



From Friends to Enemies: Inter-Ethnic conflict amongst the Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields (North West Province of Cameroon) C. 1950-1998.

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the research project was carried out by Tangie Evelyn Ngengong in the Department of Peace and Conflict Transformation, University of Tromsø.

Signature

Professor Dr. Randi Rønning Balsvik
(Supervisor)

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In successfully doing this work, I am indebted to many persons who, because of lack of space cannot all be appreciated here in.

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ABSTRACT

Ethnic conflicts in the Bamenda grassfields became common occurrences at the advent of the Chamba raids in the 1820s. Despite the presence of such conflicts, few scholarly works have been done. This lack of material provided a motivation for this study – “From Friends to Enemies: Inter-Ethnic conflict amongst the Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields (North West Province of Cameroon) C. 1950-1998”.

The endeavour is to show how these ethnic conflicts can be considered a product of fast degenerating arable land against the background of fast growing population; the Bambili / Babanki-tungoh ethnic conflict is the product of centralized state building process in the Bamenda grassfields and it is fostered by economic imperatives. It is to fill the gap in Bamenda grassfield’s historiography.

In order to investigate these hypotheses answers have been sought for the following questions: why is the Bamenda Grassfields rife with many ethnic conflicts in general and the Bambili/Babanki-tungoh in particular? What makes the two ethnic groups different, so much so that they fight each other over a piece of land? Who are the motivators of the ethnic conflict in the area? Of what importance is the disputed land between the two contestants under study? What attempts have been made by the traditional government and civil administration to end these conflicts and why have these attempts not bore any fruits?

It is evident from this study that ethnic conflicts in the Bamenda grassfields are as a result of an ever growing population without a corresponding increase in land. It also shows that the ethnic conflicts are as a result of the ever empire state building in the sub region. Furthermore, it is also evident from the work that economic consideration over the fertile piece of land between the two villages is the main cause of the ethnic conflict between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh. The claims of the two villages over the disputed land are not authentic. This is because none of the villages are willing to show a land certificate which could make the piece of land to be conveniently theirs. It is also evident that the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh have similarities (Tikars) but the ethnic conflicts have made them different from each other.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Africa has the reputation of being the world's leading theatre of conflict. Africa is experiencing an increase in the scope and intensity of conflicts underlined by internecine ethnic rivalries. To a greater extent, many of the inter-ethnic conflict situations that are going on have antecedents involving historical legacy. The history and oral tradition of most African societies contain elements of conflicts and ethnic conflict situations. Sometimes this is because the continent is suffering from the tribalism disease. This is certainly true of the turbulent post-cold war period in which Africa has experienced persistent violent and seemingly intractable conflicts. Conflict has grown rapidly in Africa in the last three decades. The notorious genocide and ethnic cleansing in Rwanda, civil wars in Liberia and minority uprisings in Nigeria amongst others represent reference points of the turbulence on the African continent. This is because Africa has the highest ethnic diversity and also the highest incidence of civil wars.

Cameroon like many other African countries has been going through difficult times of ethnic diversity and conflicts. This ethnic diversity leads to increased antagonism between ethnic groups. Due to the diversity and differences of ethnic groups in Cameroon, ethnic conflict and antagonism are difficult to be resolved. Ethnic division is a source of both conflict and cooperation in all societies. Conflicts erupt and escalate when sparked by group struggles and are underpinned by complicated alliances in which ethnic identity and affiliations are key variables.

Conflicts on ethnic grounds have a tendency to grow and become violent, thus it is no surprise that the Bamenda Grassfields in North West Province of Cameroon had similar experiences regarding the conflict amongst the ethnic groups. In societies of traditional stability, ethnic tensions are becoming an increasing factor. Ethnic conflicts have become the serious challenge of our time, which perhaps explains why ethnicity is seen as the reigning concept in African studies at present.

1.1.1 - Statement of Problem

This is a study of the conflict between two ethnic groups¹, in the Bamenda Grassfields of the North West Province of Cameroon. It sets out to examine the hostile inter-societal relationships in the Bamenda Grassfields in general and Babanki-tungoh/Bambili in particular with focus on ethnic conflicts. The study will therefore seek to investigate the course and causes of the Bambili/Babanki-tungoh conflict, and look at attempted and suggested solutions.

1.1.2 - The Tikars and how they are ethnically divided

Tikar is a name given to a group of villages in the Bamenda Grassfields with segmentary lineage system whereby smaller units of the ethnic groups (or villages) are headed by Fons, but all Tikars are related to the same ancestors. The Bambili and Babanki-tungoh people use village to mean something bigger with many houses, shops, more than three thousand inhabitants, more than one denomination with their churches, having a particular culture and sacrifices; people with salient characteristics and headed by a Fon. This is a typical characteristic of an ethnic group, but the people of Bamenda called it a village. That is, the Bamenda people use village to mean something that would fit the definition of ethnic group. Each of these villages is different from the other. Bambili and Babanki-tungoh are Tikar villages and they share a common boundary. As is the case with many ethnic groups, one of the aspects that distinguish them from the other is their language. The language and accent is much different between these ethnic groups (Bambili and Babanki-tungoh) and this is one of the aspects that have enforced the difference of their cultural identity. An accent is easily understood as a Bambili accent or Babanki-tungoh accent and vice versa. Bambili and Babanki-tungoh own different traditional attires (costumes) which are worn on special occasions to show their material culture. The Bambili costume is embroidered at the surface around the shoulders while Babanki-tungoh costume is embroidered at the edge of the hands, both having different colours. This symbolic aspect of material culture of Bambili and Babanki-tungoh people help both to construct their community and above all sense of belonging, and makes their differences visible and identifiable, Cohen (1985). The ethnographic sounds and sights of their culture are different and even the taste connected to

¹ An ethnic group in this sense is to designate a population which has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order,(similar to the general definition of ethnic group by Bath Fredrik, 1969:11)

their food culture. For example they have different sound beats (beating of a drum) before traditional sacrifices and such sacrifices are performed at different places. The Bambili traditional meal is “achu” (churned cocoyams to eat with pepper soup prepared with palm oil), the Babanki-tungoh boiled the cocoyams to eat with fried vegetable (huckleberry). Also, both Bambili and Babanki-tungoh cultures have aspects of belief in ancestors and the spirit world, but have different methods of libation. Bambili use “palm wine” (whitish stuff from palm tree) while Babanki-tungoh use water for libation.

