditional Chiefs in the Bamenda Grassfields, 2012, p. 273

III-The Suppression of the House of Chiefs

The house of chiefs was one of the structures that had a lot of influence and role in efforts aim at bringing traditional rulers closer to the administering authority. During the colonial period, the British quickly understood what was at stake when they had to deal with traditional rulers. That was why they decided to approve the southern Cameroon house of chiefs as an institution which would help the British administration to be of better service to the people.⁵⁷ Seeing the role the house of chief played in colonial Bamenda Grassfield, it was imported into the post- independence era not taking into consideration the change in the administering authority from British to post-colonial administration. The house of chiefs was wiped off and later brought back by law No 2019/024 of December 2019 setting the general code of regional and local authorities though still on paper.⁵⁸

The House of Chief was a meeting place where traditional rulers met to discuss cultural issues and how they were to relate with the political society. Traditional rulers in former West Cameroon through the House of Chief could effectively participate in handling their differences emanating within them. Rather than dragging each other to court, they could effectively through the house of chief resolved issues among themselves. This was a show of respect to the chieftaincy laws of 1960 and 1963 which prohibited the taking of chieftaincy issues related to appointment, recognition among others to court.⁵⁹ The house of chief expressed and promoted the culture and history of the people likewise the leader of this historic culture and tradition of the people.

Membership into the house of chief was opened to recognized traditional rulers with the “big five” traditional rulers (*fons* of Nso, Bafut, Bali, Mankon and Kom) *de facto* members. They became *de facto* members because of the population they control in their various polities and their influence in the society. The house of chiefs had constitutional recognition and respect. Traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield through the house of chiefs made their voices heard. The house of chiefs played an advisory role. Like the House of Lords to the government of England which acts as an advisory organ, so too is the house of chiefs in the Bamenda Grassfield though politics had set in leading to the manipulation of chiefs for political gains.

⁵⁷ Peter Geschiere., “Chiefs and Colonial Rule in Cameroon: Inventing Chieftaincy, French and British Style,” In Africa, International African Institute, vol. 63, Issue 2, 1999, pp. 151-175

⁵⁸For details, consult Tatah’s *Fons of Traditional Bamenda*, p. 103

⁵⁹In Bafut for instance, the conflict between fon Abumbi II and the chief of Bawum Nicholas Ntoh over the appointment of a third-class chief in Nsoh couple with land issues among others went up to the level of the supreme court.

Traditional rulers understood that they had an upper hand in the management of certain aspects of the society thanks to the role they played in pre-colonial, colonial and now as auxiliaries of post-colonial administration. Through the house of chief, they could collaborate with the administering authorities to ensure peace, justice and unity in the society. For peace, justice and unity among others to be maintained, the civil administrator together with traditional ruler have to work hand in hand for the development of that area. So, for this to be effective, integration would go a long way to consolidate this marriage. No wonder once a civil administrator is appointed to an administrative area, he or she has as an obligation to meet with the people and their chief since they are part of the administering body baptised auxiliary. This was because; together with the chief would collaborate in the governance of the people. The two are bound to create a cordial relation while respecting the status and dignity of each other to foster development in their areas of jurisdiction. Through the house of chiefs, the collaboration would be re-enforced and it would act as the link between traditional rulers of the house with other administrative authorities.

Following law, N° 2019/024 of December 2019, regional assemblies were created comprising a house of divisional representatives and the house of chiefs. In its section 336, the house of chiefs would have 20 members who are traditional rulers. They shall rule on all matters falling within the powers of the regional assembly. The house of chiefs shall give its opinion on the status of the traditional chiefdom, manage and conserve historical sites, organize cultural and traditional events, collect and transmit elements of oral tradition.⁶⁰ In section 338, the house of chief would comprise two committees, namely: The committee on administrative and legal affairs and the committee which handles standing orders, education, health, population, social and cultural affairs, youth and sport. There was equally the finance, infrastructure, planning, economic development, state property, town planning and housing committees. Section 339 focuses on the chair person who is the president of the regional executive council, assisted by the regional executive council secretary.⁶¹ All of the above was aimed at bringing administration closer to the grassroots through the integration of traditional rulers for better administration.

C-Traditional Rulers in Party Politics in the Bamenda Grassfields

Since the aspirations of Traditional rulers in the House of Chiefs did not improve on their condition and directly involve them in administrative decision making as they wanted,

⁶⁰ Tatah., *Fons of Traditional Bamenda*, p. 103, pp. 102-104

⁶¹ Ibid, p 104

they willingly embraced their forcefully given role as auxiliaries of the administration in the Bamenda Grassfield following the chieftaincy law of 15th February 1977.⁶² As auxiliaries, they knew the consequences of not toeing the line set by the administration.⁶³ So, they had to play along while waiting for an opportunity to make their presence felt which the political scene of 1990s offered to them. Comparing the role they played before independence; they seem not to be satisfied with the prevailing situation in post- independence administration in relation to their role in politics. As such, they sort for new avenues where they could make their voices, influence, power and authority felt once one. The political scene in Cameroon offered them the opportunity.

Traditional rulers played an important role in party politics before independence as they actively took part in deliberations and meetings that led to the independence of Southern Cameroon by joining *la Republique du Cameroun*.⁶⁴ Judging from the role they played before 1961 and the fact that they (traditional rulers) were consulted and briefed on all political happenings, they thought involving themselves back into politics would increase their influence and full integration into administration would be faster.

One of the main factors that discredited and continue to play negatively on the chieftaincy institution leading to the dethronement of chiefs in the Bamenda Grassfields in particular is their active involvement in politics. They took front line positions in political parties. Their appetite in politics increased following the reintroduction of multi-party politics in Cameroon in 1990s. The “wind of change” started blowing from the Bamenda Grassfields to other parts of the country with the founding of the Social Democratic Front party on the 26th of May 1990. Seeing the evolution of events and for fear of a full war, President Paul Biya on the 19th of December 1991 liberalizes multi-party politics in Cameroon. This was made official by law No 90/056 of 19th December 1990 liberalizing the existence of other political parties in Cameroon.⁶⁵ With the liberalization of multi-partism, traditional rulers embraced and champion political affairs forgetting that they are natural and neutral leaders

Before the liberalization of the political land scape, the lone party in Cameroon was the Cameroon Nation Union (CNU) of Ahmadou Ahidjo of 1966 which was later transformed into the Cameroon Peoples Democratic Party (CPDM) under the leadership of Paul Biya in March 1985.⁶⁶ Traditional rulers who were not opportune to take part in politics because the

⁶²For more detail on this decree, see Cameroon Tribune, No 79 of 17th February 1977

⁶³Samah., “Chiefs (Traditional Rulers) in Anglophone Cameroon”, p.267.

⁶⁴Chem - Langheë., “Southern Cameroons Traditional Authorities, p 44, Ndobegang’s Grassfield Chiefs, p.311

⁶⁵Samah., “Chiefs (Traditional Rulers) in Anglophone Cameroon “, pp.300-301.

⁶⁶Ngoh., *Cameroon History Since 1800*, Limbe, Pressbook, 1989, p.242.

political atmosphere did not permit them saw the liberalization of the political scene as a golden opportunity to bounce back to the national scene after having being eclipsed by the regimes of Presidents Ahmadou Ahidjo and Paul Biya for years. Identifying themselves with the newly created SDF which they saw as a party in their own area, traditional rulers embraced and gave their support to the party which they considered as their liberator. To counter the support given to the SDF by Bamenda Grassfields traditional rulers, the ruling party, the CPDM, was launched in Bamenda to draw the attention of traditional rulers and bring them closer to the party and its administration. Its national president was even crowned chief of chiefs by traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield in one of his few visits to Bamenda.

The participation of traditional rulers in the political evolution of Cameroon and the benefits received motivated them to throw their weight behind the ruling party. Having traditional rulers at the side of the ruling party enabled them to manipulate the choice of who to succeed a throne. As a matter of fact, the administering body manipulated the choice of a successor in favour of he who would dance according to the music played by the ruling party. Francis Adigwe noted:

Another way or means the government used to control the local population and which is peculiar to Africa was the intervention in succession or chieftaincy disputes by the central government to favor nominees who supported the party in power. The nominee was then expected to use his position to influence elections so as to secure victory for the ruling party and the government.⁶⁷

The post-colonial administration saw traditional rulers as vote banks and with their support, victory was assured. This was because post- independence administrators knew traditional rulers had a great role to play in decision taken by their people. Since he represents the people and is considered ‘a father’ who cannot mislead the children, his opinion on who to be voted was respected. In Bafut, the *fon* requested his people to choose and vote the ballot paper with a man putting on a traditional attire with his right hand in the air.⁶⁸ He encouraged us to make sure our children and friends should vote the same party because it would bring development.

Logically, at independence, traditional authorities were considered as part of the governing body given their colonial experience coupled with the fact that through them, developmental projects could easily be brought to their areas of jurisdiction. Kaze noted:

⁶⁷ Adigwe F., *Essentials of Government for West Africa*, Ibadan, University Press Limited, 1984, pp.22-23.

⁶⁸ Interview with Elisbert Mankaa Lum, 92 yeaes, wife of a chief, October 25th 2018, Makanikong

*Today, chieftaincy titles, particularly those involving high offices, are often given to wealthy, educated and politically-influential persons who can use their contacts with government officials, local and international NGOs, donors, foreign embassies and those abroad to bring in development projects and raise funds to administer the palace and their territories.*⁶⁹

This position is given through the effort of contemporary administrators who act as illegal partners in the choice of traditional authorities. The ruling party saw traditional rulers as vote breakers and sure tickets to rural votes and demanded their allegiance and support. Fully aware of the role they are requested to play in post- independence administration; many a traditional ruler supported the ruling party through motions of support while others remain silent even when their people are brutalized by state forces. In Ndu, the traditional ruler refused to stand for his people that were being shot by government troops for protesting against stolen votes in the 1992 presidential election.⁷⁰ Since traditional rulers were made part of the administering body with the appellation auxiliaries, the chief of Ndu could not bite the finger feeding him. As such, he was silent and watched the brutalisation of his people by government troops.

In the quest to be part of post-independence administrators consider modern, traditional rulers indulge themselves into shady practices contrary to norms regulating their actions and behaviors. What is of interest to this study is the fact that by indulging themselves into party politics, traditional rulers had the opportunity to act as part of the administering body through integration be it for selfish reasons or for the good of the community. *Fon* Ganyonga of Bali Nyonga, rose to political prominence in 1990 when he co-opted himself into the ranks of the ruling CPDM. He was one of the “old actors” dressed in “new clothes”⁷¹

According to Ibrahim Mouiche, he consider traditional leaders and their interest in politics in Cameroon as; “*chasseurs d'intérêts ou d'iltité; leur option pour ceux qui tiennent le fusil*”⁷²(in whatever traditional rulers do, their personal interest matters first) To most traditional rulers, the choice to collaborate with the state was a rational choice that permitted them to get more access to the state apparatus and obtain advantages in exchange for their collaboration. Also, being part and an active member in a party would facilitate pledges for bureaucratic recognition, security and full integration. A case in point showing the support

⁶⁹Kaze., “The Dynamics of Chieftaincy Succession Conflicts”, pp 227-228

⁷⁰Fisiy., *Chieftaincy in the Modern State*, pp.54-55.

⁷¹ P. Konings.,” Chieftaincy, Labour Control and Capitalist Development in Cameroon”, *Journal of Legal Pluralism* no 37/38, 1996, p.346.

⁷² M. Ibrahim., “Autorités traditionnelles, multipartisme et gouvernance démocratique au Cameroun”, *Afrique et Développement*, Vol. XXX, No. 4, 2005, p.8

and benefit traditional rulers benefited from involving themselves into politics was the traditional ruler of Bali-Kumbat as presented in the lines below.

When *Fon* Galabe Doh Gah Gwanyin of Bali-kumbat banished himself to Bamenda after collaborating with the ruling party in elections malpractice, he was backed by the D.O. for Mezam. To reconcile *Fon* Doh and his people, the Divisional Officer for Mezam launched an appeal to the natives to welcome and support their *fon* back to the village⁷³. The support given to *Fon* Doh by the D.O. against the wishes of the people of Bali-Kumbat was an indication that Doh had the support of the administration as a tool of the administering body. Thanks to his collaboration, he had favours which took him into the parliament and he had contracts awarded to him as compensation for his collaboration.⁷⁴

The sultan of Bamoun in the quest to be part and parcel of the administration uses denigrating language against the opposition party in Bamoun (UDC) in order to gain more favours. In a parable, the sultan noted that ; “*Lorsqu’un chef de famille fuit des averses, il ne doit se mettre que sous la protection d’un arbre charnu, afin que lorsque la tempête secoue ses branches, il en ramasse quelques fruits qui tombent pour nourrir ses enfants.*”⁷⁵ In other words the sultan refers to the CPDM as a juicy tree under which all Bamoun people should stand so that when the wind blows, they will be able to pick up fruits for themselves. He says as the traditional ruler of the Bamoun, the people can only support the ruling party, the CPDM, the only party that can respond to various requests from its people, unlike the UDC, a "sterile" tree that cannot even bear fruits.⁷⁶

The Kungi chieftaincy crisis erupted as a result of the refusal of a traditional ruler to join a particular political party. Before the municipal election of 1996, the parliamentarian for SDF Honorable Nsakwa requested Kungi Sylvester Shekfu II the traditional ruler of Kungi to join the SDF. Shekfu II who saw himself as an auxiliary of the administration refused leaving the CPDM which has stood for him. In response, Nsakwa turned to Mallam Musa Budi a member of his party to contest the Kungi throne. Asking a traditional ruler to abandon the CPDM for the SDF first, is an indication of the important role chiefs play in the life of political parties. Secondly, Shekfu II refused to leave the ruling party was an indication of the benefits he receives from the party couple with the fact that he occupies the position of an auxiliary to the administration. To further show his attachment to the administration as an

⁷³ Cameroon Post, No. 105, 9 April, 1992, p.15

⁷⁴ Interview with Lamo Cyprian, 54 years, a councilor, August 2016, Ndop.

⁷⁵ Cited in Kaze’s “The Dynamics of Chieftaincy Succession Conflicts”, p. 256

⁷⁶ Ibrahim., “Autorités traditionnelles, multipartisme et gouvernance”, p.9

integrated member, Shekfu II wrote to the minister of territorial administration requesting for his reinstatement as traditional ruler. He said:

*This reaction will pacify my kingmakers and all those who were present and made open pronouncements on this long standing and disturbing matter. More so a final decision on this matter will enable us start preparing for the forthcoming presidential elections. It is to be noted that since my enthronement on the 30th of November 1995 all the consultations have been to my favor except one that was done by election which is against the tradition of Kungi in particular and Wimbun in general. The first consultations took place on the 23rd of December 1996 and it favored me from the submissions of all kingmakers, and nobody contested.*⁷⁷

Writing to the minister and indicating his wish that things should be done fast so he starts preparations for the presidential election is clear evidence of the important role Shekfu II had played and would continue to play during election in favour of the party in power in which he acts as a vote bank. His open pronouncement on his readiness to start preparation for the presidential election is contrary to the role of traditional rulers who are supposed to act as neutral persons for the interest of his community. In Bafut, Abumbi II offered his courtyard for rallies of the ruling party though he sounds neutral in his speech.⁷⁸

Requesting a traditional ruler (Shekfu II) to cross the carpet to the SDF is an indication that Shekfu II is very instrumental to the success of any party in his chieftdom. Again, scheming with Mallam Musa Budi (a notorious contestant to chieftaincy positions in Kungi village)⁷⁹ to contest the throne of Shekfu II is an indication that traditional rulers are vote banks for political parties and as such are needed to secure victory for the party. In the same line of action, some individuals headed by a parliamentarian of the Moghamo constituency were accused and petitioned for manipulating the chieftaincy crisis in Ashong in favour of SDF, a political party. We also see the role of the state in the selection of a traditional ruler as was the case in Batcham. On the 18th January 2016 the traditional ruler of Batcham village in the West Region of Cameroon is chosen in the midst of a plethora of military officers instead of king makers as seen in the picture below. For instance, the symbol of “catching” a chief in the Grassfields of Cameroon was an indication that the gods have accepted and will guide and censor the acts of the sovereign. It should be noted such activities are purely traditional and done by king makers with little or no intervention from state

⁷⁷Letter of Fon Sylvester Shekfu II Jungi of Weyi to the Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization dated 08/08/2003.

⁷⁸Interview with Ndale Charles, 62 years, retired teacher, October 25th 2018, Bafut.

⁷⁹Kaze., “The Dynamics of Chieftaincy Succession Conflicts”, p 237

officials. But with the intervention of state officials, this is a clear indication of the politicization of the chieftaincy institution on the part of the state as a mechanism to continuously use traditional rulers. This act could be likened to the arrest of a chief by the forces of law and order. The state is involved in every step linked to the rule and existence of traditional rulers with the introduction of multi-partism in Cameroon.

The “Catching” of the 13 years old Chief of Batcham, West Region of Cameroon, 18th of January 2016.



Source : **Kaze, October 2018, p. 53**

Chiefs are not made or appointed by the administration but see in a circular signed and addressed to all the governors, senior divisional officers and divisional officers where in Atanga Nji the Minister of Territorial Administration outlined measures for the creation of traditional chiefdoms and instructed civil administrators to request and obtain his expressed authorization before creating, reclassifying or rehabilitating any traditional chiefdom.⁸⁰ This means that the state is in charge of creating chiefdom and chiefs to rule over the created chiefdom. Respecting the circular of the minister, the governor for the littoral gives order to have new chiefs and second-class chiefs created in Douala. (See apendix IX)

⁸⁰ Journal du Cameroun, June 08th 2018

Having a traditional ruler who is in support a particular political party is synonymous to victory for that party in that area. This explains why the link between traditional rulers and the political elites of the Bamenda Grassfields is ever strong. As a matter of fact, the post-independent administration did everything possible to draw traditional rulers closer in order to secure victory for their parties. (See plate 6) It is rumored President Ahidjo went to Nso in order to strengthen and facilitate collaboration ties with the *fon* of Nso. Coupled with the fact that the *fon* of Nso is among the influential traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield who command a lot of power and influence. Having him in your camp is sure victory taking into consideration this population. This is evidence that the modern state has consistently sought not only to use traditional rulers as auxiliaries but to integrate them through capture which has undermine the chieftaincy institution and its role in the society. The consequences of involving chiefs in politics are detrimental to the chieftaincy institution and the society taking into consideration that traditional rulers are seen as neutral persons and had to be at the apex of neutrality and justice.

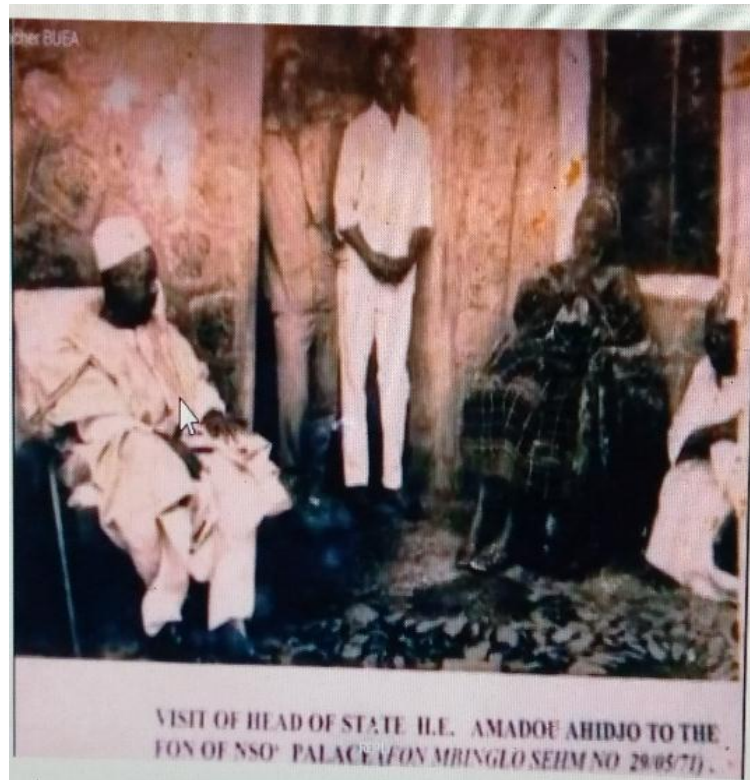
I-Traditional Rulers as Administrators in Post-Independence Bamenda Grassfield

Political power and institutions in Cameroon had changed substantially from the pre-colonial era through colonial to the present. Although traditional leaders are still present, they no longer wield the power and authority of pre-colonial and colonial times as significant changes had been witnessed in their roles in post-colonial Bamenda Grassfield. Political power in the country including substantial power over land remains concentrated in the hands of the state officials. Nevertheless, traditional authorities had persisted⁸¹. In Cameroon, each traditional ruler took on a different mood, based on the history and context of the various regions. However, in all places the level of power the ruler can exercise would be determined by their level of collaboration with those who hold the reins of power.

The structure and set up put in place by colonial administration transformed the Bamenda chieftaincy institution radically. At independence, the contemporary administration did not look at traditional rulers from the same perspectives as the colonial administration in relation to administration. This led to the creation of an "administrative traditional rulers" that worked in collaboration with post-colonial administration or as the post-independence administration dictated.

⁸¹Fisiy, Cyprian F., "Chieftaincy in the Modern State: An Institution at the Crossroads of Democratic Change" *Paideuma* 41, 1992, pp. 49-62.

Plate 6: President Ahidjo and *Fon* Mbinglo Sehm of Nso in the Nso palace 1971



Source: Photography Collection from Kumbo Council Library, 2016

Post-independence regimes had tried to reduce, sometimes without much success the administrative and legal power of traditional rulers which had been a source of conflict. Chiefs normally had administrative responsibilities which are purely local and are under the supervision of the local administration. Their formal judicial tasks had been crippled. But on the other hand, post-colonial regimes raised the position of traditional rulers by giving them a place in the political system as members of assemblies on different levels, and re-valorized the position of particular rulers who managed to place themselves at important positions within the national political structure.⁸²

At independence in Ghana, the 1957 constitution reinforced the authority of the head of state who could withdraw official recognition from a chief and had no distinction between “ordinary” and “paramount” traditional rulers. This act particularly could affect traditional rulers who publicly opposed the government. The consequences could lead to dethronement.⁸³

⁸² Chief Mukete and other traditional rulers were appointed members of the upper house as a result of their outstanding role they played in the life of the nation by constantly in support of the ruling party.

⁸³ K. Adjaye Joseph., *Chieftaincy at the Confluence of Tradition and Modernity: Transforming African Rulership in Ghana and Nigeria*, Department of Africana Studies, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pa 15260, p. 4, *International Third World Studies Journal and Review*, Vol XVII, 2006

The situation in Ghana became complicated as the Kumasi stool lands and their revenues were removed from the Asanehene (a traditional ruler) and placed directly under the control of the central government.⁸⁴ Fisiy holds that state elite as well as the anticipation of or failure to attract state-driven development efforts in their chiefdoms could contribute to the role traditional rulers play in post-colonial administration⁸⁵ since the administration rely on traditional rulers as liaisons officers with villagers⁸⁶. Failure to collaborate could negatively affect the traditional ruler and the role they play in administration in their localities. Our analysis broadens these concepts to assess the role traditional rulers played in land administration vis-a-vis post-colonial administrators.

According to Rathbone, post-independence governments of Africa gave themselves the powers to act as the ultimate arbiter in chiefly matters. This explains why some traditional rulers are imposed by the state on villages in the Bamenda Grassfield. In Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah the first president systematically took power away from traditional rulers at one point in time. He appointed top executives of his political party, the Convention People's Party (CPP), to run development related matters in the towns and villages across the country.⁸⁷ It should be noted that traditional rulers had been in control of such projects in Ghana before his accession to power. The following quote from Nkrumah best captures the relationship between him and traditional rulers:

*Those of our chiefs who are with us [...] we do honour [...] those [...] who join forces with the imperialists [...] there shall come a time when they will run and leave their sandals behind them; in other words, chiefs in league with imperialists who obstruct our path [...] will one day run away and leave their stools*⁸⁸

This quote is a perfect imagery of how traditional rulers of post-colonial Bamenda Grassfield are treated. So, for them not to run away from their stools, they embraced the option of

⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ Fisiy, Cyprian F., "Power and Privilege in the Administration of Law: Land Law Reforms and Social Differentiation in Cameroon". African Studies Centre, Leiden, the Netherlands, p 59.

⁸⁶ J. Klopp., "Land, Legitimacy and Governance in Cameroon", Institute for Research and Debate on Governance and Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs, 2010, p. 23.

⁸⁷ R. Rathbone., (2000). Kwame Nkrumah and the Chiefs: The Fate of 'Natural Rulers' Under Nationalist Governments. 6(10), pp. 45-63.

⁸⁸ Baffoe Lawrence Prince., "Traditional Authorities and Development in Ghana Kingdoms", A Research Paper submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Post-Doctoral Affairs in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, Carleton University Ottawa-Ontario, Canada, 2017, p 10

collaboration which are steps toward integration effort into modern administration headed by the post-colonial administration.

II-Traditional Rulers as Custodians of Land

Traditional rulers are “kings” no matter how small their territory, subjects or fortune may be. They are seen as the commander of the universe. Aboubakar Njiasse-Njoya sees traditional rulers as *maître de la terre* who derive his power from the ancestors and from a supreme being.⁸⁹ Having the blessings of the ancestors and the Supreme Being, he controls land which acts as a link between the living and the underworld. This position equally qualifies them as custodians of the culture and tradition of the people which gives him the right over land administration. He owns and controls land, distributes and redistributes for the well-being of his population. As the custodian of land, how did this position foster efforts at making them (traditional rulers) part of the post-colonial administration taking into consideration laws on land and land ownership in Cameroon?

The role of traditional rulers saw a change in land matters at independence. Though they are changes, the granting of independence did not completely dismantle colonial power exercised by traditional rulers over land. The Bamenda Grassfields is made up of mostly centralized societies whose traditional leaders maintained significant control over land adopted from the British colonial policy of indirect rule.⁹⁰ In relation to land use, all powers of alienation, control and allocation of land to strangers and subjects were in the hands of the local authority. The purchase of land in any form was subject to the approval of the local authority empowered by the secretary of state. They equally regulated the allocation of land be it for communal or individual use.⁹¹ This gradually reduced the influence and role traditional rulers played in the distribution and redistribution of land especially after the 1974 land ordinance.

Specifically, the 1974 land tenure ordinance defines three areas of land management. First, ordinance 74/1 explained that registration is the sole means of acquiring ownership of land. Specification for the process of registering land, a procedure resulting in the allocation of a land certificate was outlined two years later in Decree No. 76/165 of April 27, 1976. This decree stipulated that those seeking to register land that they had occupied prior to 1974 could

⁸⁹ Aboubakar Njiasse-Njoya., “Njimoluh Seïdou and Mbombo-Njoya dans l’action politique au Cameroun 1984-19988” in Clude-Hélène Perrot and Francois-Xavier Fauvelle Aymar (eds), *le retour des rois : les autorités traditionnelles et l’état en Afrique contemporaine*, Paris Karthala, 2003, p. 308

⁹⁰ C. Cheka., “Traditional Authority at the Crossroads of Governance in Republican Cameroon.” *Africa Development*. Vol XXXIII, No. 2, 2008, pp. 67-89.

⁹¹ Ngwa., “Paramountcy and control of land”, pp123-130

apply for a land certificate directly while those seeking access to land not previously occupied by them would have to submit indirectly for a certificate ⁹²

The indirect process for registering land requires supplementary documentation and usually requires more time. A complete application includes a sworn professional surveyor's report, a professional valuation surveyor's report and an attestation of non-indebtedness from the local Department of Lands all of which may be costly to acquire. Even so once completed, the application passes through the traditional ruler, Divisional Officer, Land Consultative Board, Divisional Chief of Service for Lands, Chief of the Provincial Service of Lands and the Central Service of Land in Yaounde, a process that often takes five years on average (see appendix V). For the rural population to go through this costly and time-consuming process, they prefer to work directly with the traditional ruler in acquiring land thereby giving him the opportunity to continue the management of land. Even those who have the means had to pass through a chief, and if not, through the land consultation board headed by the ruler for the demarcation of land boundary. This is an indication that no matter the process one takes to acquire land in the Bamenda Grassfield, the place of traditional rulers over land matters is unavoidable. This is because land law makes traditional rulers part of the decision takers in the granting of land certificate. So, by law, traditional rulers became part of the administering authority through integration as custodian of land that was previously under their control.

The classification of chiefs into grades equally gave the paramount ruler the opportunity to administer land under the cover of the administration. Most palaces all over the national territory fly the nation flag in their palace as a sign of the fact that they are recognized by the state. This is an indication they play an important role as integrated auxiliaries in the day to day running of the affairs of their polities. It is important to note that the national colours fly only in administrative or representative of administrative offices. So, for a traditional ruler to fly the flag of the state is an indication that his office is recognized and form part of the administering authority. This could only be possible through integration. Decree No 77/245 of July 15, 1977 created three classes of "traditional chiefs"⁹³ As part of the administrative structure (auxiliaries) traditional rulers took on a dual polity: One in relation to the central state and another with regard to their local community. Their choices are motivated either by wealth or the interest to remain in authority (office) as was the case in pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield.

⁹² J. Klopp., "Land, Legitimacy and Governance in Cameroon", p. 20.

⁹³For details, consult Rochegude, A. and C. Plancon. "Decentralisation, foncier et acteurs locaux" Foncier et Developpement.", May 5, 2009, p. 8.