Considering the fact that Bambili and Babanki-tungoh share a common boundary, it means they are neighbouring Tikar villages (Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields), who identify themselves as different ethnic groups, with salient characteristics headed by different Fons with different cultures and sacrifices. This helps to show that people from the same group (Tikar) still look for opportunities to consider themselves as “WE” while looking at others as “THEM” in society. This further brings out the negative aspects of ethnicity and ethnic relations characteristics where different groups interact. According to Seymour (1986) ethnicity is the “identification and labeling of any grouping or category of people, and the explicit or implicit contrasts made between the identified group and another group or category”. This could be regarded through the tension created as a result of how different people are and how they relate to certain issues, especially in a society where access to resources are at stake constantly leading to competition and challenges among people. According to Eriksen (2002) “ethnicity emerges and is made relevant through social situations and encounters and through people’s way of life”. There is conflict at various levels of interaction between these ethnic groups because each ethnic group identifies the other as different. Ethnic identity is used in this study as an ascription in understanding inter-ethnic relations between the Bambili and the Babanki-tungoh. This reminds us that all approaches of anthropology and social science agree that ethnicity (which is a main theme of this study) is related to the identification and classification of people and group relationships. People classify themselves as different because they identify themselves as different from others. Amongst the Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields, we see the classification of groups, like the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh as members of different villages. This kind of identification is problematic to ethnic relations and brings out traits of “us” and “them” that might lead to a

stronger sense of belonging and togetherness within an ethnic group both in “resistance against” (Bambili against Babanki-tungoh) and in “consolation against” (Babanki-tungoh against Bambili) Eriksen (2002). Though considering themselves Tikars we see the identification and classification of villages identifying themselves as ethnic groups with salient characteristics, as having different cultures and traditions like Bambili and Babanki-tungoh villages. To me, the assumption in the further exposition is that they should not fight among themselves if they want to maintain order in society and seek for harmony and greater development. This is a way of thinking that will be used to analyze my findings.

1.1.3 - Purpose of the study

This study is to get an overview of the conflict between the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh, it focuses on what the conflict was all about, the views of the conflicting parties and also the previous attempts at conflict mediation, the ways antagonistic groups act and to account for these actions. The intention is to propose ways that would reduce conflict in the area to enhance harmony, peace and development.

1.1.4 - Hypotheses

- 1) The numerous ethnic conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields can be considered as a product of fast degenerating arable land against the background of fast growing population, and they are a product of the ever growing centralized state formation in the Bamenda region, characterized by ambitious, expansionist and hegemonistic rulers.
- 2) The Bambili/Babanki-tungoh conflict is the product of centralized state building process in the Bamenda Grassfields and it is fostered by economic imperatives.

1.1.5 - Research question(s)

The study, therefore, handles the following questions: why is the Bamenda Grassfields rife with many ethnic conflicts in general and the Bambili/Babanki-tungoh in particular? What makes the two ethnic groups different, so much so that they fight each other over a piece of land? Who are the motivators of the ethnic conflict in the area? Of what importance is the disputed land between the two contestants under study? What attempts have been made by the traditional government and civil administration to end these conflicts and why have these

attempts not bore any fruits? By answering all these questions the work will fill a gap in the historiography of the Bamenda Grassfields.

1.1.6 - Justification

As far as ethnic conflicts in the Bamenda grassfields are concerned, little scholarly attention has focused on this issue, its negative effects on the society notwithstanding. In the attempt to interpret and analyze ethnic conflicts in the Bamenda grassfields in general and Babanki-tungoh/Bambili in particular, writers like historians, politicians, and journalists have tended to feed the Cameroonian public. They have expressed their opinions in various articles in Cameroon newspapers such as *Cameroon Tribune*; *The Herald*; *The Messenger* and *Cameroon Post*. The articles in these newspapers expressed the views of the different parties involved. Unfortunately, articles in these newspapers have not handled the topic objectively.

This study therefore seeks to examine the course and causes of ethnic disputes or conflict in the Bamenda grassfields. Ethnic conflicts have taken place intermittently between these two villages (Bambili/Babanki-tungoh). Given that the facts underlying these conflicts have been manipulated and distorted, there is need to resort to history, and the need for a methodological study as to the content and causes of the conflicts as a background to conflict resolution so that lasting solutions can be provided.

1.1.7 - Scope and limitation

The title of the work shows that the study would be limited to the Bamenda Grassfields which is today known as the North West province of Cameroon with its headquarters at Bamenda. The work will further be narrowed down to Bambili and Babanki-tungoh in the North West Province. During the British colonial administration (1922-61), these ethnic groups, the Bambili and the Babanki-tungoh, were under the Bafut Native authority. Today they are under Tubah sub-division of the independent state of Cameroon.

The year 1950 does not imply the beginning of ethnic conflicts in the region. Before then there were conflicts. The conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields began in the early 1820s when the disciples of Uthman Dan Fodio raiding the Adamawa Plateau of North Cameroon in an

attempt to purify Islam, launched the jihads often known as the Muslims holy wars. They forced the Chamba and Pagans to migrate south into the Bamenda Grassfields. The year 1950 has been chosen because that was when the Babanki-tungo/Bambili conflict sparked off. Again the earliest court session about the conflict was held around the 1950s. The study ends in 1998 because it was in that year that the last court hearing took place in the Bamenda High Court.

1.1.8 - Literature Review

Much has been written on the subject of ethnic conflicts, but not much has been written on the ethnic conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields. The general works on ethnic conflicts will be important to this study in that some of the hypothesis and paradigms will be tested in the study. Various authors have attempted to look at ethnic conflicts in general; anthropologists have written on the Bamenda grassfields and Cameroonian newspapers have attempted to examine certain aspects of this topic.

a. General Works (Published)

E.M. Chilver and P.M. Kabbery in *Traditional Bamenda Vol. 1: Pre-Colonial History and Ethnography of the Bamenda Grassfields* are anthropologists who have handled the origin and migrations of most ethnic groups of the Bamenda grassfields. This will be relevant to the study when treating the ethnographic survey. Paul Nchoji Nkwi and J.P. Warnier in *Elements for a history of the Western Grassfields* analyze the various ethnic groups found in the region. Paul Nchoji Nkwi in *Traditional Diplomacy: A Study of Inter-Chiefdom Relations in Western Grassfields* shows how the peoples of the region have been living in peace, inter-marrying and having tribal leaders. He also shows how this relation was often punctuated by conflicts. This book remains relevant to the study in that it will show how various chiefdoms in the Bamenda grassfields once lived in peace before resorting to conflict.

M. Fortes and E.E. Evans (eds.) in *African Political Systems* treat different African political systems. They also bring out some of the causes of conflicts. Although this treatment is based on the Central and South African Kingdoms, some of the paradigms can be tested in the Bamenda grassfields. *African Crossroads: Intersections between History and Anthropology* by

Ian Fowler and Zeitlyn is an anthropological anthology which does not handle conflicts. The book contains analysis pertaining to the origin and migratory history of the ethnic groups in the Bamenda grassfields. This is necessary in order to better appreciate what is happening in the Bamenda grassfields with focus on ethnic conflicts.

George Ngwane in *Settling Disputes in Africa: Traditional Bases for Resolution* examines the ways and means by which tradition could become a base for settling disputes. These are drawn from existing realities rather than from the abstract. This book does not satisfactorily treat conflicts as its pre-occupation neither does it handle conflicts in the Bamenda grassfields but the various methods through which conflicts could be resolved will be tested in the region under study. So far no one has written anything on this topic.

b. Unpublished Works and News Papers

Several Cameroonian newspapers have carried articles on various aspects of conflicts in the Bamenda grassfields in general and Bambili and Babanki-tungoh conflict in particular. “Babanki-tungoh – Bambili Land Dispute” in *The Herald* No. 201 of May 4-7, 1995 handles the ethnic dispute in question from the administration’s point of view. In this article, the Babanki-tungoh rejected a unilateral decision by the Mezam Senior Divisional Officer (S.D.O.), Samuel Sufo, but vowed to respect the Westmacott demarcation of 1953 which was reached in an Appeal Court decision Suit No. 23/53. The article points an accusing finger at the administration of the ruling Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM) party for being responsible for the conflict today.

“Babanki-tungoh – Bambili conflict : Babankis accuse Aberty Peter, write to Presidency” in *The Herald* No. 187 of Thursday 16-19, 1995, accuses Peter Aberty, a Cameroonian People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM) member, of supporting Bambili in the conflict with Babanki-tungoh. The Babanki-tungoh accuses the CPDM administration for igniting the conflict. Although the article reveals the extent of the administration’s involvement in the contention and the outright claim over the disputed area by Bambili, it has not treated the origins and manifestations of the conflict satisfactorily.

Another article, “After Decades of Conflicts, Babanki-tungoh – Bambili bury their hatchet” in *Cameroon Post*”, No. 00063 of Monday, 26, 1997 handles the attempt made by the Justice and Peace Commission (appointed by the North West Province elites) to seek a lasting solution to the Bambili/Babanki-tungoh protracted ethnic dispute. This commission succeeded in bringing the two warring factions together. The article has not satisfactorily handled the topic with regard to what was done to the demarcation of the land.

In all, the literature shows that several schools of thought share different opinions with regard to this conflict. Some hold the view that the people of the region are aggressive and therefore love disputes. Others felt that the ever-expanding population of the region has led to the scarcity of land thereby sparking territorial aggrandizement to accommodate the population. Yet, others are of the opinion that the Bambili/Babanki-tungoh conflict is motivated and sustained by some of the administrators found in the ruling government. The articles per se have not tackled the crux of these ethnic conflicts – the rationale behind the conflict.

1.2.0 - Research Methodology: Sources of Data Collection

In carrying out this study, primary and secondary sources were consulted. As far as the primary sources are concerned, archival materials – both Assessment and Intelligence Reports were consulted. These files were consulted in the National Archives in Buea (NAB) and the Provincial Archives in Bamenda. The Assessment and Intelligence Reports were written between 1923 and 1934 by administrative officers at the time. This information was useful as far as giving information on the origin, migration and settlement of the various villages in the Bamenda Grassfields are concerned. This historical information or material allows us to identify the issues that raise the most controversy amongst the Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields, and more specifically between the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh. This historical overview will provide explanations to the ethnic differences of the Tikar group, which are to a large extent the result of the ethnic conflicts. Secondly, various articles from different newspapers were consulted. Most of these newspapers handled the topic from a partisan point of view. Some of the articles were, however, useful and acted as a springboard for further research. Interviews were also conducted. It was difficult gathering data through this method. At a time when the Bamenda grassfields was undergoing a period of political insecurity, many

informants were skeptical releasing information. One had to begin from the general issues to the specifics as a way of obtaining the needed information. Several people had to be asked the same range of questions several times in order to establish what was common among them in terms of information.

As far as secondary sources were concerned, textbooks were consulted. These text were consulted in the university library, Buea; Pan African Institute for Development, (PAID), Buea; Local Government Training Centre, (CEFAM), Buea and private libraries which are found in Buea and Bamenda. General works on conflict resolution were consulted at the University library, Tromsø. The essence is to review literature about ethnic conflicts, ethnicity and impact studies. The literature reviewed served as both theoretical and empirical base for the analysis of the data collected. It also supplemented the information gathered during the fieldwork.

Getting into the Field: In order to understand the situation under investigation, that is to ensure that the research is well placed on ethical and epistemological grounds, qualitative research method was adopted for the study. This is to get an integrated overview, the ways in which the two antagonistic groups act and to account for these actions. The research position adopted is interpretive. This is to interpret the responses of the researched subjects and the issue under investigation. Problems and themes emerged from the fieldwork setting.

1.2.1 - Some Methodological Consideration and Sample Size

The methodological approaches I used in the field were tools, to guide me to obtain the points of view of my collaborators and the issues affecting them. In order words; attracted by Goerge Marcus' (1990) techniques on carrying out an ethnographic study, he suggest that an ethnographer can choose to "follow the people; follow the thing; the plot; story; follow the conflict". In this study, therefore, interviews were held in two of the Tikar villages. Marcus also states that a wider society can be represented through a few individuals as long as elements typical of the broad are evident with the few. Another qualitative research methodologists Adrian Holliday² supports this view and recommends qualitative research

² Doing and writing Qualitative Research (2000)

pointing out its advantage where statistics of many people cannot be more important than qualitative well-described life stories of fishermen and their wives in a fishing community, for example.

Sample size: This depended on the issues that were emerging during my interviews. As such the sample size was developed until the point where new themes were no longer emerging. When I observed that the number was good, about fifty six people had been interviewed.