Traditional rulers played an important role in land management. This explains why in any land sold, the chief of that village has a share in the amount collected. This in Bafut is called *asoh nfor*, hoe of the Fon.⁹⁴ This was to notify the chief that the land has already been given out and should not be given out to a second person, a preventive mechanism against double sale of land. All these attributes placed the chief and his institutions above ordinary men⁹⁵ thereby giving him a vantage position over land management in collaboration with the administration. This could be among the reasons why traditional rulers are termed custodians of land.

A custodian of land here means traditional rulers are the administrative administrator of land and at the same time proprietors of land as a property under their control and influence. Chieftaincy and chiefs in Botswana displayed a similar agency to their counterparts in Cameroon in general and the Bamenda Grassfield in particular when it comes to land management. They side with forces that best guarantee their interests through integration as communities and individuals while hostile to those that radically threaten their might.⁹⁶ Seretse Khama served Botswana as its first president. Using his position as a lawyer, a liberal and as a traditional ruler to promote independence and nation-building in his country through the Botswana Democratic Party, (BDP)⁹⁷ he integrated the chieftaincy institution as part of the administering body. In Cameroon, the President was conferred the title of 'Chief of Chiefs' and had empowered his administration to bring other chiefs closer to the administration through integration as auxiliaries since he himself is the chief of chiefs and at the same time the head of the executive.

III- Traditional Rulers as Assets in Post Independence Administration

In some parts of the world, especially in Africa and Asia, a majority of the population are still attached to traditional pre-colonial forms of administration. Recent experience has shown that successful decentralization and modern governance has to take existing traditional structures into account be them pre-colonial or colonial. While the standard view has been that traditional institutions headed by traditional rulers are a historic burden on the road to modernity, it is now widely recognized that traditional structures are often more legitimate than the modern state. This is because of the corrupt nature of the modern state unlike the

⁹⁴ Fuhnwi., "Fon, Chiefs and People of Bafut in Conflict", 2002, pp. 76-77.

⁹⁵ Aletum, Fisiy., *The Traditional Political Institutions of Bali-Nyonga*, p. 127.

⁹⁶ Morton, F. and Ramsay, J. (eds.) *The Birth of Botswana: A History of the Bechuanaland Protectorate from 1910 to 1966*. Gaborone: Longman Botswana, 1987, pp. 11-14

⁹⁷ Parsons, N. Henderson, W., & Tlou, T. Seretse Khama: 1921-1980. Gaborone: The Botswana Society, 1995, pp75-80

traditional system. In the traditional system administration, it is believed the illegal occupation of the throne may attract death to the illegal occupant. The illegal occupant will run into problems and difficulties with the ancestors if he goes contrary to the wishes of the ancestors. Also, unlike modern structures, the legitimacy of traditional leaders is not rooted in constitutions and electoral processes, but in inheritance or other historical mechanisms of leadership selection.

The social and economic organizations of traditional societies headed by traditional rulers have changed throughout pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence times. As the authority who handles the political, economic and social affairs of his people, traditional authorities are likely to be better informed about the needs of the local population. As such, they are highly respected by all and for the state to have the full support and collaboration of the people in such communities; they need to work hand in hand with traditional rulers of such societies through integration.⁹⁸ This is because the authority of the rulers is felt by all who reside in his chieftom as stipulated by the culture and tradition of the people of the Grassfield. This implies that the constitution of the people is understood within the context of their culture.⁹⁹

Traditional rulers guarantee the settlement of conflicts of different kinds and at the same time upholds the traditional local legal system. Chiefs are dispute settlers and local administrators. They exercise a firm ritual and moral authority over their people based on mystical and sacred attributes in close collaboration with sacred societies.¹⁰⁰ Sometimes they are involved in witchcraft, even being seen as witches themselves and at the same time witch-hunters.¹⁰¹ They mediate or act as the link between the past, the present and the future generations of their population. They protect the entire *fondom* with all its occupants including post-colonial administrators. For the entire population to benefit from the protection of traditional rulers, there is bound to be collaboration between chief who act as auxiliaries and modern state administrators for the continuous protection of the land and its occupants.

Traditional authorities often have greater mobilization capacity than post-independence state administrators. An informant said; “the entire population will come out in

⁹⁸Van Rouveroy., *States and Chiefs: Are Chiefs mere Puppets?* p 39

⁹⁹ Aletum, *Bafut Institutions in Modern Politics*, Yaounde, SOPECAM, 1990, p.25

¹⁰⁰Veronica Manka., “Chiefs and the Economics of Colonialism: The Impact of Colonial Rule in the Economic Basis of Chieftaincy in the Bamenda Grassfields 1984-1916” A dissertation in history, Higher Teachers Training College Yaounde, p. 26

¹⁰¹Fisiy., "Chieftaincy in the Modern State: An Institution at the Crossroads of Democratic Change." *Paideuma*, 1995b, 41: 49-62.

response to the call of the *fon* than to that of the D.O.”¹⁰² Even when formal recognition of traditional rulers by the state is lacking, the state in order to reach and/or mobilize the people had to contact and convince traditional rulers to mobilize the population.¹⁰³ This is one of the reasons political leaders are fully engaged in integrating traditional rulers into the ranks of their parties. Being in the good books of a traditional ruler is an assurance of victory in elections in his area of jurisdiction. This accounts for the quest by post-colonial administrators whose administration is considered modern to bring in traditional rulers as part of the governing body since they have an influence on their population which favours the political aspirations of administrators.

Traditional rulers play an important role in land administration in Cameroon in general and in the Bamenda Grassfield in particular, recognized and accepted by the post-independence institutions. They are part and parcel of the land consultation board. The offering of sacrifices to purify the land among others is an aspect handled by traditional rulers and its institutions. In such events, traditional rulers from neighbouring villages are invited alongside state officials so that together, the gods are solicited to bless and protect the land. Taking the example of the traditional rulers of Douala, Geschiere attest that:

*In January 1992 the douala 'kings' - Akwa, Bell, Deido and others - took the initiative to invite all 'Sawa chiefs' for the yearly Ngondo ritual. They invited not only the other Douala chiefs but also colleagues from the Batanga, the Bakako and Bakweri and even those from as far inland as Kumba and Mafe. The ritual took place at the usual spot on the banks of the river Wouri. A large crowd attended, including modern elite persons from the area, even Ministers. The climax of the ritual came when all the chiefs descended into the water. They spent several hours in the water and talked to the spirits who promised that it would be a good year although important changes would take place.*¹⁰⁴

Judging from the invitation of Douala traditional rulers to other chiefs and the administration, one is tempted to draw the following conclusions. The bigger than usual circuit of invited chiefs present during the ceremony seems to demonstrate effort at creating intra-ethnic bonds. Also, the presence of state officials is symbolic and a mark of recognition of a dual authority (chiefs and the administration) in post-independence administration. This portrays collaboration among traditional rulers on the one hand and with the administration on the other hand in order to maintain peace and prosperity in the land. Both parties act as a unifying

¹⁰² Bridget Bih, 52 years, princess from Mankanikong Bafut, December 2018, Limbe.

¹⁰³ Interview with John Ambe, 51 years, carpenter and messenger, August 3rd, 2018, Yaounde,

¹⁰⁴ Geschiere, Peter L. "Chiefs and Colonial Rule in Cameroon: Inventing Chieftaincy, French and English Style." *Africa* 63(2): 1993, pp. 151-175.

factor for peace and development. It equally portrays the areas of competent of each party to the advancement of the state. Although representatives of the state are present on the scene, they had no role to play during the ceremony. Rituals carried out are done solely by chiefs. Since combined efforts leads to high productivity, there is the need for traditional rulers and post-colonial administrators to combine efforts to ease and fasten integration for better output.

Traditional rulers are liaisons (bridges) between post- independence state and traditional systems of administration. Through traditional rulers, the administration be it through decentralize or deconcentrated authorities are in a better position to know the pressing needs of his people and can best speak for them. This is because the people are loyal to their chiefs. The loyalty to traditional rulers stems from the bond binding the people and their ruler sealed on the day of coronation of the ruler. The stoning process symbolizes a contract between the two parties pledging his services to the people and the other party places his allegiance to the traditional ruler.¹⁰⁵ As the authority in charge of the economic and social affairs of the people, they are likely to be better informed about the needs of the local population. That is, traditional rulers are potential for better responsiveness to local needs. As such to keep the administrative chain updated, there is the constant need for collaboration between traditional rulers and post-colonial modern administration

For any society to develop, there must or should be peace. Thanks to traditional authorities who are advocates for peace building, the Bamenda Grassfield had enjoyed some relative calm and for this peace to be maintained there is need to bring in traditional rulers to the drawing board when decisions on the peace and progress of the territory are discussed. The inclusion and recognition of traditional rulers by states, guarantees their full support for the state taking into consideration the benefits they would rip as a result of their support to the governing administration. Since the people are loyal to their rulers, there is the tendency that they can give their full support to anyone supported by their chief. In 1992, the people of Bafut were instructed to vote in the presidential election a particular political party describing the attire worn by the leader of that party in his ballot paper.¹⁰⁶

The outcome of this instruction was a landslide victory for that party in Bafut during that election. This is because of the respect the people have for their ruler by accepting whatever he says because they believe traditional rulers are the mouth piece of the gods. Also,

¹⁰⁵Interview with Chief Wankie Nebachang II, 64years, traditional ruler of Mambu and Nurse, 28th September 2017, Mambu

¹⁰⁶Geschiere, Peter L., "Chiefs and Colonial Rule in Cameroon: Inventing Chieftaincy, pp. 151-175.

in the ongoing crisis in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon, the traditional ruler of Jakiri ordered and called on all illegal arm groups or individuals who are involved in blood shed in his land to drop their guns or face the consequences. The out come was a relaxation and a drop in the number of kidnapping and killings of innocent citizens for a while. It is said he used mystical powers to kill all those who had shaded blood once they crossed any part of his *fondom* where he had dropped sacrificial items to the gods.¹⁰⁷ For fear of joining the ancestors, the separative arm groups dropped their weapons while war mongers relocated to continue fighting in order villages. This is a clear example of the important role played by traditional rulers to bring peace. For peace to last, they need to be integrated and taken care of by the post-colonial administration.

IV-Traditional Rulers and Peace Building

Traditional rulers organize tribal ceremonies, assist in checking crime through vigilanti groups, promote the welfare of the tribe, and preside over meetings especially those that concern pressing issues in relation to the development of his polity or those retarding its development. In Botswana, traditional rulers are integrated and recognized through the house of chiefs. The president was given the authority to recognize, appoint, depose and suspend traditional rulers.¹⁰⁸ The law nevertheless requires that every chief implement the instructions given to him by the minister. This attests the fact that they are part of the administering body since the state has complete supremacy over traditional leaders.

The 1977 chieftaincy law in Cameroon gave the same powers to post-colonial administrators in the Bamenda Grassfield as was the case in Botswana. In French colonies in Africa, there was a dual structure. At the local level, chiefs were responsible for “traditional” functions and the central government was charged with “modern” functions. All of this was aim at moving the state and its economy forward. This dual structure had the advantage that traditional structures were fully recognized and given a clear role at all levels of governance in the performance of their duties as custodians of the land. But it must be noted that, within the dual structure the role of traditional authorities clearly limited and politically defined.

Through the involvement of traditional authorities in policy making and implementation, it is quite probable that the continuity and sustainability of local policies would be greater than if traditional rulers are left out of the decision-making process.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Fonyuy Asanu, 44 years, carpenter, 28th September 2019, Emana Yaounde.

¹⁰⁸ Keshav C. Sharma., “Traditional Leadership and Rural Local Government in Botswana.” In D. I. Ray and P. S. Reddy, eds., *Grass-roots Governance? Chiefs in Africa and the Afro- Caribbean*, Calgary, University of Calgary Press, 2003.

Christian Owusu-Sarpong and Ray established that traditional rulers act as intermediaries between their people and the government ministries. They agree that traditional leaders possess their own unique sources of political legitimacy and authority, and so to ensure an effective achievement of development goals, the co-operation between post- independence state and traditional leaders is necessary.¹⁰⁹ The constitution of Ghana recognized the importance of traditional rulers and its institutions. Article 270(1) of the constitution guarantees the institution of chiefs and its traditional councils. Also article 270(2) (a) of the same constitution provides that “Parliament shall have no power to enact any law which confers on any person or authority the right to accord or withdraw recognition to or from a chief for a purpose whatsoever”.¹¹⁰ This is not the case in Cameroon as the constitution forgets traditional rulers and says nothing about their position and rule in post- independent administration. As such, traditional rulers fit themselves wherever they fill comfortable and accepted by the authorities that be. The filling of belonging had gradually made them partners in administration with or without the approval of the post- independence administration as per the constitution.

In post-colonial administrative structure, the hierarchical order has become even more pronounced as traditional rulers occupy the last position in administrative hierarchy. Without much success, post- independence regimes have tried to reduce the formal administrative and legal power of traditional rulers. Although some of the administrative responsibilities were taken away at independence, it should be made clear that the post- independence regimes raised the position of traditional rulers especially in the political domain. Traditional rulers received political powers at different levels and re-valorized the position of particular chiefs who managed to place themselves at important positions within the national political structure.¹¹¹ Summarily, the colonial and post-colonial principles of devolution, hierarchy and the administrative district made African chieftaincy part of a unifying administrative apparatus by politicizing the chieftaincy institution as presented by Proctor.¹¹²

At independence, the post- independence state of Cameroon overshadowed the socio-political organization of the chieftaincy institution. They put in place a new socio-political

¹⁰⁹ Christian Owusu-Sarpong., Setting the Ghanaian Context of Rural Local Government: Traditional Authority Values, Grassroots Governance? *Chiefs in Africa and the Afro-Caribbean*. D. I. Reddy, Ed., 2003.

¹¹⁰ Baffoe., “Traditional Authorities and Development”, p. 21

¹¹¹ Norman N. Miller., "The political survival of traditional leadership". *Journal of modern African Studies* 6: 183-201, 1968

¹¹² Proctor, J.H., “The House of Chiefs and the Political Development in Botswana”, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 6: 59-79, 1968

administrative structure to supervise and coordinate the traditional state. This was done through the creation of the Ministry of Territorial Administration as a supervisory authority over traditional rulers. Also, 1977 decree on the organization and functioning of chieftaincy in Cameroon marked the gradual integration of the chieftaincy institution. As a matter of fact, it should be noted that state authorities were appointed at various ranks to manage the chieftaincy institution with traditional rulers playing having a great role to play as auxiliaries. As a result of the interference, Rouveroy van Nieuwaal describes traditional rulers as “administrative traditional rulers.”¹¹³ This is because the administration has made traditional rulers to dance according to their wishes. To Nieuwaal, a unified process of modern state formation and administration in Africa is thanks to “administrative traditional rulers”. For such unity to be consolidated, full and recognized integration of traditional rulers backed by laws for better development should be the watch word.

Traditional rulers are legitimate authorities especially in remote parts of the state which automatically makes them the administering authority. This has been a very important factor in many countries in the struggle for indigenous rights. In Latin America, the recognition of indigenous cultural and political rights had been a major step for the protection of indigenous peoples. These are some of the steps put in place for further possible inclusion of traditional structures in local governance.¹¹⁴ The inclusion of traditional structures into local governance empowered traditional authorities to create associations that would go a long way to make their reign felt in all domains of life. This explains why in the Bamenda Grassfield, traditional rulers created associations aim at making their voices heard. The North West Fon’s Union (NOWEFU) and similar associations created went a long way to empower chiefs as auxiliaries to the administration. Most of them through these associations were answerable to the post-colonial modern administration which could be termed illegal integration since it’s not protected by law.

Through appointed or elected government officials, traditional rulers are brought into post-colonial administration in order to facilitate the administrative task entrusted to them. Taking into consideration the remoteness of the area they are supposed to cover administrative officials would always solicit the aid of traditional rulers since they master enclaved areas of their communities. In a *communiqué* signed by the governor of the littoral

¹¹³ E. A. B. R. Nieuwaal., States and Chiefs Are Chiefs Mere Puppets? Journal of Legal Pluralism, Vol. 38, No. 37, 1996, p.40

¹¹⁴ Lutz Georg and Linder Wolf., *Traditional Structures in Local Governance for Local Development*, University of Berne, Switzerland, Institute of Political Science, 2004, p.27

region, he gives a deadline for all chiefdoms in his area of jurisdiction without traditional rulers to make sure they have new chiefs. (See Appendix IX) In the same *communiqué*, he equally asks chiefdoms with 1st and 3rd class chiefs to make sure they have 2nd class chiefs.¹¹⁵ Justifying his request, close collaborators of the governor said the presence of traditional rulers in his region would facilitate the day-to-day running of the administration and that way administrative services would be brought closer to the people through traditional rulers. He added that the population should not forget that traditional rulers are part of the administering body.¹¹⁶

Traditional authority epitomizes a “genuinely African form of local governance. As such, being part of post- independence modern administration would go a long way to enhance good governance. This position has been championed by two groups in Mozambique. The Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO) and the Decentralization/Traditional Authorities Component’ (DTA). RENAMO advocated a return to the pre-independence state of affairs in which local chiefs had been respected and obeyed while the DTA which is made up of the Ministry of State Administration has increasingly advocated the revival of traditional authority in rural areas¹¹⁷ Iraê Lundin, a research director in Mozambique, argues in one of her publications that traditional authority or what she calls ‘African Local Authority’ could be seen as a ‘socio-cultural affirmation of Africanness.’¹¹⁸ As such, attention needs to be given to such category of persons because they play an important role in the administrative life of their societies.

Though these questions address specific issues in Mozambique, they also raise worries relevant to our understanding of efforts toward the integration of traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield. Looking at their role as auxiliaries, why the delay in giving traditional rulers constitutional powers as part of the administering body? One is tempted to also ask the efforts made by the ministry of territorial administration in particular in making traditional rulers part of the post-colonial modern administration apart from through decree and laws.

According to Mamdani, what is specifically interesting about chieftainship today is not what some may perceive as the ‘continuity of tradition’, but precisely what he sees as the ‘break in continuity.’ Hence chieftainship exists today not as a result of its own legitimacy,

¹¹⁵ The Guardian post of 20rd July 2020, p. 3

¹¹⁶ Equinox TV 24th July, 2020, 8pm

¹¹⁷ For details, see Fokwang’s *Chieftaincy in Perspective*, pp15-17

¹¹⁸ Ibid

but because of its co-operation with the colonial and post- independence states.¹¹⁹ Since the co-operation between post-colonial state and traditional rulers who are custodians ensures peace and progress, there is need to intensify integration among the two. Traditional rulers through meetings, calls for cease fire among other strategies, had played and continue to play front line role to the reestablishment of peace in the war-torn Anglophone regions of Cameroon. Some have implored black magic to force the armed groups leave their chiefdoms as a mechanism to stop or reduce the killings.¹²⁰ This implies that the role traditional rulers play in the development of the Bamenda Grassfield cannot be minimized reasons why efforts are ongoing to maintain them as part of post- independence modern administration through regional councils.

Taking the example of South Africa, interesting findings regarding the status of chiefs in post-apartheid South Africa are advanced by Bank and Southall.¹²¹ They argue that traditional leadership does not necessarily contradict democracy. To them, traditional leadership can in fact provide the bedrock upon which new forms of dual administration (made up of traditional rulers and modern administration) could be constructed or experimented taking into consideration their contributions to peace and progress. They proceed to show how the institution of chieftaincy if integrated is capable of collaborating with democratic structures which would go a long way to promote peace, democracy and development.

For a better administration of the land, there is need for mutual understanding and cooperation between traditional rulers and municipal representatives. May be the Cameroonian authorities saw the need for cooperation between elected state officials and traditional rulers 16 years after the adoption of the April 14th 2008 constitution which focused on regional and local authorities in its Part X (section 55-62) in which traditional rulers are fully involved. This inspiration might have been drawn from the South African dramatic event whereby, civic members and headmen of Dan village invited the chief and local government officials to an important meeting to explain the developments to the community. The chief was also accused of having sold a piece of their communal land to the Tzaneen TLC for the construction of pay-points in the villages.

¹¹⁹ Mamdani, Mahmood., *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996, p43

¹²⁰ The case of Jakiri is a good example as seen above. Also, it is reported the *fon* of Bafut was brutalized by the military in his palace. After requesting for an apology which failed to come, it is said he convined strong witch doctors in his palace and they lay curses on the soldiers who brutalized him which led to swallon testis

¹²¹ Fokwang Jude., *Chieftaincy in Perspective*, p 20

Though the government officials failed to attend the meeting, the chief denied the accusations and instead argued that he had similar grudges against the municipal council. The chief insisted that he had not been consulted before the implementation of the municipal council's policies in his chieftdom. He therefore used the opportunity to urge his subjects not to pay for any services.¹²² This is an indication that failure to include traditional rulers in major decision taking in relation to their polities might back fire which might slow down development. A similar incident happened in Bafut where the *fon* retired to his private quarters in the course of a meeting with the D.O. because he felt insulted by the D.O. The D.O. called him a thief caliming he had invaded tax money. Apologies and fines were paid before he could make his return for the meeting to continue. This is an indication of the power and influence traditional rulers command as natural rulers which if harnessed (through full integration) would advance development of the grassfield.

In addition to the above, on the request of the traditional rulers of the Dan region in South Africa, most habitants of the Dan area denied access into their homes for municipal construction workers either by locking their gates or by verbally insulting them to back off. This move incapacitated the municipal council project of installing water to the population. As a result, the project ended before its completion. It should be noted that the people are not rejecting development. Their worries are that the projects were initiated without the concern of the ruler who is the mouth piece of the people. This comes to confirm the fact that traditional rulers play a vital role in the life and development of their polities and so should be considered as part of post-colonial modern governance.

Van Rouveroy confirms the above role played by traditional rulers in Togo. He says traditional rulers meet every Friday at the prefect's office to be informed of administrative matters and in order to settle disputes varying from violations of the game statue to cases of witchcraft and disputes about rights to land.¹²³ Modern administration has realized that traditional rulers can offer excellent legal assistance because of their social position in the society couple with their traditional system of conflict resolution. Hence the support of traditional rulers is indispensable for government and judicial power.

At independence, the post- independence government did not make any distinction between pre-colonial and colonial made chiefs. They were both called traditional rulers. At the collapse of federalism, there was the need for the harmonization of the chieftaincy law of East and West Cameroon in order to involve traditional rulers whose absence is felt. The

¹²² Ibid p21

¹²³ Van Rouveroy., *States and Chiefs: Are Chiefs mere Puppets?* p 65

absence of chiefs in some areas of the south, littoral and east regions of Cameroon had frustrated local development through Non-Governmental organizations and appointed post-independence administrators since traditional rulers are genuine partners in development and act as spoke persons for their communities.¹²⁴ The lack of genuine traditional rulers accounts for poor development since they spearhead developmental projects. Their ability to spearhead projects is determined from their legitimacy and legality. Their legitimacy and legality act as a tool for them to galvanize and mobilize support both within and out of his polity to work toward the development of their locality hence the state. Traditional rulers served as rallying force and channels through which development could reach the people.¹²⁵ Leaving them out of administration is blocking developmental projects from reaching the people.

Governments have recognized the importance of traditional rulers in supporting state policies and mobilizing the people in favour of change. In some instances, it is very difficult or impossible to implement policies without the support of traditional rulers, especially in areas that touch upon the traditional customs of a community. The mobilizing capacity of traditional leaders is often needed in implementing policies in the social, economic or political structure of a community. The fight against AIDS, vaccination programs, implementation of land reforms and road maintenance not leaving out conflict resolution and justice would lead to development if nonpartisan traditional rulers are backed by the constitution and made part of the post-colonial modern administration.

Conclusion

Clearly, it can be said that the chieftaincy institution in Cameroon generally and in particularly in the Bamenda Grassfield plays an important role in the life of the people. It is so important to the history and development of the area in a way that no government be it the post- independence or neocolonial administrations have been able to work without the support of traditional rulers in one way or the other. This is an indication that the chieftaincy institutions have stood the test of time and so cannot be wiped out easily. In other words, they have come to stay. Traditional rulers are crucial actors and as such, they remain important instruments in the development process especially in the Bamenda Grassfield. This means that attempts by governments and other development agencies to bring development in remote areas in Cameroon could yield better results if traditional rulers are fully engaged. As Faller

¹²⁴ Fisiy Cyprian., "Chieftaincy in the modern state: An institution in th Cross road of Democratic Change", *Paideuma* 14, 1995, p. 50

¹²⁵ Fokwang Jude., "Tribal Innovators? Traditional leadership and Development in Africa", *CODESRIA BULLETIN*, 3 and 4, 2005, p 41

puts it, political and economic development would be more successful when rooted upon widely shared institutions and cultural values.¹²⁶

Good and modern governance should be inclusive and political decisions should be representative of the majority. The people of the Bamenda Grassfield easily identify themselves with their traditional leaders and as their representatives more than politically elected representatives. As such, making traditional rulers part of the decision making, gives a sense of belonging hence collaboration and development. Inclusiveness means that access must be equal for all and that the social and educational disadvantages of certain groups within the Bamenda Grassfield should be taken into account. This is possible through traditional rulers who master the terrain as well as the need of their people. In Mozambique, the debate surrounding chieftainship as presented by West and Kloeck-Jenson gained momentum since President Joaquim Chissano's declaration in 1995. He said that, his government desired the existence of traditional authorities.¹²⁷ This may be the reason why post-independence administrators in Cameroon long to work in collaboration with traditional rulers though using the wrong approach in making them part of post-independence administration because of selfish interest.

The colonial principles of devolution, hierarchy and administrative district adopted by the post-independence administration made African chieftaincy part of a unifying administrative apparatus. These principles changed the bases of power and authority of traditional rulers because chieftaincy became partly or totally dependent on the central administrative apparatus. In so doing, the institution of chieftaincy was reshaped to suit the structure and policies of post-independence administration. The chieftaincy institution lost its independence to the state and became more or less part of the political system acting as vote banks.

Post-independence governments sometimes invented or strengthened the relationship that exists between the administration and traditional rulers by integrating chiefs into their local administrative apparatus. This is done by using traditional rulers as auxiliaries who act as a link between the local post-independence administrators and the population in their areas of influence. Since modernity cannot be separated from the culture and tradition of the people, history has showed gradual development from tradition to modernity.

¹²⁶ L. Fallers., "The Predicament of the Modern African chief: an instance from Uganda". 57(2), 290-305, 1955.

¹²⁷ Fokwang Jude., *Chieftaincy in Perspective*, University of Pretoria etd, Chapter One, 2003, p 15

CHAPTER FIVE

TOWARDS EFFECTIVE INCORPORATION OF GRASSFIELD CHIEFS IN MODERN GOVERNANCE IN CAMEROON: A HISTORICAL APPRAISAL

Colonialism, Christianity, democratization, western education among others impacted the content and functioning of traditional administrative system in the Bamenda Grassfield. Taking into consideration the realities of the Cameroonian society today especially the changes associated to accessibility into rural areas as a result of bad roads, the state in its efforts to make its presence felt in all parts of the land is bound to work with traditional rulers. Post-independence government in Cameroon have increasingly faced hurdles in carrying out local development, and above all the absence of effective local representation makes chiefs and the chieftaincy institution an inevitable constant. Thus, for its power and influence to be felt, the state of Cameroon is somehow bound to consider traditional rulers as a possible “companion” to assist in the administration as was the case during the British colonial system of administration of the Bamenda Grassfields.

What has been the route travelled and the experiences acquired by Grassfield traditional rulers during the lengthy period that spans the time frame of this study. Whether administration and governance are considered as pre-colonial, colonial or post-independence, there can be no gainsaying that those who govern have ever so often given the impression of attachment to the improvement of governance for the welfare of the governed. The experiences that traditional rulers have had living with various identified and unidentified administrative policies through the different periods, provide the possibility of looking at the challenges they faced and the impact left or felt on the chieftaincy institution as it undergoes uncoordinated but determined and perceived attempts to make chiefs part of modern administration.

This chapter examines the overall effects of efforts to incorporate Grassfield traditional rulership into modern administration in Cameroon in general and the Bamenda Grassfield in particular. It looks at the changing role of traditional rulers in response to stimuli resulting from the ways and means used by various colonial and post-independence administration to make traditional rulers a part of the governance machinery of the Bamenda

Grassfields. Also, it addresses the impacts of incorporation efforts on traditional rulers as custodians of the customs and tradition of the people as well as on the development of the community. How has efforts aimed at making traditional rulers as part of the governing body contribute to the advancement of the chieftaincy institution and to the development of Cameroon?

This chapter is an appraisal of the responses of traditional rulers through the time span of this thesis. Specifically, it deals with the difficulties faced by the colonial and post-independence governments to make chiefs more impressionable to the needs of “modern” governance. Here the relative use of the adjective ‘modern’ becomes important in order to render the contextual use of the word more meaningful. What difficulties have traditional chiefs for their part faced in fitting into or performing their newly defined or redefined roles. The chapter surmises that, traditional rulership has shown itself amenable to changes, alterations, and various transformations in the whole process of adaptation to its use in various contexts. That notwithstanding, it may not be deemed to be under threat of extinction. In fact, its resilience is very suggestive of the much-parroted opinion by contemporary African governments to use traditional rulers as part of modern governance.

A- Post-Independence Governments and Traditional Rulers

Some chiefdoms in the Bamenda Grassfields came into existence thanks to the effort of the colonial and post-independence administrations. They gradually made some influential individuals as part and parcel of the administering authority and later crowned them traditional rulers. With the coming of the German as well as the British, individuals who collaborated with them were made influential and later crowned traditional rulers which the post-independence administration validated them as traditional rulers and went ahead to create more.¹ This was the case with Adang Engu Anuangwe whom the British made the traditional ruler of Oshie against the wishes of the people of Oshie though Emamba who was the recognised crowned traditional ruler of Oshie was still alive.² Even at that, the tradition of the Oshie people stipulates that it’s the son that takes over from the father in case of demise. In an attempt to protect his people as the custodian from the harsh German rule, Emamba and his people took refuge in the bushes upon the arrival of the British thinking it was the Germans making their return to Oshie. Unfortunately for him, Adang who refused to run with him was made the traditional ruler of Oshie by the British as a result of his bravery. This resulted to a

¹ Ndi Mathias., 64 years, taper, September 2018, Batibo.