1.2.2 - Field work techniques and adopting roles

This project is based on fieldwork material collected from early May to early August 2006. I started by determining the initial sites for fieldwork based on their likely relevance for the issue under investigation. Attention was focused on villages where ethnic conflict was high. This was mainly to give me a better focus in the field. Information was thus collected from two villages amongst the Tikar villages. These were: the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh villages where persons between the ages of 45-70 were chosen for interviews. They were chosen for the purpose of reliability, and had experienced this conflict more than young people. These persons were mainly chosen by means of snowball sampling. One key informant recommended the next. This is because recommended persons were depicted as being knowledgeable as far as the issue under study was concerned. Some were active participants in the conflict. These villages were chosen as sub set amongst the Tikar villages with persons of the above age limit in order to give my analysis a more informed perspective.

For the purpose of this study, the work was narrowed down to the ethnic conflict between the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh ethnic groups. Taking into consideration the fact that other Tikar villages were having serious political problems, I assumed that the conflicts in Bambili and Babanki-tungoh were representative of the conflicts in the other villages. I started the interviewing process in the Bambili village and ended with the Babanki-tungoh village. The main questions were:

- 1) What is the cause of the antagonism between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh?
- 2) Do the policies of the central administration in solving this conflict help to solve the antagonism between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh?

3) What is the importance of the disputed land to Bambili or Babanki-tungoh?

I will further develop them and others.

Interviews: The next phase was therefore to conduct the interviews of the local people of these villages. The initial sites included the ‘palaces’ of the two villages. Before entering each of these sites, contacts with the various chiefs (Fons) were made first, introducing myself to them and the purpose of the study to their villages and why their village was chosen. Due to numerous conflicts in this area (the Bamenda Grassfields), leaders of these communities doubted my identity and personality. I was even asked to say which of the provinces of Cameroon I came from. It was a little bit easy since my father came from this part of Cameroon, though my mother is from the South West Province and I lived and grew up in the South West Province. I always went to the field with my identification papers - Cameroon national identity card, Tromsø student identity card, a confirmation letter from the University of Tromsø to do research and a university of Buea student identity card to prove that I had been a student of Buea. All these created confidence. They accepted to assist by informing their entire community members, to receive me when need be. A town ‘crier’ (someone who does announcement in the village) made the announcement. The phone numbers of those who were no longer living in the village, either for farming, businesses amongst others, were given to me and the phone number of someone ‘nchinda’ (Fon’s servant) was given to me, so that I could call them. I only needed to mention the name of the nchinda and he or she would make arrangement on how we should meet for the interview. This was to ensure that informants speak freely and give unbiased answers. For the case of Babanki-tungoh, I met with the Fon in another village, the Fon only visits the village during week ends or on special occasions. This is because he is a civil servant and works outside the village. He is one of the youngest Fons amongst the Fons of the Tikar Villages. But he still directed me to the village to meet the nchinda and other respondents.

Interviews were mostly conducted in the evenings when most people came back from their jobs, farms and market places. I found it interesting how we introduced each other. Good evening Mr. “Y”, I am a student from the University of Tromsø, a Cameroonian doing fieldwork. “Oh! My daughter you are welcome, so this is you, we heard the announcement”.

Most often I explained to them that it was not for political but for academic reasons, and for the general need for social change. Some doubted if I really was not from the village, because my surname is common amongst the Tikar villages. They saw me like an insider, because of my Tikar background, and this enhanced rapport and confidence building contrary to what I had expected. As a result, they told me the story of the conflict, the area under conflict, activities in the area, their views, I was also able to discover the importance of the place (area under dispute) to these villages. I wanted to listen to people talk about their lives, views, wishes, and their view of the history of the conflict. That was how I got my inspiration from Marcus' text. In Marcus words, "collective memory is more likely to be passed through individual memory and autobiography embedded in diffuse communication between generations than in any spectacles or performances in public arenas" (1990:64). Collective representations are thus most effectively filtered through personal representations. "With this insight, the modernist ethnographer transforms the conventional realist concern with history" (ibid). The questions I prepared in advance were opened-ended in order to encourage the informants to talk. The informants were delighted to find a young lady engaged in the progress of her country. This is contrary to what I expected. I thought I would be dismissed or not accepted to interview because I am a woman. This is because most often only men carried out studies that needed interviews in the area. In effect the informants gave me their views about the issue under study.

During my interview process in Bambili and Babanki-tungoh, I asked to have a view of the site in question, (the particular place over which these villages are in conflict with each other), this place is a hilly site in between these villages some few kilometers away from the villages. Bambili and Babanki-tungoh share a common boundary or border. Both Fons accepted and nchindas were assigned from the two villages to take me there. But this was done on two separate days since none of the Fons knew I had made arrangements to view the site with the other Fon. I took pictures of the site from both sides of the villages. And some of these pictures will be inserted at the end of the thesis.

Recording interview data: The interview process was taken down by means of a note book and tape recorder. I guaranteed the confidentiality of informants and they approved the use of

tape recorder. Therefore considering the fact that the conflict between Bambili/Babanki-tungoh has not stopped completely, coupled with the political instability in the area, I reasoned that it would be impossible to write about the issue without protecting the identities of the individuals who had been interviewed. In order to hide the identities of these persons, fictitious names will be used in my analyses. To this effect personal information (demographic characteristics and family background) will not be included. This is because such information could easily be used to trace informants which could be detrimental to them. This could strain social relationship and that people should not be called upon for questions or information to be used against them. But a copy of list of names of informants, and date of interviews is available to show the exam committee but not to be included in the thesis.

1.2.3 - Field Work Problems

As it is known there are always problems associated with doing research or fieldwork. The main problem was about my identity. Some were still curious about my South West background. I actually did not want to dwell on my identity as a North Westerner or South Westerner, but when informants wanted to know I told them because I wanted to get real information. I was almost refused entry into the Bambili palace, where one of the servants (nchinda) of the Fon asked “you are from which village and province”. I told him my father is from the North West Province and Nkwen village precisely. He said Oh “we are one, just wait let me notify the Fon”. Fifteen minutes later I was taken into a hall where I introduced myself again to the Fon. Another case was when I wanted to interview a Babanki-tungoh informant who said, “show me your research permit and identity card” I gave him and he asked me some questions. So he doubted me and he wanted a proof, though he had been notified of my coming. The study was also hindered by informants who concealed information. Some local people expected me to know the truth of the conflict since I have a Tikar background. But I went into the field with less reliance on my own beliefs, expectations and ideas (keeping aside my own “common sense”) about the issue under investigation for research purpose, in order that my informants should give me all what I needed for the research. In other words, I wanted to find the “truth” as seen from the perspective of each of my informant. This enhanced confidence in my research subjects as they agreed to be of service and to contribute to the aim of the exercise.