² Walter Achombong Ngri., “The Dynamism of Traditional Rulership in Oshie Chiefdom, Cameroon ca. 1918-2009”, Ph. D thesis, University of Yaounde I, 2019, p. 81

serious conflict which dragged for years. It's as a result of creating chiefs to fit into colonial exigencies that the Oshie chieftaincy crisis was born. As such, the process of trying to make traditional rulers part of the administering body in the Bamenda Grassfields created chieftaincy conflicts in some villages.

The chieftaincy institutions under the command of chiefs faced a lot of changes, alterations and modifications in their rule with the coming of colonialism and at independence under the authority of the Germans, the British then the post-independence administration. The putting in place of the "modern" governments and the reinforcement of colonial principals of Christianity, western education, democratization among others played on the rule of traditional rulers and their role as natural rulers and administrators of the people. The quests for socio-economic power, political control and access to resources among other factors made chieftaincy institution vulnerable. The outcome of the quest of power and authority led to the imposition of individuals as traditional rulers sponsored by "modern" administration. In order to gain more authority and enjoy some of the services enjoyed by "modern" administrators, traditional rulers had to collaborate with the administering authority. This had socio-economic and political impacts on the chieftaincy institution especially in the domain of local administration.

Traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield generally were seen and acted as auxiliaries of the administration. They could not act independently as had been the case during the pre-colonial and colonial eras. They virtually ruled under the instructions of "modern" administration. This explains why a lot of changes were made ranging from the chieftaincy decree, dissolution of the house of chiefs, the attribution of remunerations to traditional rulers and their involvement in partisan politics. Summarily, traditional rulers were regarded as stooges to post-independence administrations as a result of innovations forced on traditional rulers.

Traditional rulers had as duties and responsibilities to transmit the directives of modern administrative authorities to their people and ensure that such directives were implemented. They had to help in the maintenance of law and order and also ensured the economic, social and cultural development of the areas under them as deemed necessary by the competent administrative authorities. Chiefs had to help taxation officials in collecting taxes and fees for the state and local authorities (councils) under laid down conditions. Traditional rulers may be mandated to settle disputes or arbitrate in their communities with

the exclusion of criminal matters in accordance with native laws and customs especially in areas where divisional or sub-divisional administration do not operate as was the case in colonial Bamenda Grassfield. Apart from the above, traditional rulers had to carry out any other mission that might be assigned to them by the local administrative authority. These changes came with new rules, laws and decrees which went a long way to either foster or weaken efforts aimed at making chiefs part of “modern” administration in the Bamenda Grassfield.

Since traditional rulers constitute the force of ethnic identities in the area of social services, their hereditary nature renders them incompatible with democratic governance, which requires competitive elections as one of its cornerstones.³ For this to be effective there is need for the preservation, promotion and sustainability of the chieftaincy institution as an element of the African cultural heritage for modern governance to be at its top form. This is because, traditional administration played a vital and fundamental role in the day to day life of the indigenous population and as such, those who manage traditional institutions should be taken into consideration as part of the administrative machine since elements of the past are part and parcel of traditional administration. As observed by some scholars, there are always some elements of “the past in the present.”⁴ As an indigenous institution, chieftaincy can be valorized and conditioned to meet the needs of modern administration and governance, an achievement that has been undertaken with relatively commendable success in Ghana, Botswana and South Africa.

I-The Changing Roles of Traditional Rulers in Post-Independence Bamenda Grassfield

The relevance of traditional institutions to the development of Africa is a highly contested issue in post-colonial literature. Researchers who doubt or are skeptical of the role of traditional rulers in modern administration contend that chieftaincy is anachronistic, a hindrance to the development and transformation of the continent. They hold that the chieftaincy institution is undemocratic, divisive and costly to manage. Some of the arguments advanced in support of this assertion state that chieftaincy has been corrupted by the colonial state and the clientelism of the despotic post-colonial state which has rendered the institution unaccountable to the populace.⁵ As such, populations under traditional authorities live as “subjects” rather than as citizens of the state as was the case in South Africa during the

³Baffoe., “Traditional Authorities and Development in Ghana”, 2017, p 16

⁴ Kwame Gyekye., “Tradition and Modernity”, *Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*, p. 221

⁵ Kilson, M., *Political Change in a West African State: A study of the Modernization Process in Sierra Leone*. Scribner Paper Fiction, 1966

apartheid regime. This has rendered efforts at integrating traditional rulers as part of the democratic governance difficult because of the conception on the undemocratic nature of traditional rulers.⁶

All West African traditional leaders are seen as being corrupt, selfish and undemocratic based on some West African studies which Ribot generalized to Ghana.⁷ In his view, traditional rulers are thus not worthy partners in the implementation of developmental projects. These conceptions have gone a long way to influence the position and role of traditional rulers as natural rulers as most of them struggle to make their presence felt in post-independence administration be it for the good of the society or for political and economic benefits. Truly, the participation of traditional rulers in “modern” administration especially in Bamenda Grassfields comes with its own problems. The changes seen in the reign of traditional rulers is not because traditional rulers are in themselves bad administrators but are as a result of the influence of post-independence administration. They had to adapt to the existing conditions put in place in order to benefit from the protection of the administration.

Western educated young men enthroned as traditional rulers left their traditional duties at the palace in search of better opportunities in the cities or to live up to the expectation of their duty post as civil servant or call them carrier traditional rulers.⁸ Others run behind political parties, government contracts and favours from the post-independence administration forgetting their duties as traditional rulers. This created more problems as in most cases; their people see them as unworthy for the throne.⁹ When *Fon Doh* won the lone seat in the May 1997 parliamentary election, his status changed. The regime was more than grateful to him and rewarded him generously. Huge contracts were awarded to “Royal Enterprise” owned by *Fon Doh G. G.* Ministers and General Managers were at *Doh Gah Gwayi*’s beck and call.¹⁰ This position and protection received motivated him to take laws into his hands which antagonized him and his people leading to his dethronement.

⁶ Mamdani, M. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*, Princeton University Press. 1996.

⁷ Ribot, J. Local actors, powers and accountability in African decentralizations: A review of issues. 25(104), 2001, quoted in Baffoe’s *Traditional Authorities*, p 17

⁸ Ntoh Bawum (a chief) since his coronation lived in America till now.

⁹ In an interview with Achodong Divine, 47 years old builder in August 2018 in Yaounde, he said “our chief, I mean the chief of the Oshie people abandoned his throne and settled in Yaounde for his job as a civil servant.

¹⁰ Kaze, “The Dynamics of Chieftaincy Succession Conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon, Ca. 1800-2013” Doctorat/Ph. D Thesis, University of Yaounde I, 2019, p. 271

Traditional rulers as a result of Christian influence saw the performance of rituals as is the case with some chiefdom in the Bamenda Grassfield as a taboo.¹¹ They saw some of the rituals performed by their forefathers as barbaric and an offence against the “Christian God”. The people see the gradual switch from the worship of the ancestors to christianity as a threat to the culture and tradition of the people and a failure on the part of traditional rulers to protect the land. It should be noted traditional rulers have as duty to protect the people in all domains as had always been the case before the brutal introduction of colonial and post-colonial rule which acts as barriers to the integration of traditional rulers into modern administration. Busia summarized the position of traditional rulers before colonial rule and its influences as follows:

*The chief had been a priest revered as the lineal successor of the founder of the state, and its sub-divisions, the division and the village. His subjects felt beholden to him for their well-being. He was the custodian of the lands of the political community of which he was the head. He exercised judicial functions in relation to offences classified as hateful to the ancestral spirits and other spiritual beings, to which he offered prayers for the prosperity of the community. The chief succeeded to office by virtue of his lineal descent from the ancestral founders of the political community; and what amounted to election by the representatives of the sub-units of that community.*¹²

These categories of persons enjoyed total respect, power and authority within and out of their polities before the advent of colonial and post-colonial rule. The divine nature of traditional rulers was soon to be manipulated/influenced or diluted with the coming of colonialism, christianity, political power, quest for wealth, social standing and some other factors.

Be it through collaboration with traditional rulers or out of force or greed, what is clear is the fact that it has led to conflicting situations among traditional rulers, the natives and the state. Either the people are against their chief or the people and their chief against the administration and vice versa. The conflicting situation had far reaching consequences on efforts aimed at bringing traditional rulers closer to modern administration. In most cases, the people gang up against traditional rulers who prefer to collaborate with administrative agents against the wishes of the people. The end result in most cases is dethronement which weakens integration efforts

¹¹The offering of sacrifices is a common practice done by all traditional rulers in one way or the other to ask for forgiveness and favours from the gods like good health, fertility, good harvest, peace, protection, blessings and other favours from the gods that would keep the village and its inhabitants healthy, strong and prosperous

¹² K. A. Busia., *The Position of the Chief in the Modern Political System in Ashanti*, 1951 pp.196-217.

The introduction of christianity contested most traditional practices carried out by traditional rulers with the pretext that they go against the precepts of christian missionaries. This has brought a lot of changes to the role of traditional rulers who are adherence to christian religion. The change and modification witness as a result of the introduction of christianity has weaken the traditional institution. This has placed traditional rulers at logger head with their people for refusing to act as custom and tradition demands. The state on its part is bend on using traditional rulers as auxiliaries as stipulated by the 1977 law. At the end of the day, the chief who is the father of the people is abandoned to himself for siding with the state against the wishes of the people. Abandoning the chief is a sign of an impending dethronement which of course is a diteran to integration efforts.

Traditional rulers on their part want to remain in the comfortable arms of the administration and the political class because of the advantages they enjoy as errand boys. The disagreement over who should traditional rulers pay allegiance to among the people on the one hand, chiefs and the administration as presented below has gone a long way to weaken the position of traditional rulers. It has further degenerated to other crisis such as succession struggles, exile, dethronement and even the killing of traditional rulers. This has slowed down efforts at integrating traditional rulers as part of modern administration because traditional rulers now struggle to play a double game by living up to the expectation of both camps which has slowed down development in most chiefdoms. They are found wanting over which political party they should openly support and the wishes of their people.

The changing role of traditional rulers in the administration of their different polities as a result of the influence of colonial and post-colonial administrations has gone a long way to influence the outcome of events on the daily life of traditional rulers. Many a traditional ruler fined themselves entangle between their traditional obligations and modern administrative influence and exigencies. This has played negatively on efforts at integrating traditional rulers since those who do not accept the use of traditional rulers as errand boys in administrative procedures act as stumbling block to their rule as seen below.

II-Disrespect for Traditional Rulers in the Social, Economic and Political Domains

In the Bamenda Grassfield, the chieftaincy institution which is under the command of traditional rulers is the highest institution revered by the people. Traditional rulers are believed to be a set of mystical persons with extraordinary powers gotten from the ancestors. The ruler acts as a link between the ancestors (gods) and the living. The people of the Bamenda Grassfield believe that the position of traditional ruler is accompanied by signs of

authority and continuity which immortalize him even though the individual may die. As a chief priest, he maintains a smooth relation between the ancestors and his people. He offers constant sacrifices to propitiate the land.¹³ They are bound to be respected by all. With the office of auxiliary attributed to traditional rulers, they lose respect since administrative organization is not a respecter of power and authority but positions. The impact of the changing role of traditional rulers from natural rulers to auxiliaries has led to disagreement between the people and their chief who might want to continuously benefit from the protection of the administration as an auxiliary. This has negatively slowed down integration efforts since the people would not like to see their ruler running errands for the administration.

Once a traditional ruler is enthroned, he becomes an exalted person with a mystical office. He commands political, economic, legislative and spiritual powers. The ruler makes sure he exercises his functions impartially, respecting the custom and tradition of the people with no fear nor favour. Metaphorically, Jean Pierre Warnier says traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield was like a “container” or “vessel” that bound the people together, united and protected them and the land from malevolent forces and poured out vital life-giving substances like breath, cam wood, saliva to ensure continuity.¹⁴ Unfortunately, with the putting in place of the post-independent administration and the quest to make their voices heard, traditional ruler’s legitimacy and authority were put to question by his subjects. This is because these rulers became more answerable to administrative authorities and politicians than to the customs and tradition of the people. Such situation attracted usurpers to claim the throne leading to chieftaincy succession struggles and dethronement.¹⁵ In situations where the chief is dethroned, the people struggle to clean and purify the palace rather than aiming to collaborate with the administration to bring the chief closer to modern governance.

The changing role of traditional rulers at independence has made the mystical part of chieftaincy look like folklore. Traditional rulers drink in bars, are dragged to courts, sleep in hotels, ride in public transport, involved in politics and have been seen insulted and insulting in public. The involvement of traditional rulers into modern governance has contributed in the

¹³ In an interview with Njibamum John, he made it clear that the offering of sacrifices is a regular and constant practice that the chief and *ndkwifor* must perform at the required time to maintain and strengthen the link with the ancestors. Failure to respect the days of sacrifice offering is inviting the rod of the ancestors upon the land and the people.

¹⁴ Nkwi, Warnier., *Elements for History of the Western Grassfields*, Yaounde: Publication of the Sociology Department, University of Yaounde I, 1982, p. 63.

¹⁵ Kaze., “The Dynamics of Chieftaincy succession”, p. 282

deterioration of their role. Before independence, any form of disrespect for traditional rulers was a taboo. Temgoua confirms that ;

Nous avons vu qu'autrefois le chef coutumier représentait le principe même d'autre, et possédait pour sauvegarder celle-ci tous les moyens, au premier rang des quels il faut mettre le droit de rendre justice qui n'était autre entre ses mains que le droit de vie et de mort sur tous ses sujets..... Tout ce que le chef disait devait être applaudi et ce même si l'on ne l'approuvait pas intérieurement. Ses abus ne pouvaient jamais être publiquement dénoncés... il en est depuis l'installation européenne.¹⁶

Looking at the position of traditional rulers today, it is clear that the influence of colonial rule which came with christianity and other ills, couple with the establishment of the post-colonial administration contributed in weakening the authority of traditional rulers. To give value to their rulers, the people mounted bombers to effort at fully integrating traditional rulers as part of modern administration in order to maintain their culture and tradition which gives a lot of valure and importance to traditional rulers.

With the coming of colonialism and the granting of independence, the rate of disrespect for traditional rulers has increased. Traditional rulers are treated as rascals and rough handled by administrative representative. In the late 1950s, there was a tense encounter between Achirimbi and the Assistant Divisional Officer (ADO) of Bamemda. As part of his evaluation tour, the ADO visited Bafut. In the course of the meeting, the *fon's* accounts revealed he had embezzled huge sums of money collected as taxes. In the presence of all, the ADO called the *fon* a thief. In reaction to the insult, the *fon* abandoned the ADO in his palace hall and retired to his private quarters, the *achum* (see Plate 3). After fruitless attempts to bring him back since he had to give a complete report of his activities to his boss, the ADO was forced to make amends.¹⁷ This was a sign of disrespect to the *fon*. It weakened his authority as the ruler in the presence of his people which others took as an advantage to laugh at him leading to the rejection of his paramountcy position by some chiefs in Bafut especially chiefs of the *Ntare* zone. The ADO had to pay a penalty consisting of crates of beer for insulting the *fon*. This act of the ADO discreditted the authority of Achirimbe before his people who now knew the *fon* could be insulted and a fine paid to apeace him onlike in the pre-colonial era where such a crime could lead to exile or even execution.

¹⁶ Albert Pascal Temgoua., “ Le Pouvoir Colonial Française et la Chefferie Traditionnelle de Foreke-Dschang (1920-1960), Mémoire de Maitrise en Histoire, Université de Yaoundé, 1984, pp. 32-33.

¹⁷ Samah., “Chief (Traditional rulers) in Anglophone Cameroon and Modern Governance 1961-2000”, PhD Thesis in History, University of Yaounde I, pp. 88-89.

Plate 7: Achum, the private Quarter of the Fon



Source: Divine Ngwa's photographic collection, 19 November 2012

During the succession crises in Bafut, the administration played an important role. Police men were dispatched to maintain peace. Had it been they ended at the level of maintaining peace, it would not have raised an alarm. The chiefs of Mankanikong, Atanga Ngwamando was arrested and detained for supporting one of the candidates to the throne. Considering the fact that he was a traditional ruler, colleague and close collaborator to the *fon*, gave him the power to intervene in the succession conflict. May be the late *fon* had disclosed his successor to him as demanded by tradition. Also, the fact that the heir was enthroned in the absence of the other princes as tradition demands was suspicious. The intervention and subsequent decision of the administration that the choice of the late *fon* be respected though there was no concrete evidence to show it was the choice of the late *fon* was against traditional norms of enthronement. Those who rejected the enthroned *fon* do not give him the respect he deserves.¹⁸ This explains why there are pockets of rebellion against the authority of the present *fon* of Bafut since some of the chiefs and his brothers see him as illegitimate (a

¹⁸Interview with Tanifor Peter, Age 63, carpenter, 15 September 2012, Asong.

usurper)¹⁹. But since he is backed by the administration, there is nothing (apart of refusing to pay him alligence) they can do rather than toe the line or face the administration

The arrest of Atanga Ngwamando, a traditional ruler was the height of disrespect for traditional rulers and the people. This move built a wall which act as a barrier to efforts at bringing traditional rulers closer to modern administration. The mere fact that a traditional ruler is arrested is sacriligious to the custom and traditons of the people who hold their ruler in high esteem. As such, all efforts are made by the elders to stop the desecration of the customs and tradition of the people by reducing the contact and collaboration between traditional rulers and the outside world. This has retarded efforts to fully integrate traditional rulers. The consequences are greivous on any traditional ruler who fails to toe the line drawn by the elders.

III-Seizure of Property, Sale of Communal Land and Palace Artifacts

Another factor that discredited traditional rulers as a result of collaboration with the administration is the seizure of people's wives, property and the sale of communal land and palace artifacts by traditional rulers. In many cases, such acts ended up antagonizing the people and their chief with the end result being dethronement of the chief for complicity and betrayal of the people. Since land belonged to the state, administrative authorities collaborated with some traditional rulers to seize land from the people and sell to influential personality like the case of Ndu and Kedjom where we were told their chief sold land to a Fulani cow lord, Alhadji Yusuf Danpullo.²⁰

Another example is the chief of Kedjom Keku who took upon himself to sale land in his chieftdom without taking into consideration that land is a source of lively hood of his people. Most of the population in Kedjom Keku depends on farming for their survival. Land to them is their only source of getting food. Unfortunately, Chief Vugah went around seizing land from his subjects not even minding their survival or what they were going to live on. The villagers protested to no avail. This and other factors were responsible for his dethronement.²¹

The sale of communal land in most cases resulted to farmer-grazer problem. It is seen in many parts of the Bamenda Grassfield and particularly in Kedjom Keku where there was a Fulani-grazer problem which was one of the factors that provoked the destitution of the Chief

¹⁹Suh Christopher, 64 years, Head of *kwifor*, 21st October 2012, Bawum.

²⁰Abongwa Joseph., 65 years, farmer, December 2010, Ndu. He recounts how their chief in collaboration with an influencial businessman seized and sold their lands for plantation and cattle rearing which they are still suffering the effects till date. He added "we beg to farm in our own land"

²¹See the Post Newspaper of 11th June 2004.

of Kedjom Keku because he supported the grazers against his people.²² It must be mentioned that the Kedjom chief did not only sold ancestral land. He went as far as to destroy food crops of those who opposed him, arrested and jail some Kedjom Keku youths who stood up against him.²³ Apart from the seizure of land, chief Vugah forcefully took people's wives and promised to kill their husbands if the husband dared took the matter to *Kwifon*.²⁴

In Kom, the traditional ruler sold palace artifact (*afouh-a-kom*) which the people saw as their god to a white man. All of this was in collaboration with the administration. In his book L. Asong narrates the role of the Divisional Officer in the destruction of the culture and tradition of the people of Nkokonoko Small Monje. *Akeukeuor*, the god of gods of the tribe has been cut off, stolen and sold to a white man and all the fingers are pointing at the D.O. in collaboration with the chief and some elders. Further reading of the novel presents how one of the elders says this act of cutting down their god could not be done without the help of an administrative authority; "father, let me tell you that right now I see the D.O.'s hand very deep in the matter"²⁵ In a meeting held with the DO, the elders told him "Goment, you have killed us, we shall never wash our hands clean"²⁶. As a matter of fact, modern administrators used their power and authority backed by the state to destroy the culture and tradition of the people with the pretext of bringing traditional rulers closer to modern administration. The collaboration of traditional rulers with post-independence administrators against the wishes of their people had far reaching consequences stemming from dethronement, destruction of property; exile and even killing like the case of the traditional ruler of Kedjom Keku (see plate 8 and 9).²⁷ Chief Vugah Simon the traditional ruler of Kedjom Keku was beaten to death and his body and house set on fire by his people.

In a bid to survive, many traditional rulers have chosen to scheme, abet fraud and betray their subjects even at the detriment of their people and country.²⁸ We have witnessed venerated sultans and lamidos humiliated by their people, respected *fons* pelted with rotten tomatoes, some burnt to dead, others arrested and jailed for murder, theft, embezzlement, drunken fights over alcohol and women and illicit land sales. Some palaces have been ransacked and set ablaze.²⁹ Many traditional authorities have been used as toys by politicians,

²²Kaze., "The Dethronement of Traditional chiefs" p 94

²³Ibid

²⁴ Ibid,

²⁵Asong., *The Crown of Thorns* p 22

²⁶Ibid p 46

²⁷Kaze., "The Dethronement of Traditional chiefs" pp. 105-108

²⁸Cameroon latest.blogspot.co.uk/2012/08/in-reaction-to-president-biyas-call.html, accessed, 10th July 2012

²⁹The Eye Nwespaper, in reaction to president Biya's call: CAMCORE (UK Diaspora) stomps Cameroon, makes own consolidate peace and unity, 30th August, 2012.

making them to desecrate their throne and to be reduced and openly challenged by their people. Some Cameroonians even called for the abolition of traditional institutions as a result of the treatment given to traditional rulers.

Plate 8: Destroyed Residence of Chief Vugah Simon



Source: Kaze Tindo, February 2011

Plate 9: Burnt mortal remains of Chief Vugah Simon



Source: Kaze Tindo May 2011

In 2009, the UN Human Right Committee reported that the government had taken steps to address impunity for human rights abuses, listing the following cases in which traditional rulers in Cameroon were prosecuted:

The *fon* of Awing in the North West region part of our study area was prosecuted for whipping and undressing of a church minister and a host of others

The paramount chief of Bafoussam was sentenced by the high court of Mifi to five years imprisonment, suspended for five years and a fine of one million francs for depredation by band, arson, disturbance of quiet enjoyment and respect on 6th May 2005.

The Lamido of Tcheboa was charged with false forced labour, convicted and sentenced to one-year imprisonment on 24th Augst 1993 by the high court of Benoue. A bench warrant was issued against him.

The Lamido of Douroum, was charged with extortion on his people, convicted and sentenced in two separate cases; a) defamation and abuse in which sentenced he was sentenced to one-month imprisonment and a fine of one million one hundred thousand francs on 7th May 2003. b) disturbance of quiet enjoyment, destruction of property in which he was sentenced to two years imprisonment by the high court of Mayo Louti on 13th August 2003.

The traditional ruler of Bantoum III (Bangante) was sentenced to one-year imprisonment and a fine of 10,000frs for false arrest by the court of first instance and a bench warrant issued against him³⁰ These and many more are crimes punishable if committed by traditional rulers. This has contributed either in pushing traditional rulers away from integration efforts or forced them to collaborate with the administration in order to be protected.

IV-Lack of Respect for Traditional Institutions

In the Bamenda Grassfields, the role of *Kwifor* and other traditional institutions in traditional administration of the *fondom* are very important. *Kwifor* for example exercise executive and judicial functions in the day to day administration of the land under the authority of the chief. It would sometimes regulate traditional matters based on sound judgment without consulting the chief. As a regulatory society composed of qualified elders of the land, she plays an important role in the administration of chiefdoms through decision making. As such, traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfields have as an obligation to collaborate with *kwifor*. Through collaboration, peace, respect and prosperity are guaranteed. Nyamnjo in describing the relationship between traditional rulers and the *Kwifor* holds that:

³⁰United Nations, Human Right Committee reports submitted by states parties under article 40 of the Covenant, Fourth periodic reports of state parties, Cameroon, CCPR/C/CMR/4, 31st March 2009 in ccprcentre.org/doc/HRC/Cameroon/CCPR.C.CMR.4AUV.DOC

... The thumb and the fingers both form the hand, but the thumb is the coordinator of all the fingers. The Fon is the thumb and along with others form the Kwifon. The finger stands for other people. The thumb can do nothing without the finger and vice versa. Just as without the thumb, the fingers cannot grip something grimly, so too can the people be ineffective without a Chief.³¹

This in essence means that traditional rulers have an obligation to collaborate with his people represented by *kwifor* and vice versa. The legitimacy of a traditional ruler in the Bamenda Grassfield lies in the hands of *kwifor*. So, any sign of disrespect for *kwifor* was a threat to the *fondom*. With integration efforts, *kwifor* which is charged with the protection of the chief in most cases was sidelined in favour of modern administrators who have contributed to the fall of many traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield. Not should however be taken that some traditional rulers are a disgrace to the institution as a result of their actions and greed.

Democratization has equally played a great role on the changing role of traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfields. The law of 10th July 1960 which recognized traditional rulers marks the beginning of the declining power of traditional rulers. This law which was later modified by Ahidjo gave birth to the 1977 law that reorganized and made traditional rulers auxiliaries to the administration. Being auxiliaries and positioned under the supervision of senior administrators (article 2-5 of the 1977 decree stipulated that traditional rulers were under the supervision of the prime minister, minister of territorial administration and the DO)³² meant instructions handed down by hierarchy were to be executed³³ This is against the culture and tradition of the people whose rulers don't take instructions. Rather he gives instructions which must be respected. This has gone a long way to slow down integration efforts since the people would not accept to see their chief taking orders from administrators.

The introduction of some form of salary as motivation to traditional rulers by the post-colonial administration was clear indication of the firm grip of traditional rulers by modern administration. Refusing to collaborate and work with post-colonial administration meant refusal to collect the monthly motivation (salary) given to traditional rulers. Accepting to collect meant the rulers had to dance to the music played by the administration. Either ways, traditional rulers found themselves between the hammer and the anvil with grievous consequences. Most traditional rulers in order to benefit and be favoured by the post-colonial administration abandoned their palaces and ran behind political parties for political favours and positions in the name of integration. To sum it up, Cardinall says; "...the chiefs were

³¹Kahjum., "Bum Leadership in Bum Fondom ca 1870-1999", p.37

³²Law of 2nd June 1972 and that of May 1975 at the Bamenda Regional Archives.

³³In modern administration, instructions are given from top to bottom and all instructions given by the hierarchy are suppose to be respected by subordinates.

practically powerless: they have neither revenue nor authority. They have tended to become mere sergeant-majors through whom the Administration can address the rank and file.”³⁴

B-Traditional Rulers and the Challenges of Integration

At independence, the administration of the socio-political institutions (chieftaincy) of the Bamenda Grassfield had new socio-political administrative structure that supervised and coordinated the traditional state. The creation of the Ministry of Territorial Administration as a supervisory authority over traditional rulers coupled with the 1977 decree on the organization and functioning of chieftaincy in Cameroon marked the start of gradual integration of traditional rulers into modern administration. The appointment of administrative authorities in their various ranks and files to manage the chieftaincy institution made traditional rulers puppets. They did not take into consideration the culture and tradition of the people into consideration when it came to the putting in place of traditional rulers. Some administrative authorities went as far as imposing chiefs on the people which at the long run created problems.³⁵

I-Imposition of Traditional Rulers

At independence, the chieftaincy institution was characterized by in-fighting on who to take over the throne. In order to make its authority felt, the post-colonial administration stepped in to put some order. In an effort to maintain order, individuals were at times imposed on the people as traditional rulers of which the people were not willing to cooperate with the imposed chiefs and this made integration efforts difficult. In the Ashong-Batibo chieftaincy dispute, Governor Bell Luc Rene on the 25th of August 1994 called for a meeting to find a solution to the dispute. The outcome of that meeting was the creation of the Ashong Central Third Class Fandom. This was done through a prefectural order signed by the S.D.O. for Momo John Niba Nchotu on the 6th September 1994 which created more problems. The creation of a third class fandom was an imposition of a chief on the people of Asong against their wish. The impact was that it antagonized the people who were or are backed by their culture and tradition against the authorities of modern administration for imposing a traditional ruler on them. These imposed traditional rulers were seen and used as stools by

³⁴Ali Yakubu Nyaaba., “Transformations in the Chieftaincy Institution in Northern Ghana from 1900-1969: A Case Study of Navrongo and SAKOT”, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Doctorat thesis, Department of History and Political Studies February, 2009, p 97

³⁵A. E. Agwi., “Chieftaincy Dispute in Ashong-Batibo Sub-Division, 1900-2009: A Historical Analysis”, Long Essay in History, University of Buea, 2011, 13.

administrative authorities and became more of what Rouveroy van Nieuwaal describes as “administrative chieftaincy”.³⁶

Judging from the role of traditional rulers in pre-colonial administrations, it can be deduced that the chieftaincy institution was a threat to the modern State. They were influential in conflict resolution and their words were seen in many instances as “the law” used in the settling of disputes. Dreading the threat traditional rulers could cause the modern state as a result of their influence and role backed by the population (they were seen as rival governance institutions and a threat to stability), the African modern states co-opted and marginalized traditional rulers within its bureaucratic models as mere auxiliaries who had to follow orders as stipulated by the administering officer. The people saw integration as a method of ordering traditional rulers which was out of question according to the tradition and custom of the people. In order to protect their chiefs, barriers were put up against integration efforts in order to fight against the use of traditional rulers as puppets.