At a point in time the interview process at Bambili, was distorted by the visit of the Senior Divisional Officer (SDO) of the Tubar Sub Division. This SDO of Tubar governs these Tikar villages. I had to wait for about two days before any interview could be carried out in the village, because every villager was busy. The same problem also postponed my appointment to meet with the Fon of Babanki-tungoh for about four days. I waited until they finished their mission in Babanki-tungoh before I was granted audience to meet him. Also those informants who lived out of the village were difficult to meet. At times I had to travel across two villages to meet them for interviews. The nature of roads in these places are horrible, at times you walk for many kilometers when it is too muddy and vehicles no longer go to where you are going. This is as a result of much rain in Cameroon at the time, which was the rainy season. Also it was difficult to meet interviewees, because people were too busy with their own affairs. The problem of interpreter was serious, at times I met very old people who did not understand or speak English and he or she knew about the problem under study very well. Since I don't understand or speak the language, it was interpreted to me. Someone would do the translation, and most often, I just took the translated version. I used one translator to interpret one interview from a man who could not speak English in Bambili. The interpreter was recommended by a nchinda. He interpreted the local language into English language. I also used another interpreter to interpret two interviews from Babanki-tungoh village, also recommended by a nchinda. After I struggled to get interpreters, I realized that these interpreted interviews were not different from the other interviews I got in English language. I could trust what the interpreters translated, because it was the same as I received from the other informants, only the language was different.

1.2.4 - Data analysis

After the collection of data, the next phase is to write the analysis. The study involved organizing the data based on the research questions. The first step was to read the interview transcripts and documents collected for the study. Then to analyze the data collected during the fieldwork.

1.3.0 - Theoretical and conceptual framework

I will throw light on the theoretical and conceptual approaches that will be used in analysing the findings. The theoretical approaches will be used in understanding the data analysis of what happened in the field. In other words, I want to explore how the concept of ethnicity is treated in the anthropological and social science literature and at the same time place them within the local context of this study. These theories will be used later to identify analytical tools for the findings and discussions.

a) Theoretical framework and analytical tools

I want to explore ethnicity which entails ethnic identity and boundaries of an ethnic group. There are different analytical approaches by social scientists and anthropologists for the concept ethnicity. According to Eriksen (2002) with the use of anthropological approaches, we are able to explore the ways in which ethnic relations are being defined and perceived by people; how they talk and think about their group with its salient characteristics as well as those of other groups. The Bambili and Babanki-tungoh are two groups with what could be described as “salient characteristics” which I mentioned earlier. When I introduced the concept of ethnicity earlier, I stated that all approaches of social sciences and anthropology agree that ethnicity has something to do with the “classification of people and group relationships”, Eriksen (2002). Eriksen still maintains that in everyday language, the word “ethnicity still has a ‘ring of minority issue’ and ‘race relations’, but in social anthropology, it refers to aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves and are regarded by others as culturally distinctive” (2002:4). And this means it is not necessarily placed in racial relationships alone, but in other forms of social relationships that entail other forms of differentiation. And in this case, we could talk about ethnic group relations. According to Eriksen “ethnicity emerges and is made relevant through social situations and encounters” (2002:1). Now, situations where ethnicity and ethnic identity is shown in the everyday lives of the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh people in Bamenda, will be shown, and how this fosters their differences.

A vital concept that is implicitly and sometimes explicitly present in any problematic definition of identity and ethnicity relations is boundaries. Fredrik Barth (1969) sees ethnicity

as a concept describing a particular way of drawing ‘boundaries’ between groups, in contrast to culture, which is the meaningful “contents”, the “life-world” which the ‘boundaries’ contain. Barth sees ethnicity as that social relationship where people have differences and these are marked out by variables known as ‘boundaries’. According to Barth (1969 cited in Cohen ed, 2000:20) boundaries are “complex cultural models” which carries massive cultural traits or entailments. To the best of my knowledge these boundaries could be based on, and expressed through difference in language amongst others. Boundaries bring out the difference between groups. Each boundary containing a meaningful aspect of the people’s lives that may not necessary be valued by the other group. As said earlier, Seymour-Smith (1986) also share the same notion that ethnicity is characterized by “the identification and labeling of any grouping or any category of people, and the explicit or implicit contrasts made between the identified group and another group” and notably, there must always be a ‘WE/THEY’ dichotomy to apply to concept of ethnicity. In the case of the Bambili/Babanki-tungoh relations there are salient features of THEM and US that places this study within the framework of ethnicity. The Bambili people and their own notions of what make them different are not talked about by the Bambili themselves but are referred to by the Babanki-tungoh in a process of describing the Bambili. For example, a Bambili man tells me this: *they (Babanki-tungoh people) were given a piece of land to settle for sometime and now they don’t want to let it go, they are greedy people.* And similarly, this statement still by a Bambili man about Bambili people: *We the Bambili people are kind. We are open.*

In defining ethnicity above, Barth considers that it’s a concept that describes a relationship where boundaries exist between ethnic groups. In Bamenda, the Bambili chief made it clear to me that until recently there existed a harmonious relationship between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh around the piece of land. *“They (Babanki-Tungoh) do their things and We (Bambili) do ours”* indicating absence of conflict, does not necessarily mean absence of boundaries. And also, though they live harmoniously in the area, they still identify themselves as different peoples or groups. Normally, when one person trespasses a boundary, conflict is imminent. A boundary is a conceptual tool in understanding group relations. Thus, in identifying boundaries, it results to ethnic differences as this could be seen between the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh ethnic groups. When there are boundaries it means interests are at stake and it

is due to interest that people draw boundaries (difference in language, culture amongst others). Looking at the relationship of the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh Barth's theory is correct in claiming that there are boundaries. This tells that some of the characteristics of the villages are aspects of the physical and non physical. In relation to the above, I will illustrate identity as an aspect of ethnicity.

Identity is the psychological self-conception of a person. In the social sciences, the term has also been extended to encompass social identity, cultural identity and ethnic identity. These terms refer to the identification of self with a specific social, cultural, or ethnic group. We may also speak of group identity in the sense of the identification or self conception held in common by a group of people. Referring to ethnic identity, I consider the Babanki-tungoh as sharing an ethnic identity as members of an ethnic group. The concept of identity as used in this paper is in line with the views of Ger Duijzings (2000) who argues that identity represents a link between the individual and a specific category or group of people. It is based on perceived sameness which at the same time implies difference from others, for instance Bambili and Babanki-tungoh. Identity represents a bond between the individual and a collectivity and maybe accepted or contested by both outsiders and insiders. Individuals incorporate elements of the social experience in their personal identities. The common elements create a sense of a community, a collective identity (for instance Bambili and Babanki-tungoh). It is also important to note that ethnicity is a special form of identification wherein group histories and cultural traditions which when emphasized and associated with characteristics like competition, are capable of producing either constructive or destructive actions. As such identity is an expression, which refers to the ways in which collectives are distinguished in the relations with other collectivities. Thus, similarity and differences are the dynamic principles of identity, the heart of social life. From the above, I can say that I have explained how identity in the study of Bambili/Babanki-tungoh relations is treated.

According to Schilder (1994) ethnic groups entails the 'subjective' dimension of a consciousness of being members of the same group as distinct from comparable groups, is combined with 'objective' dimension of a group name, shared notions about a collective past and/or common cultural traits. Generally, in using the concept of ethnic group and boundaries,

I consider ethnicity as a concept of classification that produces value-neutral traits, namely the emic and the etic that can be applied for analytical purposes. As such, it stands out in contrast to how people understand the relevance of their own ethnicity in relation to other people's ethnicity. Ethnicity in itself creates division because it is relevant in the social integration of different groups. This is the idea that different people's identities and markers of ethnic difference are there to represent the richness of other culture, but they also turn to rupture relations when brought out. This is to say that the identity of X is primordial and X in the protection and recognition of his/her identity would use it to suppress the identity of Y because he/she/they are different. To take a contextual example, the Bambili (ethnic group) carry out different libation exercises though they are all Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields and though such libations goes to the same ancestors. These signify aspects of various processes of ethnic differences. Therefore, I use ethnicity, boundaries and ethnic groupings in ways that explains and emphasize distinction and differences that prolong the conflict between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh.

In an attempt to generate a theory grounded on the phenomenon under investigation, it appears absolutely important to unravel both groups' perspectives as to the causes of the hostile inter societal interactions. The current antagonism is understood as a kind of ethnically driven conflict. As such it is important to have a look at some theories and analysis which are concern with the origin and causes of ethnic conflicts. By so doing, my analysis will be base on the works of some social anthropologies like Fredrik Barth, Utterwulghe and Edward Azar who are involved in theorizing theories of ethnically driven conflicts. The extent to which these theories are applicable to our case study will be seen.

In his study of ethnic boundary maintenance, Barth argued that actors themselves self-ascribe to ethnic groupings or groups. They consider themselves to belong to separate groups or villages, though with our case study, they are all Tikars of the Bamenda grassfields. This qualifies to organize them in groups when they interaction amongst themselves. That is groups maintain their identity when they interact with each other. This is a criterion for determining membership and exclusion in group relations. This theory is very influential on the issues of ethnic groupings (interaction and boundary maintenance) in our case study. This brings us to

an important analytical approach based on Edward Azar's explanation on protracted ethnic conflict situations.

I would like to briefly discuss the term protracted social conflict according to Azar (cited in Burton and Dukes, 1990), in his reflection on protracted social conflict (to suggest the type of on-going and seemingly irresolvable conflict), Azar inspires my need for a comprehensive approach that sees conflict as having multiple causes in the context of historical, socio-psychological and ethnic factors. According to Azar (cited in Ryan, 1990), protracted social conflicts are "usually conflict between ethnic groups which have been going on for some time, and which may appear to be irresolvable". This theoretical position is very useful when seen within the context of our case study. This is evident with the multi communal composition of the Bamenda Grassfields, with economic underdevelopment and communal identities amongst villages (ethnic groups) in the region. The ongoing antagonisms between the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh can be seen as a kind of protracted social conflict. Especially when looked at the nature of the conflict and the struggle between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh villages.

To understand the origin of group violence, a multidisciplinary approach is required, taking into consideration cultural and individual psychology. Since the antagonism between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh has been going on for a long time and is still going on confirms the fact that it's a protracted conflict. I will start by developing a theoretical argument using Azar's psycho-cultural conflict theory to explain the protracted conflict theory. According to Utterwulghe (1999) psycho cultural conflict theory explains the cultural shared, profound "we-they" oppositions. It conceptualizes enemies and allies, and the deep-seated dispositions about human action stemming from early development. Utterwulghe inspires me because it is certain that conflict about real interests take place under psychological dispositions and this even prolongs conflict (especially ethnic conflict). Just the reaction and relationship between the Bambili people and Babanki-tungoh can explain that ethnicity has something to do in their relations thus enhancing the conflict. As such, the analysis shall proceed along the views or perspectives of both antagonistic groups.

1.4.0 - Organization of the study

The study is structured into five chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction to the study. Here, a brief overview of the problem statement, research questions, research objectives, scope and limitations, justification and literature review are discussed. The methodological part of the research (methods of data collection, challenges, strategies used and methods of data analysis) are also discussed. The chapter also presents and discusses key concepts and theoretical approaches and their relevance to the study.

The second chapter is two fold. The first part opens with the geographical and ethnographical survey of the Bamenda grassfields. It focuses amongst other things, on the land, human, traditional and socio-political setting in which the contestants find themselves. The second part treats the arrival of the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh people. These two ethnic groups constitute the core of the study. In order to better appreciate the inter-societal relations between these two peoples, this chapter examines the period in their history when they were fraternal friends. Also the chapter also discusses the history of land use and its local practices in the area. The chapter ends with the manifestations of the conflict from c.1950-1998.

Chapter three focuses on the causes of the ethnic conflict taking into consideration the perspectives of the local people. It will also look at the ethnic aspect of the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh conflict.

Chapter four explains how and why attempts at resolving the conflict have failed. This chapter ends with some suggested solutions.

Chapter five is the last chapter. It opens with a panoramic view of all the chapters. It ties up the issues raised in the introduction and the extent to which the study has addressed them.