The labeling of traditional rulers as auxiliaries was a means to clip their wings and bring them under control. It was a mechanism to put an end to the threat posed by influential traditional rulers. These mechanisms were aimed at keeping traditional rulers under the influence and control of the modern state. The consequences among others were the lack of respect for “administrative traditional rulers” which culminated to dethronement. The successors to dethroned traditional rulers had to toe the line and play along with both parties (protect his culture and at the same time dance to the melody of the administration) for fear of an attack or eventual dethronement. This way, they stay on the fence which was challenging to efforts aimed at integrating traditional rulers into modern administration since one could not openly declare on whose side traditional rulers stood.

At independence, chieftaincy was not only threatened by the new political elites, it was transformed into a valet institution to the new state. Traditional rulers were later engulfed and aligned as the lowest administrative unit and representative of the state or what was administratively called auxiliaries of the administration. The fact that the chieftaincy institution became a valet institution at the mercy of the modern state capable of making and unmaking a chief, a number of troubles increased within the chieftaincy institution. “Administratively made chiefs” became a threat to natural rulers. This created disunity among the people and the administration. In an atmosphere of disunity and lack of trust, full integration was not possible. An example of an administratively made chief could be seen in

³⁶ E. A. B. R. Nieuwaal., States and Chiefs Are Chiefs Mere Puppets? *Journal of Legal Pluralism*, Vol. 38, No. 37, 1996, p.40

Mambu where the *fon* single handedly made Musoh a chief and imposed his authority on the people of Asong of Mambu. Though he was not dethroned, only his immediate family saw him and respected him as a traditional ruler.³⁷

Before the coming of colonial rule, traditional rulers were not answerable to anyone. Although the *kwifor* was there as a regulatory society, in most cases, it acted as an advisory council. The *fon* had the choice to either take the advice of *kwifor* or not to³⁸. He had everything at his beg and call. His word was law and was respected by all. Everything about the fondom centered on him. At independence, the steps of chiefs were gradually redressed as he was deprived from some of the advantages enjoyed and the power he exercised in certain domains. The most evident was the 1974 land laws and other decree passed by the administration. Depriving the chief of advantages enjoyed as a traditional ruler automatically created enmity between him and the administering body which is not favourable for integration.

In Cameroon, the power of traditional rulers is often based on two sources; state recognition which is synonymus to legality and local “tradition” synonymus to legitimacy. According to the 1977 decree on the reorganization of chieftaincy in Cameroon, administrative authorities could only confirm a chief presented by the kingmakers of the concerned *fondom*. At the same time, the administrative authority had the powers to or not to recognize a traditional ruler even if he was legitimately chosen by the kingmakers. A chief could officially rule if he was recognized and legally installed in the presence of an administrative authority that would later forward his name to the Ministry of Territorial Administration. This in other words suggests that even if a traditional ruler was illegitimate but legal, he could be allowed to rule which is contrary to the customs of the people and as a matter of fact will hinder integration efforts.

The inclusion and recognition of traditional authorities by states can in return guarantee their support for the state. The risk is that strengthening some traditional rulers might lead to stronger ethnic divisions and increased conflicts which might slow down integration efforts like in the case of Bafut and Fungom. In the chieftaincy struggle in Fungom, the D O decided to handle the matter his own way. In the presence of the two contestants to the throne and their supporters, quarter heads of Misong and chiefs of Fungom, the D.O presented Ngu to the people as the traditional ruler of Misong on the 20th

³⁷ Interview with Neba Felix, age 42, mechanic, October 2018, Nso Bafut.

³⁸ Interview with Abumbi II, Age 63, Fon of Bafut, 25 October 2012, Bafut palace.

of July 1967.³⁹ This declaration was made in the presence of chiefs of the entire Fungom area and a letter to that effect was handed over to Ngu. An excerpt of the letter reads; "... by this decision, the government recognises you as the chief of Missong, and at the same time appeals to you for peace and corporation among your people ...I wish to congratulate you and your success and also appeals for your cooperation at all times..."⁴⁰

The congratulatory message came after an agreement signed by the contesting parties pleading to respect the decision of the court in the presence of other traditional rulers of the Fungom area and the DO. The court decision went thus:

*We the chiefs of Fungom recognised Apwa Ngu as the Chief of Missong Luh Beh ceases to be chief of Missong from the date of this order. That Missong community will build a house for Luh Beh, that we will keep the peace and order in Missong village at all times, that in the event of any breach of the peace, we should be held responsible by the government.*⁴¹

Looking at the case of Missong, the court in collaboration with the D.O. imposes a traditional ruler on the people. Such an imposed ruler does not have the support of the people which automatically hinders integration efforts. On the other hand, although the above agreement was signed by both parties, the administration failed to follow up the full respect of the terms of the agreement. Luh Beh refused to relinquish all traditional panaphinarians to Apwa Ngu nor support him as the traditional ruler of Missong. The lukewarm attitude of the DO to ensure the full respect of the agreement was a discouraging factor on the part of Ngu to support the administration in efforts aimed at the integration of traditional rulers into modern administration. The administration failed to protect traditional rulers who were considered auxiliaries of the administration. It therefore scared traditional rulers from accepting integration efforts. Lastly, the traditional process of choosing a successor to the throne after the disappearance of the chief was not respected.

The meddling of administrative authorities in chieftaincy disputes had hindered progress toward efforts in making traditional rulers part of modern administration. The tendency is that, administrative officers will support a chief who identifies himself with the administrator of that area since he represents the President. A chief who fails to collaborate with the ruling party is bound to be relegated to the background. This has instilled fear in the

³⁹ Letter from J. N. Ntui, SDO Wum, to Luh Beh.

⁴⁰ Letter from J. N. Ntui, Senior Divisional Officer, Wum Division, to Tryself Apwa, Missong Village, Fungom Area, Wum, 20th July, 1967. Ref. no.DMW.644/68A.

⁴¹ Ref. DMW.644/98, Letter from SDO to Chief Tryself Apwa, Missong Village, Wum Division, "Disturbances in Missong Village", Your letter dated 20th August 1968, p.103.

people over the involvement of traditional rulers into modern administration since he would be controlled by the administration and does what is pleasing to the administration rather than stand for his people.⁴² As such, kingmakers for fear of the wrath of the ancestors for collaboration with the administration in the choice of a chief distance themselves from the web of modern administration as much as they could. This has slowed down integration efforts. In the Zhoa and the Kungi Chieftaincy Struggles the administration was biased or delayed in respecting the wishes of the people over who should be their chief.⁴³

II-Withdrawal of Benefits Enjoyed by Traditional Rulers

The interference of modern administration in traditional administration blocked some sources of finance for traditional rulers. Bans were placed on certain aspects which brought income and pleasure to traditional rulers. The expropriation of properties belonging to suspected or proven witches and wizards, reservation of women for the *fon*, bride prices received for twins, twins taken as the wife of the *fon* or *nchinda* depending on the sex of the child, collection of other forms of tributes were banned by the administration. Traditional rulers were no longer entitled to some of these advantages. This made things difficult for them who now had to indulge in activities contrary to the tradition and customs of the people in order to survive. Efforts to live a good life pushed traditional rulers to indulge into illicit ways of making money which further distance the respect for traditional rulers and promoted opposition from his people.⁴⁴ This opposition distanced him from his people which complicated efforts and brought traditional rulers closer to modern administration since they needed the support of their people.

On the other hand, the prohibition of traditional rulers from punishing or extorting from their 'subjects' by article 29 of the 1977 decree further complicated integration efforts. This is because any defilement of this provision could lead to dismissal. An example is the case of the Group Head of Foreke-Dschang, a second-class chiefdom who was dismissed for inertia, inefficiency and extortion on the masses by order No 111-CAB-PM of 22nd August 2005 by the prime minister, head of government.⁴⁵

⁴²In an interview with Vugbansi Mary, 35 years, teacher, August 2019, Yaounde. Chief Vouga Simon was killed by his people as a result of his collaboration with government officials and politicians in the selling of ancestral land to strangers, molestation of the people and other atrocities which the government gave a blind eye to them.

⁴³For details, consult Kaze's "The Dynamics of Chieftaincy Conflicts", pp. 133-138

⁴⁴Ndobengang., "Grassfield Chiefs", p. 154.

⁴⁵United Nations, Human Right Committee, consideration of reports submitted by states parties under article 40 of the Covenant, Fourth periodic reports of state parties, Cameroon, CCPR/C/CMR/4, 31st March 2009 in ccprcentre.org/doc/HRC/Cameroon/CCPR.C.CMR.4AUV.DOC

With the passage of the 1974 land law, the authority and power of the *Fon* had been constantly reduced or opposed by agents of the administration. Traditional rulers were seen as the last resort when it came to the day-to-day administration of their polities. When we visited the DO of Bafut, out of every ten persons we saw in his office, six came with land problem or land related issues. Requesting to know if he (the DO) is the competent authority to handle land issues taking into considering the fact that he is a stranger and does not master the terrain; he said the opinion of the *fon* is sorted if his effort at settling the matter peacefully failed since traditional rulers master land intrecacies better than him.⁴⁶ Here the *fon* who is held in high esteem by his people and is at the center when it comes to land as the custodian is seen by the D.O as the last resort. For the people, it's a sign of disrespect on the person and office of the *fon* which the people would not want to accept. Distancing their chief from the hands of the administration was a method of protecting their chief which automatically hinders integration efforts.

Conservation laws passed by the international community and the Cameroon government prohibited the killing of endangered species. Kingly animals are no longer killed and presented to the *fon*. The trade in ivory which was a source of income to the *fon* had seized to exist. They now resorted to other means of raising money which are embarrassing to the custom and tradition of the people. The *fon* was forced to seize and sale land to natives in order to raise money for the running of his family in the name of custodian since hunting, community farming for the *fon* which gave them money and food had been checked. In Bafut, because the *fon* was constantly motivated financially by Che Ntooh, communal land was seized from the people of Mbebili and handed to Che Ntooh as private property.⁴⁷ For the people to live in peace and enjoy their land and continuously pay allegiance to their *fon* as tradition demands, they preferred their ruler withdraw from collaboration with modern administration which has blocked integration efforts.

As the *fon* realized that whatever power and influence he wielded depended on those in power, he increasingly isolated himself from his age-long advisors, the *kwifor*. Consequently, his decisions did not always take into consideration the opinion of his advisers, the *kwifor*. With the sidelining of his advisers, administration became difficult for the *fon* without the support of *kwifor* which acted as the implementing force of the *fon*. Refusal to collaborate with his council members was excluding them from his administration which opened a vacuum and exposed the ruler as presented by Asong; “We came to inform

⁴⁶ Interview with Jude Ewane Mbony, DO Bafut, 14 September 2012, Bafut

⁴⁷ Interview with Tanifor Peter, Age 63, 15 September 2012, Asong.

government that we no longer have a chief”⁴⁸ The consequences fell on the ruler who was in most cases dethroned, exiled or even killed like in the case of Kedjem.

The reunification of Cameroon brought another change in the dynamics and structure of traditional administration and its institutions. The francophone system relegated *fons* to the bottom of the ladder in the chain of modern and traditional administration. For example, in 1962, the West Cameroon House of Chiefs, a structure that gave them legitimacy and strength as natural rulers not forgetting the Land Law of 1974 which weakened their hold on tribal land was abolished by the government with the pretext that it was costly.⁴⁹ With the abolishment of the West Cameroon House of Chiefs, traditional rulers lost respect for the administration attached themselves to the customs of their people in close collaboration with the traditional council which hindered integration efforts.

With the coming of colonial and post-colonial administration, there has been a new trend in the standard of living. As such, the traditional communal style of living together for the interest of all has been phased off. This system of living and sharing a communal life has not been valued by constitutional governments of the country which has created tension and pressure on the limited natural resources. With this, chiefs nowadays are faced with many economic challenges in their respective communities. With these challenges, they are forced to engage and accept proposal and offers from the administration which facilitated the process of integration and on the other side place them and the people at logger heads. This is because; chiefs now served not his people’s interests as dictated by tradition but that of the colonial and post-colonial authorities who ruled the people through them. Consequently, the colonial and post-colonial authorities arrogated the right of legislation, which had hitherto resided in the hands of traditional rulers and their elders before colonial rule. The consequence was disagreement among the people and their chief backed by modern administration which has slowed down integration efforts.

Again, there has been a transformation with respect to the exercise of judicial functions of traditional rulers. Native courts which were created and authorized by the colonial authorities to be managed by traditional rulers had limited civil and criminal jurisdictions. For instance, in civil jurisdiction, chiefs were limited to affiliation actions, custody of children, land and marital issues. Traditional rulers could no longer handle cases and give out fines as had been the case. Judgement was to be determined by the post-colonial authorities as inherited from the colonial administration. This explains why the authority and

⁴⁸L.T. Asong, *The Crown of Thorns*

⁴⁹Samah, “Chiefs (Traditional rulers) in Anglophone Cameroon”, P.73.

verdict of a traditional ruler could be contested by his subordinates in court.⁵⁰ The constant disobedience and disrespect for traditional authority goes contrary to the fact that traditionally any person under the jurisdiction of a traditional ruler was subject to the laws of that community.

Besides restraining the power of chiefs in civil and criminal matters in their area of jurisdiction under the native court ordinance, the decisions of chiefs in native tribunals were also subject to appeal. This made the latter superior to the traditional rulers and meant that, the chiefs had to rely on modern courts for affirmation of their judicial authority in the Bamenda Grassfield, a source of conflict.

In the Bamenda Grassfields, chieftaincy was preserved and guaranteed but the form was determined by the colonial and post-colonial governments. The recognition of a chief is left in the hands of the Minister of Territorial Administration. This explains why the 1977 degree on the classification of traditional rulers was introduced to reinforce the control of traditional rulers and make them answerable to the government. This went a long way to weaken the position of traditional rulers in the administration of their polities. For example, in Ghana, the Nkrumah government did not only weaken the political and judicial roles of the traditional rulers but also made them appendages to the central government by breaking their financial backbone. This was evident through the enactment of laws such as Akyem Abuakwa (Stool Revenue) Act, 1958 (Act 8) Ashanti Stool Act, 1958 (Act 28) and the Stool Lands Control Act, 1960 (Act 79). It usurped the regulation of the collection and usage of stool revenue.⁵¹

The greatest challenge to chieftaincy which affected integration efforts was the attempts by the state to reduce the power and authority of traditional rulers in the colonial era and immediately after independence. The changing roles of chiefs as determined by the central political authorities have posed challenges to chiefs to effectively contribute to the development of the nation. This is because most of the inhabitants of the Bamenda Grassfield live in rural areas where the most visible respected authority is the chief whom the people still look up to for the smooth functioning of the land. The traditional ruler of Oshie, Etunyi Mathew Anuangwe was invited by Podevin, the DO for Bamenda Division,⁵² to come to the station in Bamenda on foot. The fact that he was made to trek to the station was a challenge to his authority as traditional ruler. According to tradition, the DO had to be the one to move

⁵⁰NAB, file No 2408, Petition from Nano, village head of Oban, Nb/b, 1951

⁵¹Oduro-Awisi., "Chieftaincy Disputes in Akuapem Traditional Area, August 2013, p.43

⁵²Nkwi., *Traditional Government*, p. 142

round chiefdoms, visit and discuss whatever he wanted with traditional rulers in their palaces and not ask them to come to his station. This supports our argument that traditional rulers were consumed and till date are enablers to the administration at the detriment of the culture and tradition of their people. Efforts at making traditional rulers part of modern administration enslave traditional rulers and the culture of the people.

III-Democratization

With the liberalization of multi-partism in the 1990s in Cameroon, an opportunity was created for traditional rulers to make their voices heard. A number of factors as a result of the liberalization of the political scene made the population to destest the integration of traditional rulers into modern governance. Being part of the administering authority means one has to follow the political ideology of the ruling class of which politics has no respect for persons or titles. Traditional rulers did not only participate in politics. Their participation arose their libido for financial independence which led to the exploitation of the population leading to the emergence of a neo-traditional class of chiefs. The class of chiefs took sides in political matters as oppose to traditional norms which states that the chief is the father to all regardless of one's political view. So, democratization did not only contribute to exploitation but separated the chief from his people especially those who did not see political matters from the direction of the chief. In order to have their chief for the interest of all, they prefer he stay off politics

The political liberalization process in Cameroon in the 1990s favored the opening of the political space and the unleashing of opportunities which traditional rulers were quick to seize to demonstrate their relevance as vote banks. This led to the open implication of chiefs in partisan politics for political offices. This did not only permit traditional rulers to rejuvenate traditional rulership⁵³ but also led to what Samah Walters described as the "re-traditionalisation" of the African State.⁵⁴ Traditional authorities in the Bamenda Grassfields took advantage of their status as the representatives of grassroots people to impose themselves in this new era of liberalization in Cameroon. They did not only impose themselves but forced the people to follow them in their political line of action.

Jude Fokwang indicates that the introduction of democracy in Cameroon in the 1990s created conditions for the return of old political actors such as traditional rulers to the

⁵³ C.F. Nchia., "Party Politics in the Bamenda Grassfields 1955-2004: Transmutations and Implications", Ph. D Dissertation in History, The University of Yaounde 1, 2013, p.220 129

⁵⁴ Samah., "Chiefs (Traditional rulers) in Anglophone Cameroon", p.15

“national political scene”⁵⁵ since they were prohibited in the days of the single party state from participating in national politics.⁵⁶ Democratisation pushed traditional rulers into political parties against the wishes of the people. The *fon* of Mankon was co-opted as the first Vice President of the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) and the traditional rulers of Bali and Bafut became alternate members of the Central Committee of the CPDM. Geschiere gives an example of a chief, the *fon* of Mankon, whose car was stolen because of his involvement with a certain political party⁵⁷ It would not have happened to him if he had stayed out of party politics since it was taken away during a political meeting.

The integration of traditional rulers into modern administration through the liberalisation of the political scene placed traditional rulers at logger heads with their people. Some lost valuable property, respect of the people while others were dethroned. In Mankon for example, *Fon* Angwafor was confronted with accusations and threats from his subjects who blacklisted him for complicity with the CPDM administration. During the state of emergency, and precisely on the 3rd November 1992, hundreds of his subjects stormed his palace protesting against his “meddling” in partisan politics. Other unidentified protesters burnt down the *fon's* rest house in Bamenda to register their anger with him.

In Bali, some members of the CPDM were completely against *Fon* Ganyonga's candidature for the election as a mayor. The *Fon's* determination to run for the post led to chaos within the CPDM party of Bali. Militants who opposed his candidature decided to elect their own candidate making the party to have two contenders for the post of mayor within the same municipality being the *Fon* and one of his subjects. Although the *Fon* emerged as the CPDM candidate, at the end of the election, he was defeated by the opposition.⁵⁸ His defeat made him unpopular as had been predicted by those who opposed his running for the mayoral office. Subjects who were opposed to the *Fon's* involvement in party politics disobeyed instructions from the palace as a way of registering their disappointment with the *Fon*. It was said the people refused to supply free labor to the *Fon*, provoking him to place a temporary ban on all death celebrations (cry-die) until subjects complied with his demands.⁵⁹

The involvement of traditional rulers into politics for them to be active partners in modern administration has contributed in altering traditional order and institutions put in

⁵⁵ J. Fokwang., “Chieftaincy in the Era of Democratic Transition in Africa: A Comparative study in the Fondoms of Tshivhase and Bali”, M.A Dissertation in History, University of Pretoria, 2003, p.107.

⁵⁶ J-F Bayart., *L'Etat au Cameroun*, Paris, Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1979.

⁵⁷ Geschiere, Peter L., "Chiefs and Colonial Rule in Cameroon: Inventing Chieftaincy, French and EnglishStyle." *Africa* 63(2): 1993, pp. 151-175.

⁵⁸ Fokwang., “Chieftaincy in the Era of Democratic Transition in Africa”, p.108

⁵⁹ Ibid

place. The challenge to the authority of the *Fon* as seen in the examples above could provoke succession conflicts since the traditional rulers concern became unpopular in the eyes of the people. In the Fondom of Ndu, the killing of six citizens by soldiers for protesting against supposedly stolen victory in elections made the *Fon* unpopular to his people. His silence over the matter provoked his subjects to accuse him of collaborating with the CPDM and of being an auxiliary to state repression. As such, his subjects began to denounce him publicly and others called him by his name which is interpreted as an open sign of dethronement.⁶⁰ Disrespect, insubordination, dethronement among other things are challenges encountered by traditional rulers as a result of their involvement in party politics which has made efforts toward their integration difficult as a result of the consequences that awaits them if they go contrary to the wishes of the people. It should be said that most of the rulers venture into politics in order to protect their positions and gain favours from the system.

The involvement of traditional rulers in politics by politicians has been and continues to be an area of disagreement between the people and their chiefs over traditional administration. During the reign of Achirimbi II, he received politicians like Foncha, Muna, Endeley and Jua who solicited his support and that of his people concerning the position of Southern Cameroons in the plebiscite.⁶¹ Achirimbe II equally shook hands with the Queen of England and other influential politicians which is not acceptable taking into consideration his position as the *Fon*. In politics, people are called by their names and calling a traditional ruler by name signifies dethronement. Collaborating with politicians up to the level of shaking hands with them is a sign of disrespect for traditional institutions as a result of integration efforts. The fact that Achirimbi II and his successor interacted with modern political administrators negatively affected the position of traditional rulers and the respect he deserved from his people as custodian. This gave an opportunity to those who opposed the *Fon* to openly do so thereby undermining his position and giving room for succession conflicts. The outcome was the fragmentation of his fondom up to the level where some chiefs had refused to pay allegiance to the *fon* till date.

Traditional rulers' participation in party politics as a method geared toward integration was and is still a serious blunder that was sure to undermine the legitimacy and credibility of chiefs in the eyes of their people. That is why Lantum notes:

when a Chief participates and losses in elections as it happened in the fondoms of Nkar and Oku ... it is tantamount to virtual dethronement, or whenever he won and

⁶⁰ C.F. Fisiy., "Chieftaincy in the Modern State: An Institution at the Crossroad of Democratic Change", *Paideuma*, 41, 1995, p.55.

⁶¹ Samah., "Chiefs (Traditional rulers) in Anglophone Cameroon", P.73.

*became a council member; he has to answer to his personal names in public affairs, which is a serious contradiction to tradition, by which a living Fon is never called by his real names*⁶²

During the 1992 elections, *Fon* Galabe Doh Gah Gwanyin had apparently stuffed the ballot boxes in his palace before the beginning of the election. This situation immediately raised tempers and violent reactions. In response, *Fon* Doh Galabe threatened to open fire on his subjects. In reaction, the population threatened to burnt down his palace had it not been for the rapid intervention of the forces of law and order.⁶³ During the legislative elections of 1997, still on a background of suspicion of election fraud, his subjects organised a violent protest and given the magnitude of the protest, *Fon* Doh took refuge for a time in Bamenda. His implication in party politics and some mischievous acts with the aim of integrating himself into the modern ruling political class laid the foundation for the disintegration of the Balikumbat fondom and created a scene for chieftaincy succession conflicts.

The involvement of traditional rulers into modern administration has led to their involvement in partisan politics which is a game of interest contrary to the person of traditional ruler whose reign is for the interest of the entire population. The institution is for everyone and therefore should be excluded from partisan politics since traditional rulers are supposed to be impartial figures in the society. Their involvement in politics is a challenge to one part of the society that does not see reasons with their ruler in supporting his political stand. Every traditional ruler in the Bamenda Grassfield who gets involved in partisan politics contradicts the very institution which he incarnates as custodian and father to the people, all his efforts should geared at working selflessly for the common good of all his subjects. Some traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfields as a result of their involvement in partisan politics become tyrants, taking unilateral decisions without consulting other traditional institutions. This was the case with Chief *Sha'ngong* of Bambili who was dethroned and murdered and replaced with chief Awemo I of Bambili.⁶⁴

IV-Opposition from Traditional Institutions

Traditional institutions were given the pride of place in the Bamenda Grassfields. Among these institutions is the traditional ruler, secret societies, the traditional council among others. In pre-colonial Bamenda Grassfield, the secret societies played a pivotal role in local administration and this role continued into the post-colonial administration though with little

⁶²Ibid, p.336.

⁶³ Jua., "Indirect Rule in Colonial and Postcolonial Cameroon" p. 41.

⁶⁴Akwo., The Mbeligi and the Palace, 2006, p.13.

adjustments. As a result of the changing role of traditional administration headed by the chief, there was bound to be disagreement among traditional institutions in relation to their role in modern administration. This has been a big blow to integration efforts since these institutions are empowered to enthrone and dethrone.

If the old adage that two cocks cannot crow in the same compound is still valid then one should not be surprised to find a confrontational relationship between the state and traditional rulers on one side and the people on the other side (represented by *kwifor*) in relation to control over resources and population.⁶⁵ The African chief has become part of the state bureaucracy and sometimes even part of the official administration of justice at the detriment of his own people though he continues to be part of a traditional world. Traditional rulers alongside their advisers (*kwifor*) administer their subject without any kind of formal bureaucracy, succeeded in maintaining law and order. For example, the palace was sustained by food and goods from the people. This period was often referred to as the golden age.⁶⁶ Things gradually changed after the colonization of Africa and the Bamenda Grassfield in particular in the early 20th century when the political, social and economic structure of the area was dislodged. It became evident the *Fon* was no longer guided adequately by *kwifor*. In Bafut, the power of the *Fon* was slowly weakened under the leadership of Achirimbi II (1932-1968) as a result of external influence and a mechanism to guaranty rural votes.⁶⁷ The same situation was seen in Mankon, Bali and other parts of the Bamenda Grassfield especially with the launching of the CPDM.

Disagreement of traditional institution over the involvement of traditional rulers in party politics which could lead to brutality and non-respect of rules and regulations is one of the greatest challenges in efforts at making traditional rulers part of modern administration. Traditional institutions which are supposed to protect the *Fon* and his people would not side with a chief who goes against the tradition of the people. For fear of the consequences, traditional rulers are forced to act as a two-sided sword in order to avoid the wrath of his institutions and that of the colonial and post-colonial administration. Playing a double role makes integration efforts difficult since one does not openly accept the authority of the administration nor that of traditional institutions. An informant said,

You must learn how to play games in order to survive and rule your people in collaboration with traditional institutions charge with the traditional

⁶⁵Fisiy, Cyprian F., "Chieftaincy in the Modern State: An Institution at the Crossroads of Democratic Change." *Paideuma*, 1995b, 41: 49-62.

⁶⁶N. Matthias., *The Bafut Fandom. Keynote Address at BMCA, USA. Minneapolis, MN 2006*

⁶⁷ Ibid

*administration of the people and to avoid the wrath of the modern administration. Full manifestation of support for one authority over the other will lead to serious repercussions on our part as traditional rulers.*⁶⁸

He who fails to collaborate with his traditional institutions has himself to blame. This explains why chief Vugah was chased away from his palace by the people in collaboration with *kwifor*, a secret society in Kedjom Keku. Manifesting his support and loyalty to the administration in a correspondence, chief Vugah Simon II noted that a state cannot be within a state. In his letter to MINTAT, he further begged that the government should quickly intervene in Kedjom Keku to reinstate him as the rightful chief because he had been *Fon* for 25 years with a palace population of 135 persons as the administering authority of the state. Following his excommunication from the village, chief Vugah noted that he has been driven from the palace and from the village with his family and were suffering from serious starvation, illness and no place to stay for eight months and a half. Chief Vugah maintained in the letter that he was an arm of the administration and that the state should intervene to save him from his own people under the supervision of traditional institution (*Kwifor*).⁶⁹

According to the Resident, Native Authority control by traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield during the British colonial era was given substantial powers to exercise the functions of sacred societies. Seeing the influential role sacred societies had on traditional rulers which affected administrative procedures, the colonial administration in strong terms declared,

*“we want to make it clear to Christian and pagan alike that our native administration is the local authority whose powers are exercised in a common interest of all and whose lawful orders are authorized by government and must be obeyed by all”*⁷⁰

This statement grounded all activities of sacred societies which were considered the power and protector of traditional rulers. Most of them now operated clandestinely. As a result of this restriction on their powers, the *kwifor* and other sacred societies influenced traditional rulers not to collaborate with the colonial administration. By traditional law, traditional rulers had to obey owing to the fact that their existence and rule is linked to sacred societies. This greatly retarded efforts aim at integrating traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield.

In the Bamenda Grassfield, public knowledge of the successor of a traditional ruler is a taboo. One of the rules of succession states that the successor must not be reveal until the

⁶⁸Interview with Abumbi, *fon* of Bafut

⁶⁹ Letter to the Ministry of Territorial Administration dated, 23rd December 2004.

⁷⁰ NAB, File Aa 1926/24, the Juju societies and relations to Native administration.

death of the incumbent. This among others is to avoid, hatred, in fighting among the sons, killing, and rudeness among others.⁷¹ The people believed that the act of ruling the people is learned in the palace beside the reigning traditional ruler and not in schools. No traditional ruler in colonial Bamenda was willing to send his favourite son whom he sees as the potential heir to the throne to go and study the white man's ways of administration in order to be a good ruler when he eventually takes over the throne. "... the art of ruling was learnt here, besides our fathers not away at school. Even if they had consented to send us (and some chiefs eventually did) were we to return to rule with the laws of our country or of the white man?"⁷² This justifies the fact that traditional rulers did not want anything to do with the modern system of administration. They prefer to continue with the traditional system of administration as was the case in pre-colonial Cameroon. This direct refusal of traditional rulers to send their sons to schools created by the colonialist was a hindrance to efforts toward the integration of traditional rulers into the British system of modern governance imported into the post-colonial administration. The colonialist knew that through schools, the mentality of the people in relation to administration and other activities would be improved.

V-Disregard for Reforms

Despite the 1974 land laws passed by the Cameroon government, customary communities are indifferent to the reform. They consider the laws as useless in the rural areas where people continue, and without title, to occupy and peacefully exploit land, as in the past ignoring the consequences. The introduction and implementation of these laws does not reflect the reality on the ground today⁷³. In spite of the compulsory aspect of land registration introduced in Cameroon in 1974, majority of farm land remains under customary occupation, controlled by the *Fon* especially in the rural areas.⁷⁴ A traditional ruler from Kom holds that:

*What makes my land my land? Is it that piece of paper or the fact that I am Fon [chief] of Kom? It does not matter whether I register the land or not. Traditionally, all grazing land ... is mine, no matter what the Senior Prefect, the Agricultural Officer, the gendarmes and the government people ... may say. I am the landlord as far as grazing land is concerned*⁷⁵.

This was to show that despite the difficulties and oppositions encountered by *Fons* in the management and control of land, they still see themselves as the landlord and so have the

⁷¹Interview with Vubu Marcel, 56 years, member of the *kwifor* society and taper, January 2018, Banbaki.

⁷²Ndobengang., Grassfield Chiefs and Political Change, p. 140

⁷³A report on CRTV on land management in Cameroon, 7 pm news, 11 June, 2013.

⁷⁴P. B. Logo, Elise-H. Bikie., "Women and land in Cameroon", p. 33.

⁷⁵C.F. Fisiy., "Chieftaincy in the Modern State: An Institutions of Governance", Ethiopia, 1995, p 33.

right to control land under their jurisdiction with or without land titles. This has been a source of disagreement among traditional rulers and representatives of modern administrators which is challenging to integration efforts. Traditional rulers refuse to let go their authority as custodians which is beneficial to population as oppose to the land law which favours individuals.

VI-Disagreement among Traditional Rulers

After watching in dismay how traditional rulers were reduced to stooges, used and dumped by the regime, some North Westerners thought it wise to creat a union in order to right the wrong of the past. In 1994, the Northwest Fons Association (NOWEFA) was created to restore the lost glory of traditional institutions among others with Fon Fusi Yakum Ntaw as president. Achidi Achu, the then Prime Minister of Cameroon did not hide his contempt for the union. To him, a strong and credible association of traditional rulers was of no interest to him. So, he decided to create an association that would be at his beck and call. In his quest to have a union at his beck and call, Achidi Achu found in *Fon Doh Gah Gwayin* of Balikumbat a chief willing to run errands. With the support of Doh Gah Gwayin, Achidi Achu created a rival chiefs union. The fact that two associations were created dealing with the same category of persons (traditional rulers) was already a point of disagreement among members. The fear among traditional rulers coming together under a single union was already a stubling block for unity among them talkless of coming together under a single administration in the name of integration.

Through Doh Gah of Balikumbat, a rival association, the Northwest Fons Conference (NOWEFCO), was created and launched in style at Skyline Hotel Bamenda with the help of Achidi Achu. Achidi Achu provided funds for NOWEFCO to fight and eclipse NOWEFA. It had as target to do away with NOWEFA which was under the authority of the “big five” Fondoms (Bali, Bafut, Mankon, Kom and Nso fondoms) of the Bamenda Grassfield and their rulers.⁷⁶ The very fact that two associations supposedly believe to work for the interest and protection of traditional rulers and their values existed was already a call for concern. Traditional rulers of both camps could not reconcile. The state (through Achidi Achu) backed one of the associations may be for political reasons. Since both associations could not agree and work for a common goal, there was bound to be division among members of the

⁷⁶F. Kebila., Royal Beggars. The Northwest Fons and the Decadence of Tradition, Yaounde, A Messenger Publication, 2009, p.3.

association who were traditional rulers. The division among members of the two associations hindered integration efforts since they had no confidence on each other.

It is believed the fall of Achidi Achu from office is linked to the creation of a rival traditional association which angered the 'big five' traditional rulers and their people.⁷⁷ They campaigned against him and his party which led to the defeat of the party in the 1997 parliamentary election. The CPDM lost 19 seats to the SDF party. This was as a result of the population commanded by the chiefs of the 'big five' backed by other chiefs who were part of NOWEFA. As the occupant of the lone seat in the Bamenda Grassfield, *Fon Doh's* activities as a parliamentarian contributed in dragging traditional rulers to the mud as auxiliaries of the administration. As a chief he had as one of his duties to protect his people. Rather than stand for his people, he brutalized them with the support of state forces which slowed down integration effort since he did not have the support of his people.

Most traditional rulers refused to be placed or continued under the leadership of particular NA areas. This could be seen in the numerous petitions written by such chiefs to the authorities requesting to be disassociated from the villages grouped as NA. The traditional rulers of Oban, Banji, Babanki, Otang, Mankwi, Akofunguba, Mforya, Bafut and other villages in the Bamenda Grassfield wrote petitions addressing issues like conflict among villages, the assessment policy under particular NA areas among others⁷⁸ (see Appendix X). These petitions acted as a disunifying factor and a thorn in the flesh of the administration because it worked against the policy of integrating villages under the authority of a NA head that facilitated administrative procedures. The lack of unity among traditional rulers played negatively on integration efforts as a result of lack of trust and collaboration among them.

Petitions written to the administration did not end at the level of wanting to be separated from N.A areas and assessment policy. They equally focused on tax payment as some individuals resided in village 1 but decided to pay their taxes in village 2 but the host traditional ruler did not see it normal. Discontented rulers petitioned the authorities to either ask the persons concerned to pay taxes to him the host or leave his village. This was common in the Bafut Native Authority Area. The Village Head of Banji petitioned the District Officer of Bamenda Division, citing some names who resided in his village but refused to pay tax to him. He accused them of corruption in tax-payment and neglect in attending local council meetings and court sessions in his village. One of the reasons advanced by the ruler of Bafut

⁷⁷ Interview with Joseph Mbah-Ndam, 55 years, parliamentarian, 20th March 2016, Yaounde.

⁷⁸ File No B.3137 (3/08/54), Obang, Banji and other villages in the Bafut Native Authority Area general correspondence. They Petitioned against the policy of being assessed under the Ndop N. of the South Western Federation

was that his people cannot pay taxes to a ruler who is of Widikum origin while he is of Tikari tribe.⁷⁹ Disagreement over who was in control of which area paved the way for disunity among traditional rulers. Since traditional rulers were the main actors in the integration drive, disunity among them disrupted integration efforts.

Another area where traditional rulers disagreed among themselves and which acted as a push factor for integration were claims of land rent and tributes to be paid by some traditional rulers to their host. While the host chief claimed payment of tributes and land rent in cash and kind, the settled villages refused to pay. Most of the requested items to be paid as tributes included palm oil, fish, animal skin, kingly animals among others. Some traditional rulers went as far as to request for damages from settled villages for refusing to pay tributes.⁸⁰ Most of the petitions ended in court cases with the accommodating village emerging victorious. The settled villages were forced to comply which created enmity among the two chiefdoms. This explains why up till date in Bafut, some villages had vowed never to pay allegiance to the *fon* who is paramount. This petition caused disagreement between traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield who were main actors in the integration process. It further created a rift among them and retarded or slow down the integration of traditional rulers since they found it difficult working together. At independence, things remain the same as some of the rulers claimed autonomy at the detriment of their host chief which amplified tension among them and made it difficult bringing traditional rulers under modern administration.

With the classification of traditional rulers into grades, there was bound to be a conflict of interest, authority and superiority among traditional rulers especially of the same village. These disagreements went a long way to hinder or slow down efforts aimed at integrating traditional rulers into modern administration in post-colonial Bamenda Grassfield. Because of interest and authority, traditional rulers were constantly in court with other traditional rulers for abuse of authority, non-payment of tributes among others. In the Mankwi-Banji dispute between Achirimbi the paramount ruler and Ben Ngwa a traditional ruler of Banji, the administration was petitioned. The aim of Achirimbi was to make sure nothing passes through Ben Ngwa before reaching the palace of the *fon*, and to curb the influence and control of Banji over land and the people who resided in that area.⁸¹

⁷⁹For detail, consult Fuhnwi "Fon, Chiefs and People in Conflict", pp. 326-327

⁸⁰Ibid, p. 336

⁸¹The people of Bawum and their chief do not recognize the authority of the *fon* of Bafut over them. As such, they do not pay allegiance to him nor participate in any project or association that warrants the development of the entire fondom. Their interest is the development on Bawum only. In Mbebili, Nebachi the chief and the original settler is not recognized by the *fon* of Bafut which degenerated to the dismissal of Nebachi in COTTEC Bafut as a teacher since the school is owned and run by the *fon*.

The position of the administrator in most disputes in the Bamenda Grassfield antagonised traditional rulers. The administration issued letters of warning, call to order among others to traditional rulers calling on them to be respectful to customs and tradition and at the same time to respect agreements. On July 1963, Mr Epo, the Assistant District Officer (ADO) wrote a letter to the *Fon* of Bafut calling his attention to reports that came to him from chiefs of Otang which were contrary to the 1954 peace accord. It should be noted that the 1954 peace accord gave traditional rulers under his fondom some degree of authority and autonomy. He advised the *Fon* to stay away from cruelty else the heavy hand of the law would fall on him.⁸² This was a threat to the *fon* which according to tradition is a taboo

The fact that the letter made it clear that chief could pay their taxes directly and the right to use their leopard skins and buffaloes as they wished was a blow to the authority of the paramount ruler. Threatening a paramount traditional ruler of the heavy hand of the law that might fall on him is unheard of in the Bamenda Grassfield. In order to maintain their dignity, traditional rulers were not ready to be part of modern administration since integration means dancing to the tune of the administrators. Also, encouraging settled traditional rulers through the 1954 peace accord not to pay allegiance to their host was not satisfactory to traditional rulers who preferred to distance themselves from the post-colonial administration. The bitterness of the *Fon* of Bafut was seen in a letter he wrote to the Prime Minister of West Cameroon complaining of grave insult on his personality by the ADO for Bamenda, Epo for or who was being partial in handling the matter. With this tensed atmosphere, they were bound to be a slow in administrative collaboration between Achirimbi and the ADO which retarded full integration.

While on the field to collect data, permission was granted by chief Nebachi after paying the necessary items to visit and take snap shots of some important images that will be of use to this study. While doing so, a man whose name we got as Mborongong Nufor came out threatening fire and brimstones to confiscate our camera. When asked why he was against the visit and taking of photos upon presentation of the attestation for research, permission from the chief and one of his guards to accompany us, he said:

The chief is to accompany you to the sites since you do not know where most of the shrines are located and what to do when you get there. There are places you are not supposed to enter. What is he doing in that so call

⁸²Bamenda Regional Archives (BRA) B 3137/164, Cruel Treatment of people, Bamenda, 17th July 1963, District Office Bamenda.

*palace of his? This is how they sell out our culture and tradition to strangers. The fon must hear this*⁸³

In an attempt to know why he reacted that way, we were told he is a spy from the paramount ruler. As a spy, he opposes the chief once he has the opportunity so as to make those around know the chief has no influence over that village.⁸⁴ The same Mboringong Nufor is the coordinator of a sacred society called red *mbabo*⁸⁵ created by the paramount ruler to challenge the black *mbabo* owned by the chief of Mbebili which is traditionally recognised as his right to own one. The youths sent away with stones the red *mbabo* claiming the only *mbabo* they know and recognised is the black one owned by chief Nebachi.⁸⁶ The mere fact that both traditional rulers in the same area are at logger head which according to tradition is unheard of is a source of disunity which does not favour integration.

These two instances are presented to show how disagreement among traditional rulers could lead to open confrontation which is not a favourable ground for the integration of traditional rulers into modern administration. We also see the position of Nebachi, chief of Mbebili, minimized by the *Fon* who created another *mbambo* knowing fully well that each village is supposed to have just one *mbambo*. It was the same case with members of the red *mbambo* who accepted to work against chief Nebachi and the tradition of their people by collaborating with the decision of the *fon*.⁸⁷ The youths on their part oppose the authority of the paramount *Fon* by sending away his *mbabo* which from that day has never been seen in the village. The imposition of authority by traditional rulers to their subordinates is a stumbling block to integration efforts.

The people and the opposition expected chiefs to be neutral mediators in the ongoing struggle between civil society and the state, but this was not the case as most traditional rulers against the wishes of the people took sides. It was against this background that many people in the Bamenda Grassfields expressed hostility not only towards their chiefs who sided with the state, but also to the idea that chiefs ought not to participate overtly in multiparty politics. Bamenda Grassfields chiefs that ventured into politics were faced with serious opposition and

⁸³ An experience we had while in the field to gather material for this study. It was discovered that it was an intentional act to prove chief Nebachi is not recognised or respected as the traditional ruler. The open opposition to the decision or authority of the chief made collaboration very difficult.

⁸⁴ Interview with Moses Nchitu, Age 51, Messenger (*ndogari nfor*) of the *Fon* of Bafut, Mbebili, 18 September 2012.

⁸⁵ *Mbabo* is masrada that acts as the messenger of the chief. It gives out information to the villagers. During the day, it masks itself and can be seen by all while at night, no one is expected to see it. It uses a gong to call the attention of the villagers when an announcement was to be passed. All villagers in Bafut are entitled to just one *mbabo*.

⁸⁶ Interview with Vincent Fonchia, 54 years, retired Teacher and Councilor Bafut Rural Council, 18 September 2012, Mbebili.

⁸⁷ Ibid

threats from their subjects. *Fon* Angwafor was confronted by his subjects and blacklisted for complicity with the CPDM administration. These accusations became more grievous during the state of emergency, when on 3rd November 1992 hundreds of subjects stormed his palace to protest against his “meddling” in partisan politics. All these violent reactions from the subjects which are challenge to the *fons* authority could affect his position and role as the mouth piece of the people. This equally plays against integration efforts.

VII-Destruction of Royal Properties

In the Bamenda Grassfields Francis Nyamnjoh noted that some *fons* like that of Mankon, Bafut, and Balikumbat that joined party politics saw their legitimacy and authority being contested. In the 1992 presidential election, *Fon* Angwafon’s rest house was burnt by unidentified protesters to register their disillusion with him. Accusing fingers were pointing at militants of the Social Democratic Front (SDF).⁸⁸ In Kedjom Keku, the people destroyed the pharmacy of Chief Vugah and his private resident as a result of dissatisfaction with his reign which was marked by corruption, brutality, tyranny backed by the administration.⁸⁹ (See Plates 7 and 8 above)

Fon Ganyonga of Bali was one of such chiefs whose political career gained prominence in 1990 following his co-optation into the ranks of the ruling CPDM. He was one of the “old actors clad in new clothes”.

C-Impacts of Efforts toward the Integration of Traditional Rulers

With the the annexation of Cameroon through the Germano-Douala treaty of 12 July 1884 through Kings Ndube Lobe Bell, Akwa Dika Mpondo and Eduard Schmidt and Johannes Voss who stood for the Cameroonian people and German administration respectively, for the Germans, there was bound to be a change in local administration which was under the command of traditional rulers. From that moment, the Germans made it as a policy to use traditional rulers in the day to day affairs of the territory which was adopted by subsequent colonial and post-colonial administrations till date though with some modifications. Efforts put in by the various parties, be they traditional rulers, colonial or post-colonial administration, it should be noted, went a long way to either improve or destroy the traditional system of governance in existence.

⁸⁸ F. Nyamnjoh., and M. Rowlands, “Elites Associations and the Politics of Belonging in Cameroon”, *Africa*, vol 68, No 3, 1998

⁸⁹Ibid.

Traditional authorities often have greater mobilization capacity than the state. Even when formal recognition by the state is lacking, the state has to consult and convince the traditional authorities in order to reach and/or mobilize the people, which is one of the reasons why political leaders in many countries have started to recognize and work with traditional leaders. Many governments have recognized the importance of traditional leaders in supporting state policies and mobilizing the people in favour of change. In many cases it is very difficult or impossible to implement policies without the support of traditional leaders, especially in areas that touch upon the traditional customs of a community. The mobilizing capacity of traditional leaders is often needed in implementing policies in the social, economic or political structure of a community. For example, initiatives to fight AIDS and implement vaccination programs are effective with the help of traditional rulers. An informant told us the people would respond to calls especially when it comes from their chief than from the administrative officers⁹⁰. So, efforts at integrating traditional rulers would go a long way to improve on the health situation of the population.

I-Economic Benefits

Financial benefits received by traditional rulers played a double edge sword which went a long way to either boost or slow down efforts at making traditional rulers part of modern governance. Chieftaincy conflicts have been on a rise in the Bamenda Grassfield as a result of collaboration between traditional rulers and the state for financial gains on the part of traditional rulers. Traditional rulers act as collaborators and enablers to the state and political parties for financial benefits even at the detriment of his population. The main reason for collaboration among others is the financial benefit attached to the position of a traditional ruler which has provoked succession conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields. In fighting among contestants to the throne in order to equally benefit from financial assistance from the state has plunged the chieftaincy institution into crisis. At times, the administering authorities are bound to take side at the discomfort of the people. This was the case with the dethronement of Chief Vugah Simon in 2003 of Kedjom Keku which the D.O for Bamenda insisted he be reinstated against the wish of his people.⁹¹

On the other hand, financial benefits as a result of collaboration between traditional rulers and modern administrators have gone a long way to improve on the social and economic life of some communities. The social condition of the people is improved as some

⁹⁰Interview with Ayiese Matilda, 45 years, farmer, August 2016, Babalang Ndop.

⁹¹For details, consult Kaze "The Dethronement of Traditional Chiefs" p 92

of the wealth acquired by traditional rulers was used in the development of the community. Most of the wealth gotten by the *Fon* of Bafut (Abumbi) as a result of his interaction with the state and other sources was used in the construction of a community nursery and primary school in the palace. This gesture greatly motivated the population as they benefited from the fruits of integration. Chief Vugah Simon of Kedjom Keku used some of the money he got through the sale of community land to set up a pharmacy (which was later destroyed when he was dethroned see plate 8) in his village. This went a long way to improve on the health situation of his community.

The financial contribution of elites backed by the state to traditional rulers has swayed traditional administration in favour of those who finance the activities of the chief. This has made chieftaincy a lucrative business in which individuals with no royal background now challenge the authority of traditional rulers in order to enjoy the financial benefits that goes with the position of a traditional ruler. This has weakened the authority of traditional rulers in the midst of state authorities who now see them as objects use in climbing the political ladder rather than collaborators for good governance.

According to V.B. Amazee, the economic benefits that accompanied the position of chiefs, made the chieftaincy title one to be contested for.⁹² An example is the Tiben chieftaincy succession conflict in the Bamenda Grassfields where two princes fought for the throne because of economic benefits.⁹³ Chieftaincy has become a means to achieve fast wealth and fame. Forkum Kebila in 2009 noted:

The once revered traditional rulers in the Northwest are today in disrepute. The traditional institution is at the crossroads. The integrity, nobility and dignity that were the hallmarks of traditional rulers of yore have been thrown overboard by a new breed of rulers who speak and understand only one language: money. The insatiable quest for money by traditional rulers has given birth to royal killers, royal dealers, royal drug barons, royal thieves and royal beggars. Traditional rulers can be seen palling around with armed robbers; they confer title of notability on celebrated embezzlers, and professional crooks. Most Fons in the Northwest have sold their soul to the devil. They need deliverance. The Fons have forgotten that character is the foundation stone upon which one must build to win respect. Just as no worthy building can be erected on a weak foundation, so no lasting reputation can be

⁹² V.B. Amazee., Traditional Rulers(chiefs) and Politics in Cameroon History, Yaounde, Press Universitaire de Yaounde,2002, p.13

⁹³For details, consult Kaze's "The Dynamics of Chieftaincy Succession Conflicts", pp. 270-272

*built on a weak character. A solid trust is never derived from a sordid character.*⁹⁴

This is because, traditional rulers embraced efforts at making them part of modern administration there by taking sides forgetting the fact that they are natural rulers and as such are supposed to be neutral in traditional administration.

The quest for financial gains has pushed natives to rise against traditional rulers leading to abdication, dethronement, exile and even the murder of traditional rulers. This has jeopardised efforts at making traditional rulers part of modern administration with the argument that these efforts have resulted to the exposure, disrespect and denigration of traditional rulers and their institution. Forkum Kebila is of the opinion that Bamenda Grassfields traditional rulers have been celebrating ill-gotten wealth and auctioned tradition for a small fee.⁹⁵ The fact that the ruling party was defeated in the 1997 parliamentary election with the assistance of the Northwest Fons Conference which was aimed at bringing in more votes is clear proof that traditional rulers in this association were interested in making money for themselves. They were in for “beleh politics”. Kabila confirms this view point when he says “most of the members in the association (NOWEFCO) “were not there because of conviction. Easy money and empty promises kept them in the association.”⁹⁶

In order to continuously make money for themselves, traditional rulers resorted to the sale of communal land and palace artifacts to foreigners in collaboration with state officials who grant tourism permits. Some rulers defend themselves that they are citizens like any other person and have the right to be involved in all public activities like all other citizens. The *Fon* of Mankon has repeatedly defended himself in interviews with the press and with researchers by asking: “How can you deprive a citizen of involvement in politics simply because he holds a traditional title of *Fon* ?”⁹⁷ This is evidence that they can carry out any activity in the society as long as they are citizens forgetting the fact that they have been made exalted and revered persons, and as such, are restricted from public life. They are to be the light for the people to follow and lead by example, if he mars, the tribe will follow suit and the nation will be kept.⁹⁸ Failure to understand or see things from the perspective of the custom and tradition of the people would always place the people and their ruler at logger heads

⁹⁴ Kebila., “Royal Beggars: The Northwest Fons and the Decadence of Tradition”, p.1

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 3

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Nyamnjoh, Francis B., Cameroon: Over Twelves Years of Comestic Democracy. *Nordic Africa Institute Bulletin* 3, 2002a

⁹⁸ Nyamnjoh., Chieftaincy and Democracy in Cameroon and Botswana in *Modern Africa Politics, History and Society*, Univerzita Hradec Králové Filizofická fakulta, Volume 2, Issue 2, 2014 p. 26

It should be noted that in the Bamenda Grassfield, land and palace artefacts represent important symbolic aspects of all culture and tradition of the people. These items are sacred to the people and any attempt to give them out in exchange for money is doing away with the culture and tradition of the people. That is selling the people, their homes and the ancestors⁹⁹ in complicity with the administration in the name of collaborating as or with auxiliaries for better administration.¹⁰⁰ Another example is the traditional ruler of Bamali Njuafua Idrisse III whom in 2008 was alleged of requesting huge sums of money for every plot sold in his land from the buyer and the seller. Anyone who refused to pay had an injunction placed on the plot of land till the requested amount was paid. This jeopardised the relationship between him and his people on the one hand and with the administration on the other hand which acted as bumpers to integration efforts.

II-Socio-Political Fallout

When the British took over, they imposed a system of indirect rule introduced by Lord Frederick Lugard aimed at using traditional authorities who played important role in the life of the community as administrators. All of this was aimed at empowering traditional rulers in order to facilitate administrative procedures. At independence, decrees, adjustments and modifications were made in relation to the role of traditional rulers in administration. These changes introduced by the post-independent administration affected the socio-economic, religious and political lives of the people and their institutions. Since traditional rulers were both the political and religious head of their polities, they had divine power and authority and were influential in the day to day managing of their polities. With changes introduced by the post-independent administration, traditional rulers had to toe the line as drawn by the administering authorities.

In recent times and in a bid to adjust to modern standards, traditional rulers involved themselves in mischievous things like misappropriation of stool lands, sale of royal property, nonrespect of traditional institutions, greed among others. Their involvement in such activities had far reaching consequences on the personality of the chief and the general administration of the chiefdom. Through collaboration with modern administration, traditional rulers were obliged to involve themselves in shady deals for political power or personal interest. In most cases, the consequences of this interaction and collaboration which were all aimed at

⁹⁹ R Delarozier., *Les Institutions Politique et Sociale des Population dites Bamiléké*, Institut Française D'Afrique Noire, 1950, pp.17-19.

¹⁰⁰ Asong., *The Crown of Thorns*, p.

integrating themselves or be integrated was division among the people with the end result being the dethronement of some chiefs.

In the speech of Endeley when he became the first Premier of Southern Cameroon, he defined his government and its position (integration with Nigeria). He later introduced ministerial positions and expressed the policy of his government in relation to traditional rulers. He said:

My government will concern itself with the preservation of this valuable institution and will do everything in its power to maintain its sanctity... But we shall also expect that in their own interests, chiefs and traditional rulers must keep clear of party politics. Being the respected rulers of all the people it will be most illogical for them to actively indulge in party politics as this will only expose them to the disdain of a section of their subjects. Any chief who persists, despite this timely advice, to participate in party politics does at his own risk.¹⁰¹

Being part of the political life of the society is what traditional rulers have longed for in order to bounce back and be part of the administering body. From the policy statement of Endeley, it was clear that traditional rulers had no place in administration. It was meant for educated elites. The policy statement weakened and demoralized the spirit and enthusiasm of traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield in their quest to be part of modern administrators. The outcome was the building of camps with the end results being reunification of the two Cameroons where traditional rulers became active partners in politics. Endeley was relegated to the background for his inability to cooperate with traditional rulers. Foncha mounted the political rostrum and his collaboration with traditional rulers leads the people to Foumban. It is believed the socio-political crisis in the English-speaking part of the country which started in 2016 with lawyers who took to the streets to express their dissatisfaction is as a result of the non-respect of the Foumban constitution among others. This is because with the help and support of traditional rulers, the government of Foncha was able to pull the population to reunification.

Efforts at making traditional rulers part of the administering body made most traditional rulers to act as tyrants in the administration of their polities since they have the backing of the state. Prominent chiefs have joined the elite ranks of the ruling party and government even at national level, some of them ministers, members of the central committee political bureau, parliamentarians and others as chairmen of parastatals and civil

¹⁰¹ NAB, File No 0c/1953/1, A statement of Policy made by the first Premier for Southern Cameroons, E.M.L. Endeley

administrators. This has made some traditional rulers to act as if they were above the laws of the central state. The ‘lamido’ (chief) of Rey Bouba in Northern Cameroon is, for instance, known to own his own army and can arrest, beat and even kill, with impunity. Chief Doh Gah of Balikumbat took the law into his hands, arrested and even went up to the extent of killing his villagers who stood along his part since he had immunity as a parliamentarian. Increasingly, traditional rulers are part and parcel of the modern elite, and they are as much victims of manipulation as they are guilty of manipulation which has weakened the chieftaincy institution. Refusal to be manipulated by the state is tantamount to disobedience which had consequences. In Bambamli Ndop, the administration through the D.O. intervened and dethroned the reigning chief in favour of his brother in a chieftaincy succession dispute.¹⁰² We were told this was a well calculated act to do away with the reigning chief who seems to be an obstacle to administrative procedures.¹⁰³

In Cameroon a chief seems to be worthless and inexistent if his enthronement is not confirmed by the administrative authorities. This act has brought in the notion of legitimacy and legality where the people see their chief as legitimate but the administration might see him as illegal. Refusal to acknowledge the choice of the people has created division among kingmakers and the administration which in most cases affects the reign of the chief. Over the years, some decisions taken by the Cameroonian administrators have created social disequilibrium and stagnation in development¹⁰⁴. Many have taken advantage of disagreements between kingmakers in the selection of legitimate heirs to the throne either deliberately or due to ignorance on the rules and conditions of becoming the chief.

Some administrative authorities have made chieftaincy a financial enterprise. They would collect money from contesting parties to a throne and at the end grant no judgment. After the dethronement and murder of chief Vugah Simon II of Kedjom Keku in 2008, his brother Benjamin Vubangsi was designated by kingmakers as successor, but the SDO of Mezam was not in accordance with the choice. Though his objection was founded on the fact that the murdered chief was supposed to be succeeded by his son and not the brother as tradition demands, general feelings in Kedjom Keku was that envelopes have change hands and the SDO wants to impose his choice on the Kedjom Keku people. Such acts have contributed to distance the chieftaincy institution from modern administration and chiefs who

¹⁰²Contact Kaze’s “The Dynamics of Chieftaincy Conflicts”, p 231

¹⁰³Abongwa Rapheal, 52 years, teacher, 2018, Etoug-Ebe Yaounde.

¹⁰⁴G. Aganah., “The Effects of Chieftaincy Conflicts on Local Development: The Case of the Bawku East Municipality”, Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in Peace and Conflict Transformation, University of Tromsø, 2008, p.88.

refused to collaborate end up being sent away by the people as was the case with the chief of Kedjom Keku.¹⁰⁵

Traditional rulers made a remarkable entrance into politics with efforts at making them part of modern governance. They participate in all political manifestations ranging from motion of supports, campaigns managers, candidates to elections in council, regional, parliamentary and senatorial election post of responsibility. Even if they are not candidates, they openly show their political support to candidates who are going in for electoral positions.¹⁰⁶ This is contrary to the role of a traditional ruler who is supposed to be neutral and rule in favour of all despite their political stand. The consequence of supporting a political party is dividing the village into two or more political groups which is a fertile ground for the breeding of conflicts.