CHAPTER TWO

A). THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND ETHNOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF THE BAMENDA GRASSFIELDS

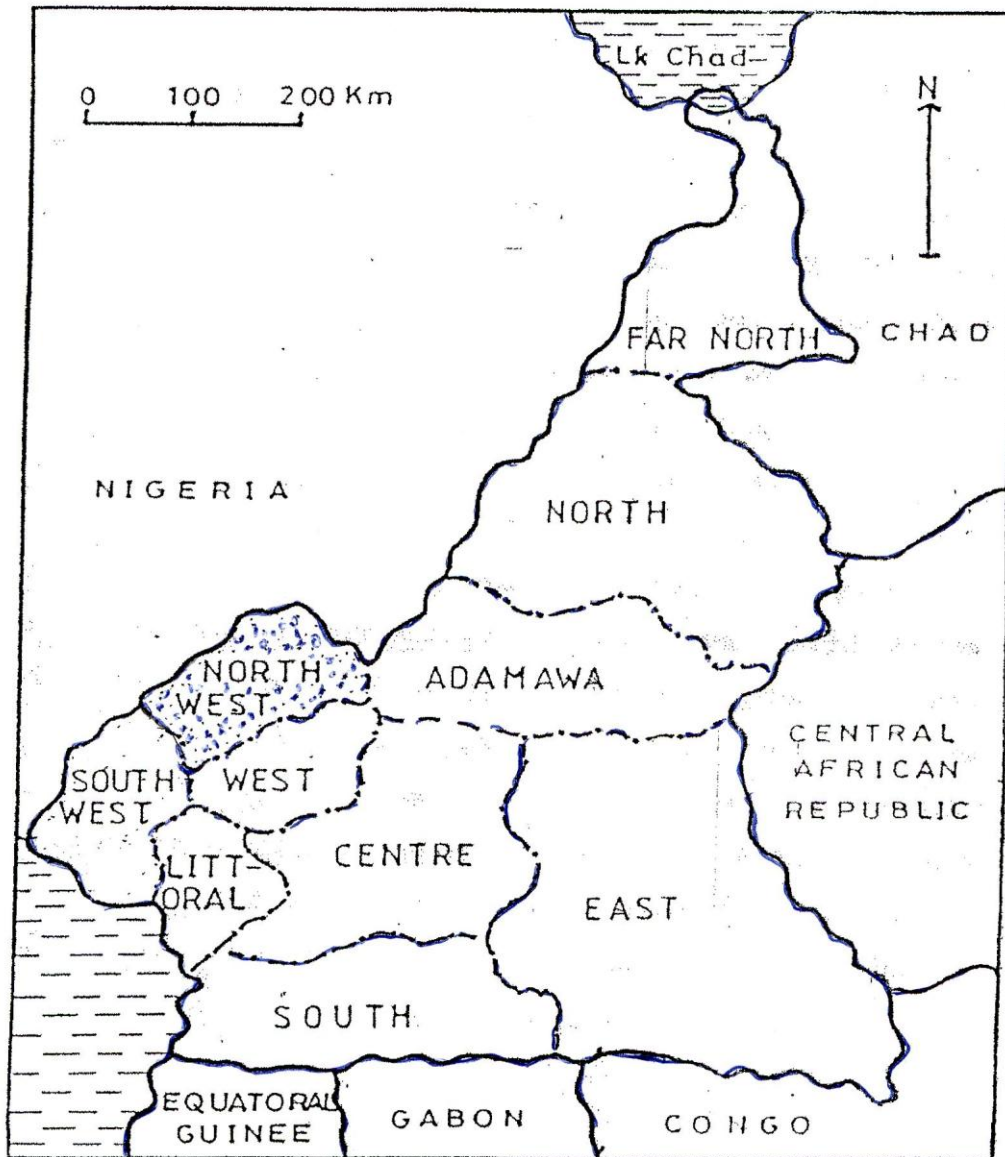
This chapter describes the geography and ethnography of the Bamenda Grassfields. It focuses on the land, the peoples and the traditional and socio-political organizations in which the contestants of the ethnic conflicts find themselves.


The second part will examine the arrival of the contestants, the Bambili and the Babanki-tungoh, in the region. It will look at amongst other things, their geopolitical setting, their occupations (activities) and their origin/migratory histories. Some of these aspects also helped in furthering animosity that became grounded in the ethnic conflict. It is obvious that the two neighbors never arrived at their respective areas as enemies because the animosity started only after they have lived in their respective sites for many years. Their relationship was initially cordial. The chapter further examines the period when the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh were living in cordiality. An insight of the manifestations of the ethnic conflict will help us understand the situation of the contestants.

2.1.1 - Land

The Bamenda Grassfields was an important political and economic zone in British colonial Cameroons. As part of the British Southern Cameroons, it is located at the point where the long West African coastline turns sharply south, to run down to the Congo and Cape. It is found East of Greenwich, approximately between longitudes 5°3', 8°5' and latitudes 9°5', 11°0' north of the equator. According to E. M. Chilver and P. M. Kaberry (1967), the Bamenda Grassfields cover the former administrative divisions of Bamenda, Wum and Nkambe, which in 1953 had a total population of 429,000 including 10,000 Fulani. See map I.

Map I - Location of the Bamenda Grassfields in Cameroon.



 Study area (The Bamenda Grassfields)

SOURCE: Macmillan Atlas for Cameroon Schools p9

The dominant geographical feature of this area is the Bamenda High Plateau. It stretches from the North East and East of the Bamenda Grassfields over the centre of the area at an average height of 4,500 feet above sea level, Ritzenthaler R. and Ritzenthaler P (1926:10). It is studded with peaks, the highest and most spectacular of them being the Akuofo Mountains between the Bamenda station and former French Cameroon frontier and Oku Mountain which is 7,357 feet above sea level, Ngwa (1967:16). The Bamenda plateau falls suddenly from Bafut into the former Menchum valley which is about 2,000 feet above sea level. The region is well drained: The rivers Nun and the Mbam in the east flow into the River Sanaga in the former French Cameroons. The Donga, Katsina-Ala and Menchum flow west to join the Benue in Nigeria, while the Momo flows into the tributaries of the Cross River in Manyu Division. There are two main seasons: the rainy season which begins about mid March and ends early in November and the dry season which lasts from October to March. Rainfall varies from 65 inches daily to 125 inches with the heaviest precipitation being concentrated between August and mid-October. Temperature rises during the day to over 84 ° F. During the rains it often drops to 65 ° F and much lower at night, Kaberry (1952).