During the regional elections, 20 traditional rulers were elected to join the wagon of regional administrators. Post colonial modern administrators have the interest of integrating traditional rulers into the post-colonial modern administration because it's of their own interest to work in close collaboration with traditional rulers since these rulers exert an outsized influence over their citizens in the moral and spiritual realm. The president of Cameroon on December 2nd decided to provide "financial support" to traditional chiefs standing for election as regional councilors on the 6th of December.¹⁰⁷ All this has a negative impact on traditional rulers as in most cases; they lose the support of their people. To constantly have the support of traditional rulers, they do everything possible to make sure the pockets of traditional rulers are financially strong which leads to the bleeding of the state coffers.¹⁰⁸ It's a strategy that helps government leaders retain their grip on power through traditional rulers.¹⁰⁹

The integration of traditional rulers into the post-colonial administration which is considered modern might lead to the 'capture' of the chieftaincy institution.¹¹⁰ Jua in his presentation arrives at a similar conclusion in his study of chiefs in the North West Province

¹⁰⁵Kaze., "The Dynamics of Chieftaincy Conflicts", p. 266

¹⁰⁶ Albert Ouédraogo, « La chefferie des Moose dans la tourmente de la modernité ? », in La cohabitation des légitimités dans le cadre de la gouvernance locale au Burkina Faso : Enjeux et défis, Compte rendu de l'Atelier de Ouagadougou, les 25 et 26 Novembre 2008, p.13

¹⁰⁷Dougueli Georges., *How Much Influence do Traditional Chiefs Really Have*, Friday 11th December 2020

¹⁰⁸The states spent more than 1 billion CFA monthly as financial assistance to traditional rulers taking into consideration the law of 2013 enacted where by traditional rulers receives 200,000frs, 100,000frs and 50,000frs monthly for first, second and third-class traditional rulers respectively. This is couple with other financial benefits they enjoy as members of parliament, senate and regional councilors.

¹⁰⁹For more, consult Evariste Foupoussi Fotso's *Faut-il Bruler les chefferies traditionnelles*, published by SOPECAM.

¹¹⁰ Fokwang., *Chieftaincy in Perspective* p.24

of Cameroon. He argues that the state does not only seek to undermine the institution of chiefs, but also to 'capture' it. This is evident in the legislation that defines and regulates the role of chiefs in post-colonial Cameroon. According to Jua, the state seeks to 'convert chiefs into clients' leading the relationship between the two to take on a 'semblance of parasitism rather than symbiosis'¹¹¹ As such, traditional rulers who still command the government's stamp of legitimacy are likely to be dethroned which is a source of conflict in the chiefdom.

III-Dissolution of the House of Chiefs

The house of chiefs seems not to have satisfy or reflect the vision of traditional rulers.¹¹² They wanted a house of chief similar to that of Northern Nigeria but to their surprise, what was granted had severe statutory limitation both in structure, composition and functions. Its propositions were open for debate in the house of assembly meaning the final decision in a deliberation came from the assembly which did not reflect the aspirations of traditional rulers. Deliberations in the house of chiefs was as it is today at the senate seems to be a waste of time since modification could be made by the house of assembly.¹¹³ Chiefs saw themselves as instruments use by the post-independence administration to satisfy their desire.

Traditional rulers were not happy with the fact that their decisions were approved by the house of assembly before they could be implemented. Chiefs wanted a house where their resolutions are made law but that was not the case which made them look at the house of chiefs as a tool. With the prevailing situation which did not favour the aspirations of the chiefs, traditional rulers sort for alternative measures to impose themselves as part of the administering body. Political liberalization offered them the opportunity which came with its own ills. Amongst the ills were or is disrespect and dethronement since in politics there is no respect for culture and tradition. The traditional ruler of Baligham in 1968 confirms the disappointment of traditional rulers who thought their involvement in the quest for a house of chief would advance their interest and provide alternative avenues for the achievement of political and economic interest which was not the case.¹¹⁴

The House of chiefs that had served as an arena as well as an outlet for traditional authorities in the former West Cameroon to engage in national politics was unceremoniously dissolved in 1972. At this moment chiefs became politically unemployed as they could not participate fully in party politics. Worst still, the 1977 decree made chiefs auxiliaries of the

¹¹¹Ibid

¹¹² Interview with Mbarkwa Wilson, 59 years, traditional ruler and retired soldier, 18th December 2018, Tugi Momo

¹¹³ Section 30 (a and b) of the Cameroonian Constitution of April 14th 2008

¹¹⁴Ndobegang., Grassfield Chiefs, pp 326-327

administration and by so doing greatly reduced the spiritual and mystical position of chiefs vis-à-vis their subjects. In fact, chiefs had to depend on the state to exist politically which is sacrilegious to the culture and traditions of the people for their chief to rely on the post-colonial modern state for survival. For traditional rulers to survive and live a comfortable life, they had to collaborate with post-colonial administrators against the wishes of the council of elders and the people or be relegated to the back seat. Unable to accept the dictates of the post-colonial administration, chiefs accepted the dissolution of the house. The dissolution of the house of chiefs pushed traditional rulers into modern politics which facilitated integration at the detriment of the culture and traditions of the people.

The worthlessness of the house was pointed out by Angwafor III of Mankon in September 1960 in its first session. He lamented over the fact that traditional rulers accepted a house without full knowledge of its scope and purpose in relation to the house of assembly. He described it as a worthless body set up to enable the KNDP and future parties in power to distribute political rewards where traditional rulers would not be able to censure nor obtain any favour for his people. The observation of Angwafor III was a challenge to the aspirations of traditional rulers to be involved in administrative decisions. The resignation of Angwafor III to stand for elections in the house of assembly confirmed the house of chief had no value and did not provide the desired aspirations of traditional rulers.¹¹⁵ The dissolution of the house created an avenue for the creation of rival chiefs' associations like NOWEFCO, NOWEFA among others teleguided by administrators for political gains.¹¹⁶

With the dissolution of the house of chiefs and other factors, traditional rulers embraced political activities with the conviction that their power and authority would be reenforced which rather became detrimental to the culture and traditions of the people. In politics, actors are address by their names. In the Bamenda grassfields, calling a traditional ruler by name is synonymus to dethronement. The shame and disgrace that followed the involvement of traditional rulers into politics made most subjects to challenge the authority of most chiefs. The challenges ranged from abuses, fight for the throne, incitment of the population against the chief, non-respect of laws governing the chieftaincy insitution among others. At mile 20 Bukari-Bafut, the *Fon* leased out to Joseph Ambe Nkwah a sand pitch as care taker and he was to deposite an agreed amount to the palace each month. Joseph Ambe Nkwah gradually made himself the owner and proceeds gotten from the sand pitch were no

¹¹⁵NAB, File No 1a 1958/1, Discussions in the house of chiefs in West Cameroon.

¹¹⁶F. Kebila., Royal Beggars. The Northwest Fons and the Decadence of Tradition, p.3.

longer shared with the *Fon* as agreed and he equally refused to leave the pitch.¹¹⁷ He claimed the *Fon* had done nothing with the money he had been sending to him for the development of the area for the past years. As such, he preferred to use proceeds from the pitch for the development of the community that harbours the sand pitch. All of this is as a result of the involvement of traditional rulers into shady activities which made the people to see them as not worthy to be called their chief. This greatly weakened the authority of the *Fon* as the trustee of land and played negatively on integration efforts.

Power struggle between chiefdoms has been a source of conflict as a result of the involvement of traditional rulers into politics. The house of chiefs in the Bamenda Grassfield went down as a result of favours enjoyed by particular chiefs that were in position of authority at the detriment of others. Similarly, during the British colonial era, a series of court cases came up against paramount rulers who benefited from the British system of indirect rule at the detriment of other chiefs. Power struggle and protection of sphere of influence has been and is a source of conflict because of the involvement of traditional rulers into partisan politics. Chiefs are agents whose political choices are contingent on their personal interests. Since the reintroduction of multiparty politics in Cameroon, traditional rulers have successfully made it to the forefront of national politics, sometimes in competition with other chiefs and chiefdoms.¹¹⁸ By actively and openly supporting the ruling party, many chiefs in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon have mobilized themselves under various lobbies to demand more recognition and resources from government as a share of the “national cake”.

IV-Religious Impact

Before the introduction of christianity, traditional rulers were the center of focus for all religious ceremonies in their communities. Sacrifices to the ancestors were championed by them. These sacrifices were aimed at maintaining a good and cordial relationship with the ancestors and to plead for blessings ranging from fertility, peace, good harvest among others. With the putting in place of the colonial and post-colonial administrations, traditional religion was relegated to the background and chiefs were obliged to abandon their religious duties and follow the instructions of the administering body. As a matter of fact, through integration, traditional rulers were dictated what to do. Some aspects of the people's customs and

¹¹⁷ Interview with Kabia Wire, Age 59, Quarter Head, 20 October 2012, mile 20 Wum Road.

¹¹⁸ . Nyamnjoh., Cameroon: Over Twelves Years of Comestic Democracy. 2002a, pp 8-14

traditions were left out because the colonial administration saw it as barbaric. They preached against polygamy, idol worship, twin murder and a host of other activities practised by traditional rulers. All of these distant the people from communing with the ancestors who act as the life wire between the living and the death.

According to tradition, chiefs are to marry more than one wife. Since polygamy was discouraged with the introduction of christianity, chiefs lose some of thier wives who had embraced christianity and wanted to receive the sacrament of communion. Some chiefs have hanged to christianity there by rejecting the fact that they are traditional rulers and as one, they have an obligation to have more than one wife as stipulated by most customs and traditions of the people of the Bamenda Grassfield.¹¹⁹ The bride price of a twin that was paid to chiefs or take her in as a wife while the male twin was taken into the palace as a *nchinda* were all abolished. Chief Nebachi as a result of christianity was married to one wife and died as a monogamist despite the fact that he was a chief. He said “*Kwifor* can continue with its sacrifices for he is not part. I want to serve God first before my people”.¹²⁰ It is the same case with Chief Atanga Muwah of Mankanikong who holds:

*Modernity came to improve our living conditions and it is thanks to christianity. We do not need to hold on to outdated customs and traditions that are not favorable to us and our people. We need not seize people's children for wives or their wives for our selfish interest. With one wife, one can still rule his people perfectly.*¹²¹

Nebachi became a devoted christian and an elder of the Presbyterian Church and an active member of the Christian Men Fellowship (CMF) in Mbebili Bafut, thanks to the introduction of christianity and the collaboration of traditional rulers toward its proliferation. It was the same case with the *Fon* of Mbabili who was an active member of the Catholic Men Association (CMA) who refused to take a second wife as requested by tradition. He claims whatever he does must be in conformity with christian teachings. This has been a blow to the tradition and belief of his people. The *Fon* was supposed to marry more than one wife so that the *Muma*, *Ndifor*, *Tabufor* and *Tandafor* could be appointed from different mothers to avoid

¹¹⁹ In the neighbouring chiefdom of Batibo, Fon Mbah, another young educated chief, has stayed faithful to his only wife, despite pressure from his subjects to marry other wives, as is normal for a chief in the grassfields. In the same light, the chief of Mankanikong Atanga Muwah a lecturer at the university of Bamenda has refused to get married to a second wife despite pressure from the traditional council, his sisters and brothers after 16 years + on the throne.

¹²⁰ Interview with Chief Nebachi of Mbebili.

¹²¹ Interview with Chief Atanga Muwah, Chief of Mankanikong.

children of one mother controlling the entire fondom which is not healthy enough for the survival of the fondom.

Going against the custom and tradition of the people is igniting a conflict which could lead to abandonment of the chief, dethronement and death as was the case with the traditional ruler of Kedjom Keku especially in cases where the chief acts contrary to the wishes of *kwifor*. An excerpt of the dethronement of a chief is presented below. The head of the *nkwifor* openly tells the D.O. of the dethronement of the chief because he has chosen to collaborate with the D.O. rather than work in collaboration with his council.

*We have also come to tell Goment that we have no Chief any longer, meaning that we the people who catch our Chiefs, have decided to take back our respect from Nchindia Fuo-ndee Alexander who was until yesterday paramount Chief of Nkokonoko Small Monje - for reasons which Goment knows already. You mean you have dethroned your Chief? That is what I mean Goment.*¹²²

With the introduction of Christianity, traditional rulers were brainwashed not to worship nor offer sacrifices to their ancestors. In complicity with administrators, some traditional artifacts like the gods of the land, stool, skin of kingly animals among others were stolen and sold to the white man since they were made to believe it would fetch huge sums of money for them. Traditional rulers in complicity with administrative authorities collaborated in selling statues to the white man. *Afou-Akom* could not have left the Kom land without the knowledge of the *fon*. Asong a writer narrates the role administrators play in collaboration with traditional rulers to sell out the custom and tradition of the people as seen below;

*Father, Akeukeur could never have reached the coast without the help of a lorry. The D.O. is the only person here who has one. There are road-blocks in the villages along the road down to the coast and there are policemen at every one of them. If Akeukeur passed through them without being stopped and brought back, the carrier must have been somebody with supreme authority over the police. Only the D.O. has such powers. Achiebefuo will have to be present. We shall have to force him to say who asked him to carve it. It is not enough that he had admitted his wrong.*¹²³

Integration and collaboration have contributed to the selling of the culture and tradition of the people in exchange for money as seen above where the D.O. asked Achiebefuo to carve a replica of the village god which he exchanges it with the real god for financial benefits. The

¹²² L.T. Asong., *The Crown of Thorns*, p. 180

¹²³ Ibid, p 22

act could provok war against the administrative authority and all those who participate in the distruction of the culture and tradition of the people as was the case in *The Crown of Thorns*.

Conclusion

This chapter was about the way traditional rulership has fare since its socio-political and economic space was invaded and its place and role altered with the coming of colonialism. How has traditional authority and traditional rulers existed in the effort to contribute toward carrying out administration and governance. How has the place of traditional rulership changed and what could be a more appropriate development driven paradigm within which African's traditional heritage could be more useful? It equally focused on the challenges faced through time by various forces that have tried to bring traditional rulers within the realm of modern governance. Specifically, it dealt with the difficulties faced by the colonial and post-independent governments to make traditional rulers more malleable and "useful" to the needs of modern governance.

It emerges from the chapter that the ramifications of the varied attempts to fashion traditional rulers for greater participation in governance are quite many but the effect of their recilience remains most noticeable. Despite the socio-cultural, political and economic reforms aim at making traditional rulers part of administration, traditional rulers have not lost their place as natural rulers and the voice of the people. Despite the challenges to integration efforts as a result of the changing role of traditional rulers in colonial and post-independence administration, traditonal rulers in the Bamenda Grassfields in particular and Cameroon in general still represent the socio-cultural heritage of their various communities. They are still revered by many and their capacities to mobilise their communities towards common cause are very impressive and targets for mobilisation.

In the politics of give-and-take, traditional rulers are subjected to dance to the tune of the modern adminiatration since they are made to believe that '*politics na njangi, you scratch ma back a scratch your own*'¹²⁴ But it should be noted that it is the duty of the state to remunerate anyone who helps in bringing about justice, peace and unity in the country as it's the case with traditional rulers. On a daily basis, traditional rulers work for the interest and growth of their polities. Even those who venture into party politics do so as a means for grabbing one or two developmental projects for their people either through appointed or elected representatives. Aletum holds that traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfield were

¹²⁴ This was a statement frequently made by Achidi Achu, a politiciain from the North West Region who had served as the Prime Minister of Cameroon. He is noted for making traditional rulers understand that politic is 'njangi' where you benefit if you contribute for others.

admired for the way in which they brought about peaceful co-existence and harmonious living among their subjects.¹²⁵ This remains a great asset to be harnessed and incorporated by post-independent administrators into our modern political system of administration for growth and development. Therefore, the fact that the state gives some stipends to traditional rulers is part of the duty of the modern state and not an enticement for being part of modern administration.

From a more general perspective, the resilience of African traditional rulers and their capacity to adapt to the evolving society is a great opportunity for Africans to reconcile with its history and lay fresh grounds for the emergence of a new African state. Although traditional rulers have incorporated a lot of western culture and civilization into the traditional system of administration, there is more to benefit from this category of persons who command a lot of authority and influence in their polities. Traditional rulers because of their legitimate nature, efficiency and collaborative spirit become great actors at national and international levels.¹²⁶ The contribution of traditional rulers in peace building and the development of Cameroon and the continent cannot be underestimated. This is because the chieftaincy institution headed by traditional rulers can be likened to a mineral resource which if carefully exploited by the post-colonial administration could contribute in bringing development to the community but if poorly handled, it could be a weapon for the destruction of the modern state. To effect this line of thinking, a constitutional reorientation wherein traditional rulership has a protected position would make for a much more sustained and long lasting impact.

¹²⁵ Aletum M. Tabuwe, *Political conflicts within the traditional and the modern institutions: a case study of the Bafut-Cameroon*, Vander, Lovvain.

¹²⁶ An example of a traditional ruler at international level is seen in the traditional ruler of the Nso people. The traditional ruler of the Nso people in collaboration with the state of Cameroon went to Germany in November 2022 to facilitate the return of *Ngonnso*, a stolen artifact

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Traditional rulership in Africa in general and the Bamenda Grassfield of Cameroon in particular is one among the few most revered indigenous institutions of governance acting as the political, economic, socio-cultural and religious leader of the society. Traditional rulership as an all-encompassing term are responsible for the well-being of the entire population under their polity. Through time it has been clear that traditional rulers play an important role in the society as traditional administrators. It is not easy today to dissociate traditional rulers as “non-state players” in state matters even if it is not apparent. This can be explained by the fact that they do not only constitute a fundamental element of the people’s culture, tradition and identity, but the respect accorded to them by the people and its impressive capacity to mobilise has made it a tool in the hands of government. Through traditional rulers, the state could better consolidate itself and extend its administrative functions where state agents are absent.

In his *Republic*, Plato categorically stated that, only the Philosopher-King should rule. By this, he actually meant that the best people should be chosen to be in authority and administration be it traditional or modern and the right people should also be called upon to make this choice. These two elements among others are the most important parts of the canons for the choice of a traditional ruler in the Bamenda Grassfield who will eventually rule over his people when the reigning chief must have joined the ancestors. Not just anyone can become a traditional ruler nor can he be chosen and enthroned by just anyone. Any chief chosen by a decree or decision from an administrator could be considered legal but illegitimate by his people. Reason why when this happens, the imposed ruler finds it difficult to collaborate with his people and in most cases, deposition comes as the best solution. The council of elders acting on the instructions of the late chiefs are responsible for enthroning the next traditional ruler in almost all chiefdoms in the Bamenda Grassfield respecting laid down rules.

Generally, there are five common criteria among others, use in choosing an heir to the throne in the Bamenda Grassfield. The candidate must have the legitimate royal blood and must be conceived on the tiger skin. The moral character of the would-be chief is taken into consideration as well as he should have an idea of palace protocol and dealings. He should be matured and have wisdom. Lastly, the physical fitness of the candidate is also taken into consideration. These are some of the measuring rods for a good traditional ruler. This is as a

result of the role chiefs play in the society and the attachment the people have in their traditional institutions.

In the same manner, being a modern administrator, certain conditions and obligations are to be made. If traditional rulers and modern administrators go through criteria to be bestowed the confidence to administer in their various areas of jurisdiction, it is but normal that both be accorded and enjoy the privileges of modern administrators. This is because both work for the general interest and growth of the society. The people believe that their chiefs are to work tirelessly for the interest and growth of their polity. Failure to do so and to render justice is inviting the rode of the gods on the reigning chief. Judging from the important role traditional rulers play as traditional administrators in the society from time immemorial, they warrant to be made part of governing body be it morden administration or not.

There is empirical evidence that most villages of the Bamenda Grassfield, both in rural and urban areas believe and respect rules and regulations supervised by traditional authorities despite modern state structures. These rules go beyond the boundaries of the chiefdoms. The respect attributed to a traditional ruler in his village is almost the same respect given to his representatives in almost all major towns in Cameroon where indigenes of that community are resident. As such, the traditional system of administration remains the de-facto governance system as the state and its institutions have still not penetrated into and have an influential role on the culture and traditions of the people.

The chieftaincy institution in the Bamenda Grassfield has been resilient in the face of radical mutations for several decades and has managed to survive and adapt to each context. Despite the resilience, traditional rulership has largely been infected and affected in its form and content with the coming of colonial and post-independent administrations. Failure on the part of the state to collaborate and effectively manage traditional rulers can provoke political, economic and religious consequences such as succession conflicts among others. Thus, the chieftaincy institution placed under the authority of traditional rulers, if well oriented by the powers that be, can become an efficient instrument of development and sustainable governance.

It must be admitted, however, that the traditionally unconstrained powers of traditional rulers have undergone transformation as a result of colonial rule among others. Since independence, “modern” administration has the authority to withdraw the official recognition of traditional ruler on the part of the state, particularly those who publicly opposed the government. Thus, traditional rulers have been directly controlled by the government. In Ghana, with the creation of the House of Chiefs, government could recognize or withdraw

recognition from a chief. The Ghanaian government was empowered to control the finances of a chief and could even destool him if he was found wanting. The same situation is applicable in the Bamenda Grassfield especially with the introduction of the chieftaincy law of 1977 which gradually led to the attribution of salaries to traditional rulers which could be a means of controlling their finances, an indication that traditional rulers are part of modern administration. Cheka describes such a situation as traditional rulers being at the crossroad.

Traditional rulers were seen as useful persons by both the colonial and post-independence administrations if they could serve as effective instruments for the implementation of government policies amongst their people. In this light, the post-colonial administration took a series of moves to ensure the attainment of these objectives. These included an invitation in 1966 for chiefs to rally round the unified party; the establishment of criteria for the award of a 'Certificate of Official Recognition by the Government' in 1967; a presidential warning in 1969 to all chiefs who were reluctant to change; the abolition of the House of Chiefs in 1972; and a decree in 1977 defining the role of chiefs within the new 'nation-state'. Chiefs were defined and treated largely as auxiliaries of the administration, answerable to district and regional state administrative officers. Being subservient to representatives of the head of state, traditional rulers became 'vote banks' though they did not participate actively in decision making at local and national levels. All these were strategies put in place to fully integrate traditional rulers as part of the 'modern' governance machinery.

The influence of administrators in traditional arrangements has been an important and determining factor in efforts aimed at making traditional rulers part of the colonial and post-independence administration. The root of administrative interference could be traced back to the advent of colonialism when African chiefs were subjected as subordinates to colonial administrative officers. From then on, the place of traditional rulers as traditional administrators was adapted to suit colonial exigencies before exporting them from the colonial into the post-independence era. The influential role of modern administrators and the involvement of traditional rulers into party politics has paved their integration in modern administration.

Chiefs have administrative responsibilities which are purely local and are under the supervision of the local administration. Their formal judicial tasks have sometimes been totally crippled while at other instances, they are ruled politically. As a result of their political affinities, some traditional rulers are made assembly members at different levels and revalorized the position of others who managed to place themselves at important positions within the national political structure. True as it may be, this did not mean that chieftaincy in

the Bamenda Grassfield disappeared because of the political and judicial landscape. Particularly in the field of dispute settlement, chiefs still play an important role in their polities. In other words, traditional rulership play an intermediary role by definition.

The "chieftaincy" phenomenon has undergone profound transformations during the last hundred years. Against this background it seems obvious to know the role and in what way the chieftaincy institutions could play in the transformations and processes of democratization. It is also obvious, however, that an answer to such a general question cannot be univocal or not comparable. This is not only caused by the fact that the regional differences within Africa itself are too great, but it is also due to the diversity in colonial and post-independence histories in which the chieftaincy institutions have evolved. The underlying question is to know how chiefs have mediated the link between the past, the present and the future. In this connection it is important to understand the correlation between their control over people and over resources which issue from different conceptualized worlds.

The developments in the position of traditional rulers in Cameroon in several regions have gone through numerous phases, varying from almost complete disappearance of their authority, to claims to prominent positions in the political existing order. Colonial and post-colonial state formation has to a greater extend affected the position of traditional rulers in Cameroon which has pushed them to collaborate with modern institutions. This collaboration in most cases has made traditional rulers to be seen as mere assistants to modern state elites. The modern chief in Africa has been absorbed into the state bureaucracy through an extensive system of governmental rules and at the same time a part of a more or less traditional world.

Chapter one of the study focuses on traditional rulership and pre-colonial political, economic and socio-cultural administrative organization and management of traditional institutions in the Bamenda Grassfield. It was established in the chapter that the structure of power and authority exercised in the Bamenda Grassfield during that era was in the hands of traditional rulers. Again, the sources and methods of chiefly wealth, its distribution and the importance of wealth in traditional administration were discussed. How did wealth and other factors contribute to maintain traditional rulers at the helm of traditional administration?

The administrative setup, administration and management of pre-colonial traditional societies and its institutions in the Bamenda Grassfield were under the command and authority of traditional rulers. The chapter equally handled and analyzed the patterns of political, economic and socio-cultural organization as well as the nature and structure of power and authority held by Grassfield traditional rulers before colonialism. The political,

economic, social and religious strength of traditional rulers placed them at a vantage position. How did their role acts as a stepping stone or motivated their integration into modern governance with the coming of colonial rule were tackled in chapter one.

In chapter two, attention was centered on the German conquest and administrative organization of Cameroon in general and the Bamenda Grassfield in particular. What strategies and mechanisms were employed by the Germans to gain the support and collaboration of traditional rulers?. What role did traditional rulers play in German administration and how did socio-economic changes in traditional administration as a result of colonial intuition facilitated the transformation of traditional rulers into the German modern system of administration. The chapter amongst its objectives tried to analyze how German efforts to use traditional rulers in administration transformed into some sort of integration of traditional institutions into colonial structures of governance.

Chapter three dealt with the strategies used by the British to ensure the “the progressive adaptation of native institutions to modern condition” as defined by the British Anthropologist Lucy Mair. The different mechanisms and strategies used by the colonialists to maintain traditional rulers, the efforts of traditional rulers to continuously remain part of the administering body not forgetting the quest for a House of Chief by traditional rulers are issues examined in chapters three and four. Note should be taken that chapter four went an extra mile to handle the post- independence administration of the Bamenda Grassfield and its contributions to making traditional rulers part of the post- independence modern governance.

As a result of efforts and influence from both the colonial and post- independence administrations, the chieftaincy institution became part of a unifying political and administrative structure. As parts of the administering body, traditional rulers were seen as consultants especially in land matters. They were seen as the life wire that must be consulted in order to respect administrative procedures. The readjustments made by the post- independence administration in all domains and their contributions to make chiefs part of the administering body equally drew our interest and were examined in chapter four. This chapter was structured into two parts. Part one focuses on the part played by post- independence administrative policies in making traditional rulers part of modern governance while two handles reasons why traditional rulers should be made part of modern governance. In the two parts, much attention was focus from the period of the creation of the unitary state right up to 2013 which is the upper limit of our study.

There is no doubt that the chieftaincy decree, the use of traditional rulers as auxiliaries, the house of chief and a host of other administrative decisions and factors

contributed in efforts aim at mobilizing traditional rulers to be part of modern administration. Despite the efforts, strategies and mechanisms applied by various administrations to make traditional rulers part of modern administration, these efforts are a dream still to be realized. What are the challenges faced in the process of trying to make traditional rulership part of the administering body and what future holds for traditional rulers as administrators was examined in chapter five.

In reality, colonial rule and other historical factors mentioned earlier in this study contributed in diminishing the authority of the traditional rulers and had exposed and made them instruments to modern administration. Research shows that traditional rulership has been under intense pressure to change and has therefore evolved and adapted to the demands of the times. With the pretext of blending modernity with tradition, modern administration has pushed traditional rulers to change from conquering more territories through wars to now collaborating with the Central Government and the international community with the aim of bringing development to their people.

Traditional rulership stands as mediators between the living and the dead. As such, they are seen as a divine institution which liaise the ancestors and the living. This indicates the sacred origin of the power and status of traditional rulers who possess mystical, life-sustaining powers. The central statement this study makes is that since the coming of colonial rule, all administration sought to make chiefs a part of the governance mechanism. Chiefs have been assigned roles of varying importance, but at no one time has the position of chief been wiped off from any chieftaindom. Even when traditional rulership have not been in good terms with the colonial and post-independent administrations, it has been a matter of endurance. This endurance is what can be referred to as being made part. That is each administration striving to make chiefs a part of its governance structure. The word modern is used to distinguish the desire to cause chiefs to cease and or desist from certain practices and manners. The “new” is seen as the modern, deprived of older and abandoned practices and habits. The song is about modern governance which refers to the contemporary or current practices and procedures tailored to meet the needs, wishes and orientations of the contemporary/current/modern administrations.

Despite arguments advanced about the selfish, undemocratic and corrupt nature of traditional rulership, the chieftaincy institution in the Bamenda Grassfield has come to stay and is held in high esteem and regarded as providing a reasserted sense of belonging as well as a powerful agent of social cohesion and harmony. Donkoh sees it as “embodiment of the spirit of the ancestors and a link between them and the living community” Judging from the

attachment linked to the chieftaincy institution, its importance to the people and the role traditional rulership play be it in modern or traditional administration, this study suggests that rules guiding the chieftaincy institution under the authority of traditional rulers could be backed by the constitution. That is to say, instead of altering what traditional rulership can do, they should be constitutionally empowered so that they can become efficient and participatory. As a result of “modern administrative” influence, traditional rulership has in very steady way become an important stake for the acquisition of economic and political influence.

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2	Abongwa Rapheal	52	Teacher	Etoug-Ebe	August 2018.
3	Abumbi II	67	<i>Fon</i> of Bafut	Bafut Palace	November 2017.
4	Achodong Divine	47	builder	Yaounde	August 2018.
5	Akuma Benjamin Ndeh	62	Farmer	Mulang Bamenda,	28 th December 2018.
6	Afuti Peter Suh	72	Taper	Mambu	16 th August 2017.
7	Atanga Muwah Nforbi	53	Teacher/Chief of Mankanikong	Yaounde	18 th September 2017.
8	Banla Federick (Shey Nwerong)	56	Driver and quarter head of Sob	Jakiri,	August 2016.
9	Buma Mathias	62	Council member	Nsongwa	18 th December 2018.
10	Catherine Mbuh Antonia	40	Princess of Mbesa	Nkween Bamenda	28 December 2018.
11	Che Kokakong	68	Prince of Mankwi palace	Bamenda	September 2018.
12	Chi Joseph	61	Carpenter and member of <i>kwifor</i>	Alamatu Mankon	29 th December 2018.
13	Climent Che Ngwabajong	79	Farmer / president of traditional council	Bamenda	28 December 2018.
14	Elisabeth Manka'a	92	Wife of a chief	Mankanikong	23 September 2012.
15	Forbah Peter	53	Teacher	Bambili	13 th August 2016.
16	Formin Charlse	58	Divisional officer of Mbengwi	Mbengwi	August 2017.

17	Fru Mathias	69	Retired teacher	Mankon	September 2018.
18	Joseph Mbah-Ndam,	55	Parliamentarian	Yaounde	20 th March 2016.
19	Jude Ewane Mbony	/	DO for Bafut	Bafut	14 th September 2012.
20	Lamo Cyprian	54	Councilor	Ndop	August 2016.
21	Lewoh Emmanuel	69	Worker at the Kumbo council	kumbo	August 2016.
22	Lodga Jude,	51	Former member of Bali war society	Yaounde	October 2018.
23	Marius Che,	72	Retired teacher	Mbebili Bafut	November 2018.
24	Mbarkwa Wilson	59	traditional ruler and retired soldier	Tugi Momo	18 th December 2018.
25	Mbinlo II	//	<i>Fon</i> of Nso	Younde	August 2019.
26	Mbongo Peter	55	Divisional Officer Bamenda II	Ntarikon	August 2017.
27	Micheal Nanefor	65	Teacher / controller of royal properties	Bafut	November 2017.
28	Muchia Lawrence	82	Trader / quarter head	Mbebili	November 2017.
29	Ndifru Mathias	53	Farmer / Prince of Mankon	Mulang Mankon	28 th December 2017.
30	Nforbi Alexander,	68	former member of <i>Manjong</i> war society	Bawum-Bafut	August 2017.
31	Neba Paul	52	Carpenter / Elder	Bawum Palace	16 th August 2017.
32	Ngam Nestor	52	Council member	Belo	December 2017.
33	Ngeh Chrisantus	58	Farmer	Ndu	December 2010.
34	Ngong Peter	58	Trader	Njinikom	December 2017.
35	Ngwa Francis	64	Plumber	Alakuma Bamenda	August 2017.
36	Njokem Tawn II	62	Fon	Mbengwi	August 2017.

37	Nyamsenkwen Christopher Kumbuma	55	Former Mayour of Bali	Bali	August 2017.
38	Shang Gilbert	54	Farmer	Banso	20 th December 2010.
39	Suh Christopher	64	Head of <i>kwifor</i>	Bawum	21 st October 2012.
40	Syracuse Lee Been	59	Farmer/Elder	Bafoussam	8 th November 2016.
41	Tah Ndap George	63	Former Lord Mayor of Mbengwi	Mbengwi	August 2017.
42	Tanifor Peter	63	Carpenter	Asong.	15 September 2012.
43	Tanji Godlove,	67	Carpenter / prince of Batibo	Batibo	September 2018.
44	Tangang Divine	39	Private Secretary to the <i>Fon</i> of Bafut	Bafut Palace	25 th September, 2012.
45	Tiba Grace	52	wife of the chief of Mambu	Mambu Palace	16 th August 2017.
46	Victor Fuh	51	Trader	Kom	November 2019.
47	Vugbansi Mary	45	Teacher	Yaounde	August 2019.
48	Zacharia Ndi	72	Retired Catechist	Batibo	September 2018.

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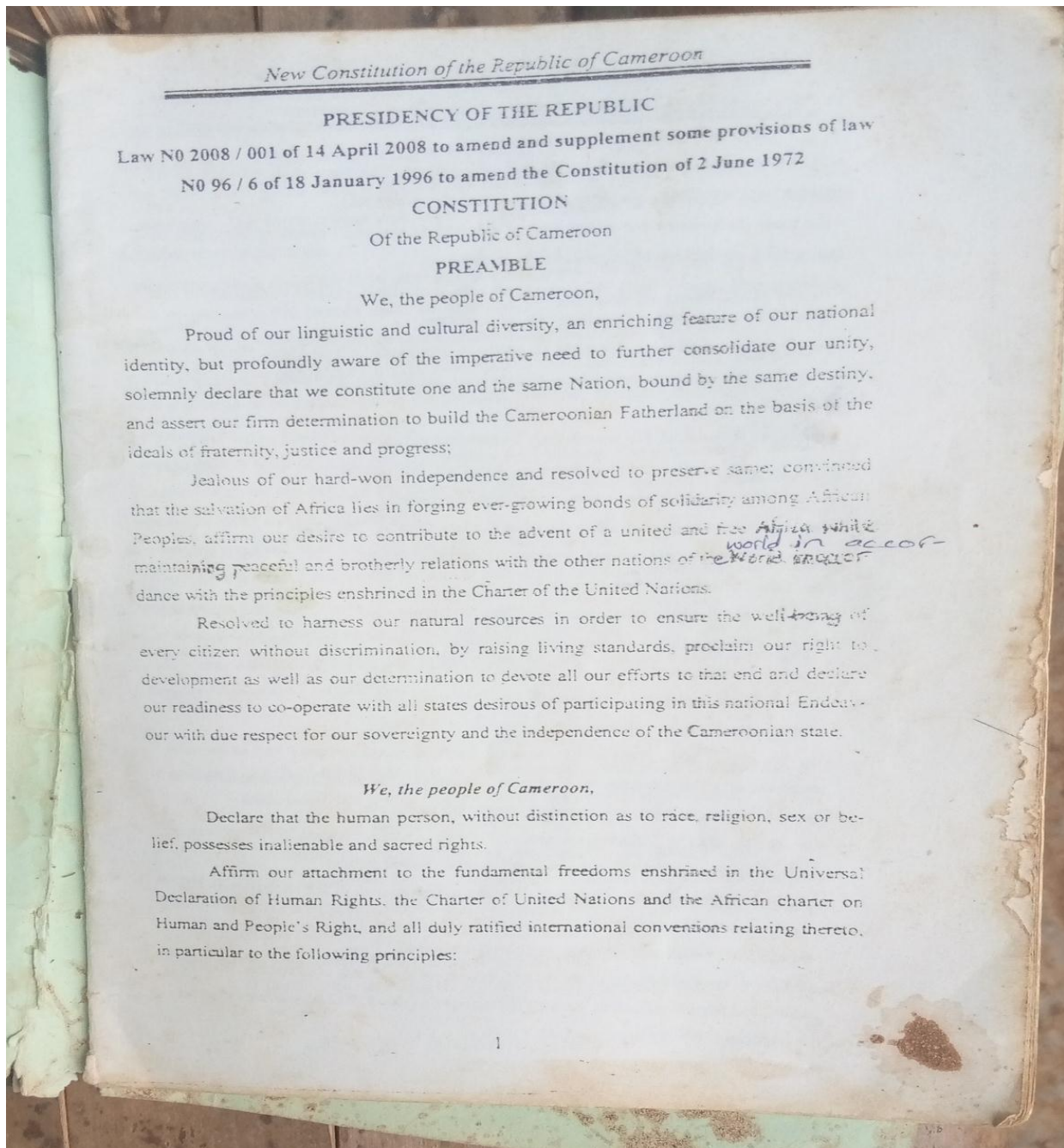
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APPENDICES

Appendix I

Law No 2008/001 of 14th April 2008 to amend and supplement some provisions of law No 96/6 of 18th January 1996 to amend the Constitution of 2nd June 1972



New Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon

PART V

Judicial Power

Section37: (1) Justice shall be administered in the territory of the Republic in the name of the people of Cameroon.

(2) Judicial power shall be exercised by the Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal and Tribunals. The Judicial Power shall be independent of the executive and legislative powers. Magistrates of the bench shall, in the discharge of their duties, be governed only by the law and their conscience.

(3) The President of the Republic shall guarantee the independence of the judicial power. He shall appoint members of the bench and of the legal department.

He shall be assisted in this task by the Higher Judicial Council which shall give him its opinion on all nominations for the bench and on disciplinary action against judicial and legal officials. The organization and functioning of the Higher Judicial Council shall be defined by law.

Section38: (1) the Supreme Court shall be the highest court of the State in legal administrative matters as well as in the appraisal of accounts.

(2). It shall comprise:

- a judicial bench;
- an administrative bench;
- an audit bench.

Section39: The judicial bench shall give final rulings on:

- appeals accepted by law against final rulings given by the various courts and tribunals of the judicial system;
- judgments passed by the lower courts of the judicial system that have become final in cases where the application of the law is challenged;
- all matters expressly devolving upon it by law.

Section40: The administrative bench shall examine all the administrative disputes involving the state and other public authorities. It shall:

- examine appeals on regional and council election disputes;

Appendix II

Law No 2008/001 of 14th April 2008 to amend and supplement some provisions of law No 96/6 of 18th January 1996 to amend the Constitution of 2nd June 1972

New Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon

- (2). He shall be Head of the Armed Forces.
- (3) He shall ensure the internal and external security of the Republic.
- (4) He shall accredit ambassadors and envoys extraordinary to foreign powers. The ambassadors and envoys extraordinary to foreign powers shall be accredited to him.
- (5) The President of the Republic shall enact laws as provided for in Article 31 below.
- (6) The President of the Republic shall refer matters to the Constitutional Council under the conditions laid down by the Constitution
- (7) He shall exercise the right of clemency, after consultation with the Higher Judicial Council.
- (8) He shall exercise statutory authority.
- (9) He shall set up and organize the administrative services of the State.
- (10) He shall appoint to civil and military posts of the State.
- (11) He shall confer the decorations and honorary distinctions of the Republic.
- (12) The President of the Republic may, if necessary and after consultation with the Government, the Bureaux of the National Assembly and the Senate, dissolve the National Assembly. The election of a new Assembly shall take place in accordance with the provisions of Article 15 (4) below.

Section 9.(1) The President of the Republic may, where circumstances so warrant, declare by decree a state of emergency which shall confer upon him such special powers as may be provided for by law.

(2) In the event of a serious threat to the nation's territorial integrity or to its existence, its independence or institutions, the President of the Republic may declare a state of siege by decree and take any measures as he may deem necessary. He shall inform the Nation of his decision by message.

Section 10. (1) The President of the Republic shall appoint the Prime Minister and, on the proposal of the latter, the other members of Government.

He shall define their duties.

He shall terminate their appointment.

He shall preside over the Council of Ministers.

(2) The president of the Republic may delegate some of his powers to the Prime

New Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon

Minister, other members of Government and any other senior administrative officials of the State, within the framework of their respective duties.

(3) Where the President of the Republic is temporarily unable to perform his duties, he shall delegate the Prime Minister and, should the latter also be unavailable, any other member of Government to discharge his duties within the framework of an express delegation of some of his powers.

CHAPTER II

The Government

Section 11: The Government shall implement the policy of the Nation as defined by the President of the Republic.

It shall be responsible to the National Assembly under the conditions and procedures provided for in Article 34 below.

Section 12: (1) The Prime Minister shall be the Head of Government and shall direct its action.

(2) He shall be responsible for the enforcement of the laws.

(3) He shall exercise statutory authority and appoint to civil posts, subject to the prerogatives of the President of the Republic in such areas.

(4) He shall direct all the government services required for the accomplishment of his duties.

(5) He may delegate some of his powers to members of Government and to senior State officials.

Section 13: The office of member of Government and any office ranking as such shall be incompatible with that of Member of Parliament, Chairman of the Executive or Assembly of a local or regional authority, leader of a national professional association, or with any other employment or professional activity.

PART III

Legislative Power

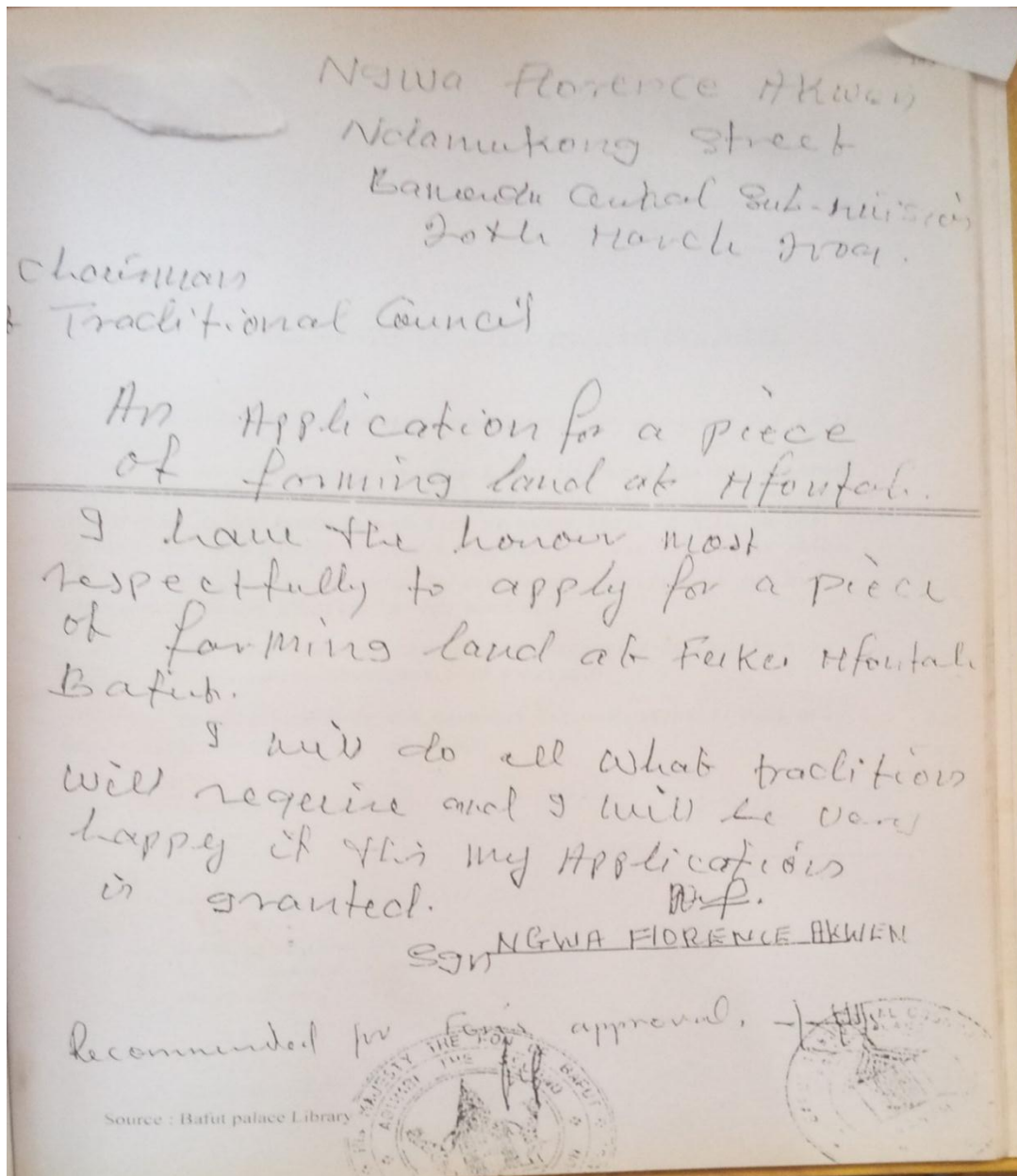
Section 14: (1) Legislative power shall be exercised by the Parliament which shall comprise 2 (two) Houses:

(a) The National Assembly;

(b) The Senate.

Appendix III

An Application for Piece of Farming Land at Mfoutah



propriétaire initial, s'il s'agit d'un immeuble immatriculé. L'immeuble est remis au même et semblable état où il se trouvait avant la délivrance du titre, s'il s'agit d'un immeuble non immatriculé.

(5) Le retrait du titre foncier prévu à l'alinéa 3 du présent article ne peut, sauf cas de fraudes du bénéficiaire, intervenir que dans le délai du recours contentieux.

(6) Un titre foncier est nul d'ordre public dans les cas suivants :

- lorsque plusieurs titres fonciers sont délivrés sur un même terrain ; dans ce cas ils sont tous déclarés nuls de plein droit, et les procédures sont réexaminées pour déterminer le légitime propriétaire. Un nouveau titre foncier est alors établi au profit de celui-ci;
- lorsque le titre foncier est délivré arbitrairement sans suivi d'une quelconque procédure, ou obtenu par une procédure autre que celle prévue à cet effet ;
- lorsque le titre foncier est établi en totalité ou en partie sur une dépendance du domaine public;
- lorsque le titre foncier est établi en partie ou en totalité sur une parcelle du domaine privé de l'Etat, d'une collectivité publique ou d'un organisme public, en violation de la réglementation.

(7) La nullité du titre foncier prévue à l'alinéa 6 ci-dessus est constatée par un arrêté du ministre chargé des Affaires foncières, susceptible de recours devant la juridiction administrative compétente.

(8) Les agents publics reconnus auteurs ou complices des actes irréguliers ayant entraîné le retrait ou la constatation de nullité d'un titre foncier, sont sanctionnés conformément aux dispositions de l'article 2 de la loi n° 80-22 du 14 juillet 1980 portant répression des atteintes à la propriété foncière et domaniale. .

Article 11. (nouveau).- (1) Toute personne

the said certificate to the initial owner, if the property was registered. The property shall revert to its exact condition prior to the issue of the certificate, if the property was not registered.

(5) A land certificate may be withdrawn under the provisions of paragraph (3) above only within the time-limit allowed for appeals against administrative decisions, except where there is fraud on the part of the holder.

(6) A land certificate shall be null and void before the law in the following cases:

- where several land certificates are issued on the same plot of land; in this case they all shall be declared automatically null and void and the procedures shall be re-examined in order to determine the legal owner. A new land certificate shall then be established in his name;
- where the land certificate is issued arbitrarily without following any procedure, or where the procedure is not provided for by the law;
- where the land certificate is issued entirely or partially on lands appertaining to public property;
- where the land certificate is partially or entirely issued on a parcel of private state land, or on land belonging to a local authority or a public body, in violation of the regulations.

(7) The nullity of a land certificate stipulated in paragraph 6 above shall be established by order of the Minister in charge of land tenure, which may be challenged before a competent administrative court.

(8) State employees who are guilty of or accomplices to irregular acts which cause the withdrawal or the nullity of a land certificate shall be punished in accordance with the provisions of Article 2 of Law No. 80/22 of 14 July 1980 to repress infringements on landed property and State lands.

11. (new) (1) Any person eligible to apply for a

habilitée à solliciter l'obtention d'un titre foncier sur une dépendance du domaine national doit constituer un dossier comprenant :

- une demande en quatre (4) exemplaires dont l'original est timbré, indiquant ses nom et prénoms, sa filiation, son domicile, sa profession, son régime matrimonial, sa nationalité, le nom sous lequel l'immeuble doit être immatriculé;
- la description de l'immeuble (situation, superficie, nature de l'occupation ou de l'exploitation, estimation de sa valeur, indication des charges qui le grèvent).

(2) La demande signée, ne doit viser qu'un immeuble composé d'une seule parcelle. Si une route ou une rivière traverse le terrain, celui-ci fait l'objet d'autant de demandes qu'il y a de parcelles distinctes.

(3) Les demandes portant sur les terres libres de toute occupation ou de toute exploitation sont irrecevables. Elles sont instruites selon la procédure de concession.

(4) Suivent également la procédure de concession, les demandes portant sur des mises en valeur réalisées après le 5 août 1974, sauf s'il est établi par la commission consultative que ces mises en valeur étaient précédées par une occupation ou une exploitation non probantes réalisées avant le 5 août 1974.

Article 12. (nouveau).- (1) Le dossier est déposé auprès du chef de district ou du sous-préfet du lieu de situation de l'immeuble.

(2) Dès réception du dossier, et dans les soixante douze (72) heures, le sous-préfet ou le chef de district délivre, sans aucune formalité préalable sur le terrain, un récépissé à l'adresse y indiquée, puis le transmet dans les huit (8) jours à la délégation départementale des affaires foncières.

Article 13. (nouveau).- (1) Dès réception du dossier, le délégation départementale des affaires foncières fait publier dans les quinze (15) jours, par le chef de service

land certificate for national lands shall prepare a file containing:

- an application in four copies, the original of which shall be stamped, giving the full name, parentage, domicile, profession, form of marriage, nationality, and the name in which the property is to be registered;

- a description of the property (situation, area, nature of occupancy or exploitation, estimated value, details of liabilities with which it is encumbered).

(2) Applications, which shall be signed, may cover one parcel of property only. If a road or a water-course crosses the land, the number of applications for the property shall be equal to the number of separate parcels.

(3) Applications concerning lands which are entirely unoccupied or unexploited shall be inadmissible under this procedure. Such applications shall be made in accordance with the procedure for grants.

(4) Applications for lands occupied or exploited after 5 August 1974 shall also follow the procedure for grants unless it is established by the Land Consultative Board that the development was preceded by a non convincing occupancy or exploitation carried out before 5 August 1974.

12. (new)(1) The file shall be lodged with the District Head or the Sub-Divisional Officer of the area where the property is situated.

(2) As soon as the file has been received and within 72 (seventy-two) hours following, the Divisional Officer or the District Head shall deliver, without any prior formality in the field, a receipt to the address indicated on it and shall transmit the file within the 8 (eight) days following to the Divisional Delegation of Land Tenure.

13. (new) (1) upon receiving the file, the Divisional Delegate of Land Tenure shall, within the 15 (fifteen) days following, ask the Head of the Divisional Land Tenure Service

départemental des affaires foncières, un extrait de la demande par voie d'affichage dans les locaux du service, de la sous-préfecture, du district, de la mairie et à la chefferie du village concerné.

(2) Sur proposition du chef de service départemental des affaires foncières, le sous-préfet ou le chef de district territorialement compétent, président de la commission consultative, fixe par décision, la date de constat d'occupation ou d'exploitation.

(3) Lorsqu'il y a plusieurs demandes, il est établi chaque mois, à la diligence du chef de service départemental des affaires foncières, et par décision du sous-préfet ou du chef de district concerné, un calendrier des travaux de la commission consultative.

(4) En vertu des dispositions de l'article 16 de l'ordonnance n° 74-1 du 6 juillet 1974, fixant le régime foncier, seule la commission consultative est compétente pour établir les constats d'occupation ou d'exploitation des dépendances du domaine national de 1ère catégorie en vue de l'obtention du titre foncier.

(5) Lorsque l'immeuble à immatriculer intéresse plusieurs circonscriptions administratives, les commissions consultatives concernées siègent ensemble, à l'initiative de celle qui détient le dossier.

(6) En cas d'occupation ou d'exploitation effective, la commission consultative fait immédiatement procéder au bornage de l'immeuble par un géomètre assermenté du cadastre, en présence des riverains. Les frais de bornage sont à la charge du requérant.

(7) Lorsque le bornage ne peut être achevé en présence de l'ensemble des membres de la commission consultative, le président de ladite commission désigne un comité ad hoc qui supervise les travaux de bornage jusqu'à leur achèvement.

Le chef de village et un notable du lieu font obligatoirement partie de ce comité.

to publish a summary of the application, posting it at the offices of the Sub-division, the District, the City Hall or the palace of the village concerned.

(2) On the proposal of the Head of the Divisional Land Tenure Service, the competent Divisional Officer or District Head, Chairperson of the Land Consultative Board, shall issue a decision fixing a date for the establishment of occupancy or exploitation.

(3) Where there are many applications, the Head of the Divisional Land Tenure Service shall publish every month, upon the decision of the Sub-Divisional Officer or the District Head concerned, a schedule of the Land Consultative Board's activities.

(4) Pursuant to Article 16 of Ordinance No. 74/1 of 6 July 1974 to establish land tenure, only the Land Consultative Board shall be competent to assess the occupancy or exploitation of national land of first category in view of obtaining land certificate.

(5) Where the property to be registered concerns many administrative units, the Land Consultative Boards concerned shall meet jointly, when convened by the one which has the file.

(6) In case of effective occupancy or exploitation, the Board shall immediately have the property demarcated by a sworn surveyor of the Surveys Service in the presence of neighbours. Demarcation costs shall be met by the applicant.

(7) Where demarcation cannot be entirely carried out in the presence of all members of the Land Consultative Board, the Chairperson of the said Board shall appoint an ad hoc committee which shall monitor the demarcation works to completion.

The village chief and a local notable must be members of the committee.

(8) A peine de nullité, aucun bornage d'immatriculation ne peut être effectué par le géomètre seul.

Article 14. (nouveau).- (1) A l'issue du bornage, un plan et un procès-verbal sont dressés par le géomètre.

(2) Le plan est signé du géomètre. Le procès-verbal de bornage est signé du géomètre, du président de la commission consultative, du chef de service départemental des affaires foncières, du chef du village concerné et des riverains.

Il y est fait mention :

- des nom et prénoms des participants ;
- des mises en valeur et de leurs auteurs ;
- de la description des limites reconnues, de la longueur des côtés.

Chacun des sommets du polygone formé par l'immeuble est désigné par un numéro d'ordre.

Le plan de bornage est rattaché aux points de triangulation ou de polygonisation.

Article 15. (nouveau).- (1) Dans les trente (30) jours qui suivent la réunion de la commission consultative prévue à l'article 13 ci-dessus, le délégué départemental des affaires foncières transmet au délégué provincial des affaires foncières le dossier comprenant outre les pièces énumérées à l'article 11 du présent décret, le procès verbal de la commission consultative, cinq (5) exemplaires du plan et le procès-verbal de bornage de l'immeuble.

(2) Le chef de service provincial des affaires foncières l'inscrit dans le registre provincial de suivi des réquisitions d'immatriculation, lui affecte un numéro, examine la régularité des pièces produites, le vise le cas échéant, et établit un avis de clôture de bornage qu'il fait publier dans le bulletin des avis domaniaux et fonciers prévu à l'alinéa 4 ci-dessous.

(3) Le dossier est transmis au conservateur foncier pour suite de la procédure s'il est visé.

(8) Under pain of nullity, no demarcation may be carried out by the lone surveyor.

14. (new)(1) On completion of the demarcation, a plan and a detailed report shall be drawn up by the surveyor.

(2) The plan shall be signed by the surveyor. The detailed report of the demarcation shall be signed by the surveyor, the Chairperson of the Land Consultative Board, the Head of the Divisional Land Tenure Service, the village chief concerned and the neighbours, stating:

- the full names of the parties concerned;
- the developments and those who carried them out;
- a description of the recognized boundaries, with the length of the sides.

Each angle of the polygonal area of the property shall be given a serial number.

The plan of the demarcation shall indicate the triangulation or the polygonation reference points.

15. (new) (1) In the 30 (thirty) days following the meeting of the Land Consultative Board mentioned in Article 13 above, the Divisional Delegate of Land Tenure shall transmit the file containing the documents enumerated in Article 11 of this decree, together with the detailed report of the Land Consultative Board, 5 (five) copies of the plan, and the detailed report of the demarcation of the property to the Provincial Delegate of Land Tenure.

(2) The Head of the Provincial Land Tenure Service shall enter the application in the provincial land certificate follow-up register, assign it a number, check that the accompanying documents are in order, countersign it if it is approved, and draw up a notice of final demarcation which shall be published in the Land Notice Bulletin as provided for in paragraph 4 below.

(3) The file shall be transmitted to the Land Register for further proceedings if it has been

et au délégué départemental des affaires foncières pour redressement s'il n'est pas visé.

(4) Le bulletin des avis domaniaux et fonciers est publié par chaque délégation provinciale du ministère chargé des Domaines et des Affaires foncières.

Son organisation et ses modalités de fonctionnement sont fixées par décret du premier ministre.

Article 16. (nouveau).- (1) A partir du jour du dépôt au district ou à la sous préfecture de la réquisition d'immatriculation, et jusqu'à l'expiration d'un délai de trente (30) jours à compter de la publication au bulletin des avis domaniaux et fonciers de l'avis de clôture de bornage, toute personne intéressée peut intervenir :

a) soit par voie d'opposition et uniquement s'il y a contestation sur l'auteur, ou l'étendue de la mise en valeur;

b) soit par demande d'inscription de droit, en cas de prétention élevée sur l'existence d'un droit réel ou d'une charge susceptible de figurer au titre à établir.

(2) Les oppositions et les demandes d'inscription de droits sont formées par requête timbrée comportant l'indication des nom, prénoms, domicile des intervenants, les causes d'intervention et l'énoncé des actes, titres ou pièces sur lesquels elles sont appuyées.

La requête formée avant la séance de la commission consultative est adressée au chef de district ou sous-préfet du lieu de situation de l'immeuble qui doit la soumettre à l'examen de ladite commission le jour de la descente sur le terrain.

Article 17. (nouveau).- Les oppositions ou les demandes d'inscriptions des droits non examinées le jour du constat d'occupation ou formulées ultérieurement sont adressées au conservateur foncier qui doit les consigner dès réception et dans l'ordre d'arrivée, dans

approved, or to the Divisional Delegate of Land Tenure for corrections, if it has not been approved.

(4) Each Provincial Delegation of the Ministry in charge of State Property and Land Tenure shall publish a Land Notice Bulletin.

The conditions for publishing and running this Land Notice Bulletin shall be determined by a decree of the Prime Minister.

16. (new) (1) From the day when the application for registration is lodged at the District or Sub-divisional Office, until the expiry of a period of 30 days from the day of publication in the Land Notices Bulletin of the notice of final demarcation any interested party may intervene either:

(a) with an objection, only if there is cause for dispute concerning the person responsible for the development or the scope thereof, or

(b) with an application for registration, in the even of a claim being based on the existence of a real right or of an encumbrance liable to be entered in the certificate under preparation.

(2) Obligations and applications for registration shall be formulated in a stamped request stating the full name and domicile of the intervening parties, the grounds of intervention and a list of the deeds, certificates or documents on which the objection or application is based.

The request made before the Land Certificate Board session addressed to the District Head or Sub-Divisional Officer of the area where the property is situated. The latter shall submit it to the aforementioned Board for examination on the date of inspection.

17. (new) Objections of applications for registration which are not examined on the day of the assessment of occupation or lodged subsequently, shall be transmitted to the Land Conservator who, as soon as he receives them, shall enter them in a special

Art. 2.- Le présent décret sera enregistré, publié selon la procédure d'urgence, puis inséré au *Journal Officiel* en français et en anglais.

Yaoundé, le 16 décembre 2005.

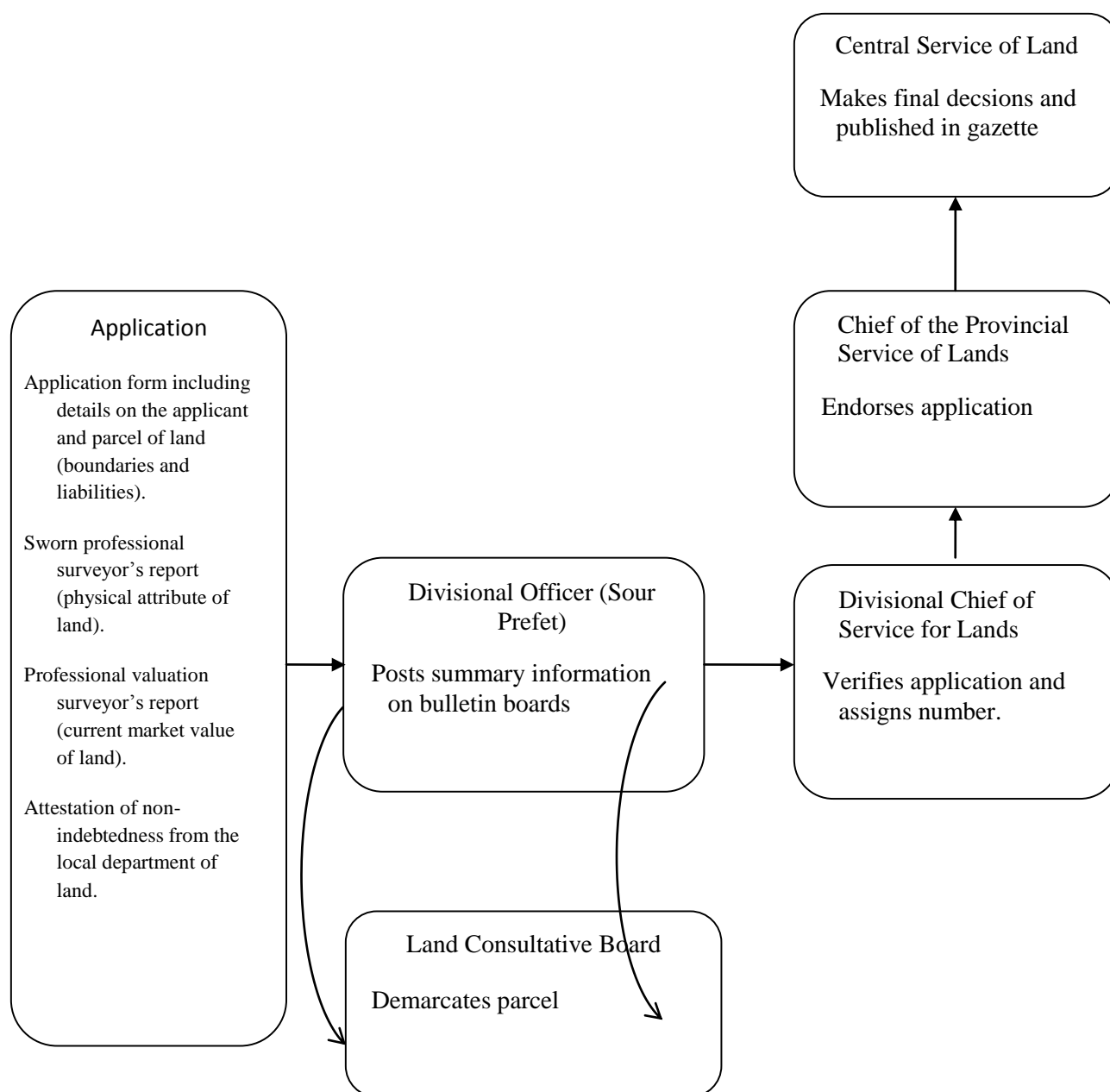
Le président de la République,
Paul Biya.

2. This decree shall be registered, published according to the procedure of urgency and inserted in the *Official Gazette* in English and French.

Yaounde, 16 December 2005.

Paul Biya,
President of the Republic.

Appendix V: Procedural diagram for land certificate application



Source: Adapted from Jacqueline Klopp's *Land, Legitimacy and Governance in Cameroon*, p.52

Appendix VI: Decree No 77/245 of 15th July 1977 on the Organisation of Traditional Rulers in Cameroon

RÉPUBLIQUE UNIE DU CAMEROUN

PAIX - TRAVAIL - PATRIE

DECRET N° 77/ **245** DU **15 JUIL 1977**

portant organisation des chefferies traditionnelles

LE PRESIDENT DE LA REPUBLIQUE ,

- VU la Constitution du 2 juin 1972 modifiée et complétée par la loi n° 75/1 du 9 mai 1975 ;
- VU la loi n° 7/SC du 10 décembre 1960 sur la reconnaissance des chefs traditionnels, ensemble les textes modificatifs subséquents ;
- VU le décret n° 72/349 du 24 juillet 1972 portant organisation administrative ;
- VU le décret n° 72/422 du 26 août 1972 modifié et complété par le décret n° 76/147 du 10 avril 1976 fixant les attributions des chefs de circonscriptions administratives et les organismes administratifs chargés de les assister dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions ;
- VU l'arrêté n° 244 du 4 février 1933 fixant le statut des chefs coutumiers, ensemble les textes modificatifs subséquents ;

DECRETE :

CHAPITRE I

DISPOSITIONS GENERALES

ARTICLE 1er. - Les collectivités traditionnelles sont organisées en chefferies conformément aux dispositions du présent décret.

ARTICLE 2. - La chefferie traditionnelle est organisée sur une base territoriale. Elle comporte trois degrés hiérarchisés suivants :

- chefferie de 1er degré ,
- chefferie de 2ème degré ,
- chefferie de 3ème degré.

ARTICLE 3. - Est de 1er degré, toute chefferie dont le territoire de compétence recouvre celui d'au moins deux chefferies de 2ème degré. Ses limites territoriales n'excèdent pas en principe celles d'un département.

Est de 2ème degré, toute chefferie dont le territoire de commandement englobe celui d'au moins deux chefferies de 3ème degré. Ses limites n'excèdent pas en principe celles d'un arrondissement.

La chefferie de 3ème degré correspond au village ou quartier en milieu rural, et au quartier en milieu urbain.

ARTICLE 4. - Nonobstant les dispositions de l'article 3 ci-dessus, l'autorité

PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE
PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC
SECRETAIRAT GENERAL
SERVICE DU FICHIER LEGISLATIF ET REGLEMENTAIRE
LEGISLATIVE AND STATUTORY AFFAIRS CARD INDEX SERVICE
COPIE CERTIFIEE CONFORME
CERTIFIED TRUE COPY

- un extrait de casier judiciaire du candidat (bulletin n° 3) ;
- une copie d'acte de naissance de l'intéressé ou du jugement supplétif en tenant lieu ;
- un certificat médical d'aptitude physique établi par un médecin public ;
- une copie s'il y a lieu de l'acte officiel prouvant la vacance de la chefferie (acte de décès, démission ou destitution, rapport médical).

ARTICLE 14.- Le sous-préfet compétent transmet au préfet, un dossier similaire à celui prévu à l'article 13 ci-dessus.

ARTICLE 15.- Les chefs de 1er degré sont désignés par le Premier Ministre; ceux de 2ème degré par le Ministre de l'Administration Territoriale et ceux de 3ème degré par le préfet.

ARTICLE 16.- Les contestations soulevées à l'occasion de la désignation d'un chef sont portées devant l'autorité investie du pouvoir de désignation qui se prononce en premier et en dernier ressort.

Toutefois, la décision prise peut être rapportée, s'il est établi que l'autorité compétente a été induite en erreur.

ARTICLE 17.- (1) Le chef doit nécessairement résider sur son territoire de commandement.

(2) Les fonctions de chef traditionnel sont incompatibles avec toute autre fonction publique. Toutefois, l'autorité investie du pouvoir de désignation peut autoriser le cumul de fonctions, notamment lorsque la personne intéressée réside sur le territoire de la chefferie concernée.

ARTICLE 18.- (1) Le chef peut démissionner de ses fonctions.

(2) Sa démission est acceptée par l'autorité investie du pouvoir de désignation.

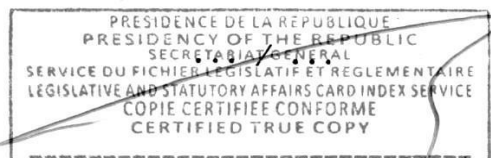
CHAPITRE III

ATTRIBUTIONS ET AVANTAGES ATTACHES

AUX FONCTIONS DE CHEF TRADITIONNEL

ARTICLE 19.- Sous l'autorité du Ministre de l'Administration Territoriale, les chefs traditionnels ont pour rôle de seconder les autorités administratives dans leur mission d'encadrement des populations.

ARTICLE 20.- Auxiliaires de l'Administration, les chefs traditionnels sont notamment chargés :



- 1° - de transmettre à la population les directives des autorités administratives, et d'en assurer l'exécution ;
- 2° - de concourir, sous la direction des autorités administratives compétentes, au maintien de l'ordre public et au développement économique, social et culturel de leurs unités de commandement ;
- 3° - de recouvrer les impôts et taxes de l'Etat et des autres collectivités publiques, dans les conditions fixées par la réglementation .

Indépendamment des tâches qui précèdent, les chefs traditionnels doivent accomplir toute autre mission qui peut leur être confiée par l'autorité administrative locale.

ARTICLE 21.- Les chefs traditionnels peuvent, conformément à la coutume et lorsque les lois et règlements n'en disposent pas autrement, procéder à des conciliations ou arbitrages entre leurs administrés.

ARTICLE 22.- (1) Les chefs de 1er et 2ème degrés perçoivent mensuellement

- une allocation fixe, calculée sur la base de l'importance numérique de leur population ;
- une indemnité pour charges spéciales.

(2) L'allocation fixe et l'indemnité pour charges spéciales prévues au présent article sont fixées par arrêté conjoint du Ministre de l'Administration Territoriale et du Ministre des Finances .

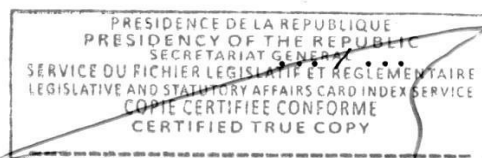
(3) L'allocation fixe est soumise à retenue pour impôt; elle ne peut être inférieure au salaire du travailleur de la 1ère catégorie échelon I du secteur public de la zone où est installée la chefferie.

ARTICLE 23.- (1) Les chefs traditionnels peuvent prétendre au paiement des remises sur l'impôt forfaitaire collecté par leurs soins, dans les conditions fixées par le Code Général des Impôts.

(2) Ils peuvent également prétendre à des primes d'efficacité octroyées par arrêté du Ministre de l'Administration Territoriale sur proposition des autorités administratives, en raison de leur dynamisme et de leur efficacité dans les opérations de développement économique et social de la nation.

(3) Les taux de cette prime sont fixés dans les mêmes conditions que ceux de l'allocation fixe et de l'indemnité pour charges spéciales.

ARTICLE 24.- (1) L'allocation fixe et l'indemnité pour charges spéciales ne peuvent se cumuler avec les indemnités parlementaires, le traitement de



fonctionnaire ou d'agent des administrations publiques.

(2) En cas de cumul de fonctions dûment autorisé, l'intéressé doit opter, avant sa désignation par l'autorité compétente, soit pour le maintien de son traitement ou salaire, soit pour le bénéfice des émoluments de chef traditionnel.

ARTICLE 25.- (1) Tout chef traditionnel victime d'une incapacité permanente imputable au service peut prétendre :

- 1° - à une rente viagère lorsque cette incapacité entraîne son dégagement de ses fonctions ;
- 2° - à une indemnité dans les autres cas.

(2) Le montant des allocations prévues ci-dessus est déterminé par arrêté conjoint du Ministre de l'Administration Territoriale et du Ministre des Finances .

ARTICLE 26.- Les chefs traditionnels portent un insigne distinctif, et éventuellement une tenue dont les caractéristiques sont déterminées par arrêté du Ministre de l'Administration Territoriale. L'acquisition de cet insigne et de cette tenue est à leur charge.

CHAPITRE IV

GARANTIES ET DISCIPLINE

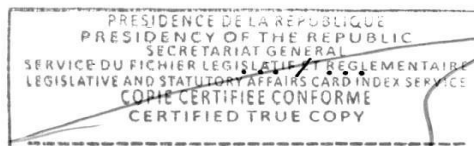
ARTICLE 27.- (1) L'Etat est tenu d'assurer au chef la protection contre les menaces, outrages, violences, voies de fait, injures ou diffamation dont il peut être l'objet en raison ou à l'occasion de l'exercice de ses fonctions.

(2) Il est tenu, le cas échéant, de réparer le préjudice subi par le chef du fait de ces actes. Dans ce cas, l'Etat est d'office subrogé aux droits de la victime, pour obtenir du ou des auteurs des faits incriminés, la restitution des sommes versées par lui au chef à titre de dédommagement, indépendamment des sanctions pénales encourues.

ARTICLE 28.- Les autorités administratives portent chaque année leur appréciation sur l'activité des chefs traditionnels de leurs circonscriptions administratives, compte tenu notamment de leur efficacité, de leur rendement et du développement économique et social de leur territoire de commandement.

ARTICLE 29.- En cas de faute dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions, en cas d'inefficacité, d'inertie ou d'exactions à l'égard des populations, les chefs traditionnels encourent les sanctions suivantes :

- rappel à l'ordre ;
- avertissement ;



- blâme simple ;
- blâme avec suspension pendant 3 mois au plus de la totalité des allocations ;
- destitution.

Les sanctions disciplinaires qui précèdent ne peuvent être infligées que si le chef a été préalablement appelé à donner des explications sur son comportement, son inefficacité ou son inertie.

ARTICLE 30.- (1) Le rappel à l'ordre, l'avertissement et le blâme simple sont infligés :

- a) - aux chefs de 3ème degré par le sous-préfet territorialement compétent ;
- b) - aux chefs de 2ème degré par le préfet, d'office ou sur proposition du sous-préfet ;
- c) - aux chefs de 1er degré par le gouverneur, d'office ou sur proposition du préfet.

(2) Le blâme avec suspension pendant 3 mois au plus de la totalité des allocations est infligé par le Ministre de l'Administration Territoriale.

(3) La destitution des chefs de 3ème degré est prononcée par le Ministre de l'Administration Territoriale, celle des chefs de 1er et 2ème degrés est prononcée par le Premier Ministre.

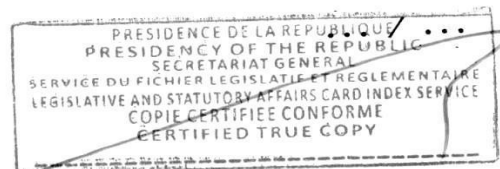
CHAPITRE V

DISPOSITIONS DIVERSES

ARTICLE 31.- Par dérogation aux dispositions de l'article 7 ci-dessus, certaines agglomérations urbaines peuvent être organisées en zones, quartiers et blocs par arrêté du Ministre de l'Administration Territoriale, sur rapport des autorités administratives locales, compte tenu de leur importance démographique et lorsque les nécessités d'encadrement l'exigent.

Toutefois, le Ministre de l'Administration Territoriale peut décider qu'une zone constituant antérieurement une chefferie traditionnelle soit maintenue en tant que telle; dans ce cas, la zone considérée bénéficie de la réglementation applicable aux chefferies de son degré de classement.

ARTICLE 32.- (1) Les zones, quartiers et blocs sont des structures hiérarchisées, placées sous l'autorité des responsables appelés : chefs de zones, chefs de quartiers, chefs de blocs.



(2) Leurs fonctions peuvent se cumuler avec toute autre activité salariée, à condition que les intéressés résident effectivement dans leur territoire de commandement.

ARTICLE 33.- (1) Les zones et les quartiers sont assimilés, du point de vue de leur fonctionnement et de leur administration, aux chefferies de 2ème et 3ème degrés.

(2) Le mode de désignation des chefs de zones, de quartiers et de blocs est déterminé par arrêté du Ministre de l'Administration Territoriale.

ARTICLE 34.- (1) Les chefs de zones et de quartiers peuvent prétendre à la prime de rendement et aux remises sur l'impôt forfaitaire, dans les mêmes conditions que les chefs traditionnels. Ils n'ont droit ni à l'allocation fixe, ni à l'indemnité pour charges spéciales.

(2) Les chefs de blocs peuvent prétendre à une remise sur l'impôt forfaitaire s'ils ont été désignés en qualité de collecteurs d'impôt.

ARTICLE 35.- Les chefs traditionnels qui exercent leurs fonctions dans les agglomérations urbaines réorganisées conformément aux dispositions de l'article 31 alinéa 1er ci-dessus, mais auxquelles ne s'applique pas l'article 31 alinéa 2 du présent décret, conservent leur statut coutumier à titre personnel.

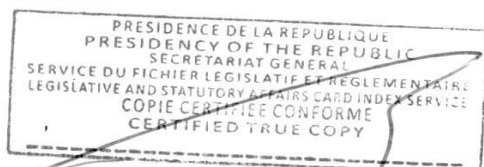
ARTICLE 36.- Les avantages prévus au présent décret ne s'appliquent qu'aux chefferies traditionnelles dûment reclassées, conformément aux dispositions de l'article 2 ci-dessus.

ARTICLE 37.- Les contestations en matière de désignation des chefs non tranchées à la date de dissolution de la " Chieftancy Advisory Commission ", instituée par la loi n° 7/SC du 10 décembre 1960 sont réglées conformément aux dispositions de l'article 16 du présent décret.

ARTICLE 38.- Les dispositions financières prévues aux articles 22 et 23 ci-dessus, entreront en vigueur à compter du 1er juillet 1977.

ARTICLE 39.- Sont abrogées toutes les dispositions antérieures au présent décret.

ARTICLE 40.- Le présent décret sera enregistré et publié au Journal Officiel en français et en anglais.



Appendix VII: The Designation of the Buea First Class Traditional ruler

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN	PAIX - TRAVAIL - PATRIE
<div style="transform: rotate(-45deg); transform-origin: left top; position: absolute; left: 100px; top: 100px; font-size: 0.8em; color: blue;">SERVICES DU PREMIER MINISTRE SECRÉTARIAT GÉNÉRAL DIRECTION DES AFFAIRES ADMINISTRATIVES ET DES REQUÊTES</div> <div style="position: absolute; left: 100px; top: 150px; transform: rotate(-45deg); font-size: 0.8em; color: blue;">COPIE CERTIFIÉE CONFORME</div>	<p style="text-align: center;">ARRETE N° 106 /PM DU 25 NOV 2021</p> <p style="text-align: center;">portant homologation de la désignation de Monsieur ESUKA ENDELEY Robert en qualité de Chef traditionnel de premier degré de Buea.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">LE PREMIER MINISTRE, CHEF DU GOUVERNEMENT,</p> <p>Vu la Constitution ;</p> <p>Vu la loi n°79/17 du 30 juin 1979 relative aux contestations soulevées à l'occasion de la désignation des Chefs traditionnels ;</p> <p>Vu la loi n°80/31 du 27 novembre 1980 dessaisissant les juridictions des affaires relatives aux contestations soulevées à l'occasion de la désignation des Chefs traditionnels ;</p> <p>Vu le décret n°77/245 du 15 juillet 1977 portant organisation des chefferies traditionnelles et ses modificatifs subséquents ;</p> <p>Vu le décret n°92/089 du 04 mai 1992 précisant les attributions du Premier Ministre, modifié et complété par le décret n°95/145 bis du 04 août 1995 ;</p> <p>Vu le décret n°2008/376 du 12 décembre 2008 portant organisation administrative de la République du Cameroun ;</p> <p>Vu le décret n°2011/408 du 09 décembre 2011 portant organisation du Gouvernement, modifié et complété par le décret n°2018/190 du 02 mars 2018 ;</p> <p>Vu le décret n°2019/001 du 04 janvier 2019 portant nomination du Premier Ministre, Chef du Gouvernement ;</p> <p>Vu l'arrêté n°19/CAB/PM du 07 février 1981 déterminant les chefferies traditionnelles de 1^{er} degré et son modificatif ;</p> <p>Vu le procès-verbal de consultation des notabilités coutumières du 05 février 2018,</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>ARRETE :</u></p> <p>Article 1^{er}.- Est homologuée, à compter du 05 février 2018, la désignation de Monsieur ESUKA ENDELEY Robert, en qualité de Chef traditionnel de 1^{er} degré de Buea, Département du Fako, Région du Sud-Ouest, en remplacement de Monsieur MOKA LIFABA ENDELEY, décédé le 11 juillet 2015.</p> <p>Article 2.- L'intéressé aura droit aux avantages de toute nature prévus par la réglementation en vigueur.</p> <p>Article 3.- Le présent arrêté sera enregistré, publié suivant la procédure d'urgence, puis inséré au Journal Officiel en français et en anglais./-</p>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content;"><div style="text-align: center;">PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE</div><div style="text-align: center;">VISA</div><div style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.2em;">000221-17 NOV 2021</div><div style="text-align: center;">PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC</div></div>	<p style="text-align: right;">Yaoundé, le 25 NOV 2021</p> <p style="text-align: center;">LE PREMIER MINISTRE, CHEF DU GOUVERNEMENT,</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> Joseph DION NGUTE</div>

Appendix XIII: Decree Attributing Salaries to Traditional Rulers in Cameroon

DECRET N°2013/332 DU 13 SEP. 2013 modifiant et complétant certaines dispositions du décret n°77/245 du 15 juillet 1977 portant organisation des chefferies traditionnelles.

LE PRESIDENT DE LA REPUBLIQUE,

Vu la Constitution ;

Vu le décret n° 77/245 du 15 juillet 1977 portant organisation des chefferies traditionnelles, modifié et complété par le décret n° 2008/376 du 12 novembre 2008 portant organisation administrative de la République du Cameroun,

DECRETE :

ARTICLE 1er. - Les dispositions des articles 22, 23 et 24 du décret n°77/245 du 15 juillet 1977 susvisé sont modifiées et complétées ainsi qu'il suit :

« **ARTICLE 22.-** (nouveau) Les Chefs traditionnels perçoivent mensuellement des allocations dont les montants sont fixés ainsi qu'il suit :

Chef de 1er degré : 200 000 FCFA ;

Chef de 2ème degré : 100 000 FCFA ;

Chef de 3ème degré : 50 000 FCFA.

ARTICLE 23.- (nouveau) Les allocations ci-dessus sont affranchies de l'impôt conformément au Code Général des Impôts.

ARTICLE 24.- (nouveau) (1) Les allocations ne peuvent se cumuler avec les indemnités de parlementaire, le traitement de fonctionnaire ou d'agent des administrations publiques.

(2) En cas de cumul de fonctions dûment autorisé, l'intéressé doit opter, avant sa désignation par l'autorité compétente, soit pour le maintien de son traitement ou salaire, soit pour le bénéfice de l'allocation de chef traditionnel. »


ARTICLE 2.- Le présent décret sera enregistré, publié selon la procédure d'urgence, puis inséré au Journal Officiel en v français et en anglais. /-

Yaoundé, le 13 sep. 2013

Le président de la République,

Paul BIYA

Appendix IX: Order to Stop Creating Chiefs and Second-Class Chiefs in the Littoral

<p>REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN Paix Travail Patrie</p> <p>REGION DU LITTORAL</p> <p>SERVICES DU GOUVERNEUR</p> <p>CABINET</p>		<p>REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON Peace-Work-Fatherland</p> <p>LITTORAL REGION</p> <p>GOVERNOR'S OFFICE</p> <p>CABINET</p>
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MESSAGE - PORTE - FAX

DE : GOUVERNEUR REGION LITTORAL / DOUALA

A : MM(S) -

- PREFET DEPARTEMENT DU WOURI / DOUALA
- PREFET DEPARTEMENT MOUNGO / NKONGSAMBA
- PREFET DEPARTEMENT NKAM / YABASSI
- PREFET DEPARTEMENT SANAGA MARITIME / EDEA

N° 349 /MPF/C/CAB

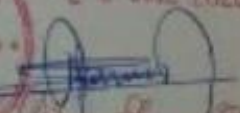
MENTION : URGENT

TEXTE : HONNEUR VOUS REPERCUTER STOP EN VUE ORGANISATION ELECTIONS REGIONALES STOP MINISTRE DE L'ADMINISTRATION TERRITORIALE STOP VOUS DEMANDE STOP INSTANTANEMENT DE PROPOSER CREATIONS OU ERECTIONS CHEFFERIES 2^{ME} DEGRE LA OU SE TROUVENT LEUR INEXISTENCE ENTRE 1^{ER} ET 3^{ME} DEGRE STOP PAR AILLEURS STOP LUI FAIRE TENIR FICHER COMPLET ET SANS VACANCE DE CHEFFERIE AU PLUS TARD VENDREDI 31 JUILLET 2020 STOP IMPORTANCE ET URGENCE HAUTEMENT SIGNALEES STOP ET FIN. /-

- IVAHA -

BOON A FAXER

26 JUL 2020



Fredrick Toundou Toundou
Administrateur Civil Principal
Hors Echelle

Appendix X: Petition against the policy of being assessed under the Ndop Native Authority of the South Western Federation

From Nano and Quarter Heads,

Obang Village, Bafut Area,

Bamenda District,

3rd May 1953

The Honorable Resident,

Bamenda Province

Bamenda

Through the senior District Officer,

Bamenda District,

Bamenda

Petition against the Policy of Being Assessed Under the Ndop Native Authority of the South Western Federation

Sir,

We the undersigned petitioner, the Village Head and Quarter Heads of the Village of Obang and our people have the honour to in- the Honoraable Resident that for our selves and on behalf of our people feel that we should not be assessed to pay our tax to the Ndop N.A Treasury any longer, and that the Resident should not be surprised to learn that we are only prepared to pay our tax to the Wum Federation.

I have long asked to be removed from this Federation and we are repeating this again in order that the Ndop N.A. should not waist time and their employees to come to our Village for assessment since we will only pay our tax to the Federation for 1953 and upwards.

We have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most humble petitioners,

Nano, Village Head of Obang

His thumb mark.

Abah, Quarter Head

Akoh, Quarter Head, His thumb mark

Bahdih, Quarter Head

His Thumb mark,

Joness Memang, His thumb mark

This is to certify that the above has been written at the request of the petitioners and after it has been read over to them in English and explained in vernacular, they confirm that this contains nothing the Honorable Resident, Bamenda Province, Bamenda through the senior District officer, Bamenda.

Witnessed this 3rd day of May 1953 by:

Written by H.J.S. Ngongi,

Letter writer, Abakpa,

Bamenda
(free)

No fee has been received for this document

Authority dictated to the writer for the District officer, Bamenda Division, Bamenda

Letter writer (Cameroon-Buea, Fee charged for two copies only)

Source: BPA, File No B.3137 (3/08/54), Obang and Bani Villages and Bafut Area General Correspondence.

Appendix XI: Question Guide

Questions for Elites, Administrators, Politicians and the Common man

- 1-Are you aware of the power and influence of traditional rulers in the Bamenda Grassfields?
- 2-Where do traditional rulers acquire their power, authority and influence?
- 3-Who is an administrator to you and what are his/her duties?
- 4-What is the role of the D.O. in your community?
- 5- What is the relationship between your chief and the administrators of the area?
- 6-What is your knowledge about the interaction between your forefathers and the colonial and post-colonial administrations?
- 7-Between traditional rulers and the civil administrators, whose decision has an impact on the population?
- 8-Do you think traditional rulers should be involved in modern administration?
- 9- How does the involvement of traditional rulers in politics influence his rule and what are the social implications on the local population?
- 10-What role are traditional rulers to play in modern administration?
- 11-How has the government managed the chieftaincy institution in the Bamenda Grassfield?
- 12-What do you think can be done to harmonise the traditional and modern systems of administration in Cameroon?
- 13-How does the lack of cooperation between traditional and modern leaders affect government developmental initiatives in the grassroots?
- 14- Do you think traditional rulers should be integrated into modern administration and why?

Interview guide for Kingmakers and Traditional Rulers

- 1-What is/are the qualifications, for one to become a traditional ruler of your area?
- 2-What is the relation between you as chief and the representative of the state?
- 3- Has there been instances where you feel cheated or by-passed by other authorities as the traditional ruler of your community and what is/was your reaction.?
- 4-As a citizen who doubles as a traditional ruler, do you think you should have political limits?
- 5-What was the outcome of non-cooperation with appointed or elected officials of the state?
- 6- What is your stand in efforts aimed at integrating traditional rulers into modern administration in Cameroon?

7-How has this affected the economic status of the *Fondom*?

8- What in your opinion can be done for traditional rulers to maintain their pre-colonial powers and live up to modern expectations?

9-Can we not conclude that accepting salaries from the state means accepting to work as dictated by the administering authority?

12-What do you think can be done to resolve in fighting among traditional rulers for a share of the “national cake”?

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