The traditional economy of the region is based on subsistence agriculture, animal breeding and handicraft. The existence of fertile volcanic soils permits the cultivation of a variety of crops. Agriculture is a pre-occupation of women as well as men. Many crops like maize(*zea mays*), plantains(*musa paradisiacal*), cocoyams(*colocasia antiquorum*) yams(*dioscorea*) are grown everywhere as staple food crops. Also guinea corn(*sorghum vulgare*), native white carrot(*coleus dazo*), sweet potatoes(*impomoea batatas*), bananas(*musa acuminata*), groundnuts(*arachis hypogea*) are also widely grown, Purseglove (1968). The German colonial administration introduced the Irish potatoes into the region which today is cultivated in increasing quantity by almost all ethnic groups in the area except the forest areas. The people have also recently begun growing grape fruit, papaw, oranges, guavas, soya beans, cabbages, tomatoes and pineapples while in the Menchum valley, Bikom and Ndop plain various species of rice are cultivated with the help of the Upper Nun Valley Development Authority (U.N.V.D.A). The U.N.V.D.A. created in 1970 is charged with the development of rice cultivation in the headquarters of Nun Valley above the Bamendjim dam, in order to supplement the incomes of the local populations of the region, Neba (1987:166). A lot of

importance is also attached to the production of cash crops, especially Arabica coffee, groundnuts and tobacco. The attractive climate and open grasslands attracted many people to settle in this region in the nineteenth century.

2.1.2 - Peoples of the Region

This section will give a detailed account of the people in the region in order to understand where they came from, and how this affected their ethnic relations. The indigenous people of the area (Bamenda Grassfields) fall into five main groups, based on their oral traditions of origin. These groups are: Tikar who constitute the largest ethnic groups of the region; the Widekum who occupy the South Western area; the Mbembe in the northeastern area; the Chamba; and the Aghem, Kwi (1987:15). Each group consists of several ethnic groups. As of 1980, the North West Province, the former Bamenda Division, had an estimated population of 809,000 inhabitants over an area of 6,996 square miles. This is the only data I have of the population statistics. The last official census³ was in 1953. There has been no other census.

The most populous of these peoples are the Tikars. Tikars were the first to settle on the Bamenda region. According to their oral traditions, they lived originally to the Northeast of their present territory, somewhere between Tibati and Ngoundere, Ngoh (1996). This group settled to the South of Bamenda station in the Ndop plain to which they gave the name of their country of origin. As a result of this, politically-autonomous villages were founded. Although controversy seems to exist with regard to their migrations to the Ndop plain, it seems that they arrived the area in waves. Harold D. Nelson et. Al. (1974) maintains that the Tikars began drifting southward in the eighteenth century or earlier in search of new land, a movement that became stronger during the Fulani invasions⁴ of the nineteenth century.

³ Their relative numerical strength estimated in 1948 by Chilver and Kaberry was as follows: Tikar 175,000; Widekum 83,000; Mbembe 22,000; Chamba 14,000, Aghem 7,000, Chilver and Kaberry, (1967:13). The official 1953 census gives different figures: Tikar had 59,914; Widekum 110,125; Chamba 29,000; and the other ethnic groups 2,976. To these might be added the Hausas, Bororo and Ibo(Nigerians) who entered the area in small but increasing numbers during the British colonial administration. According to the 1953 census, there were 9,931 Fulanis and 3,451 Hausas in the region.

⁴ In the early nineteenth century (1804) when the disciples of Uthman Dan Fodio raiding the Adamawa Plateau of North Cameroon in an attempt to purify Islam, launched the jihads often known as the holy wars, forced the Chamba and Pagans to migrate south into the Bamenda Grassfields.

They first founded the villages of Bafanji; Bamessing, Babessi and Bamali. Then Bambalang, Bamunka and Balikumbat. The second wave of immigrants founded Baba, Babungo and Bangolan. As at the time of settlement, none of these villages could dominate the other, but their relations were characterized by conflicts over land and their being subject to slave raids. According to their oral traditions, even the Fulani and Chamba raids failed to unite them politically.

The last of the Tikar migrations into the Bamenda Grassfields comprised the following: Kom and Bafut. Kom is the second largest of the Tikar fiefdoms in the Bamenda Grassfields. Their origin which is accepted by Chilver and Kaberry and Nkwi, is that they came from Ndobu in the present Adamawa province. They migrated and set up a temporal settlement at Bamessi. While at Bamessi the Kom population increased tremendously and began to prosper more than their host. This prosperity was the root cause of the feud that developed between the guests (Kom people) and their host (Bamessi), Nkwi(1976). Bafut Chiefdom had also moved into the Bamenda Grassfields by the end of the 18th century with Bafreng (Nkwen). Her dynasty claims origin from Ndobu, presumably the area of that name in northern Bamum and the Upper Mbam from which legends bring the ancestors of the kings. The Bafut dynasty claims to be related to those of Nkwen and the Kijem (Babanki-tungoh). Within Bafut there are various legends concerning the route taken by the founder of the kingdom. This is not surprising since the chiefdom is a composite one and varying traditions reflect the interests of different groups within it. However, two schools of thought have emerged as to when they left their point of origin and arrived Bamenda. The first school states that the people of Bafut, traditionally considered the oldest and most senior dynasty of the area, were the first to leave Ndobu, followed by Babanki, Bafreng and Bambili. Another school of thought led by Chilver and Kaberry, maintains that Bafut left Ndobu together with Babanki, Bafreng and Bambili to Bafut from where the last three split off to settle at their present sites. Whatever the case, it should be born in mind that Bafut originated, like other Tikar peoples, from North Cameroon. It is clear from the foregoing description that a lot has been said and written by some anthropologists and colonial administrators about the Bamenda Grassfields.

2.1.3 - Traditional Socio-Political Organization

The socio-political organizations of the groups in the Bamenda Grassfields can conveniently fall into two systems, namely, the centralized and the leaderless systems. In order to better appreciate these systems, it is necessary to look at their fundamental characteristics. The centralized group or fondoms of the Bamenda Grassfields include Kom, Bafut and Bafanji (all Tikars). Centralized states usually arose when the leader of local group or of immigrant warriors gained control over a number of un-centralized village communities and formed a kingdom. But generally, the pre-existing social and political structure of the village was not seriously tempered with, and each lineage retained its role and status in the village. With the spreading influence of the royal family cult, the leader gradually acquired semi-divine authority over the Kingdom. They were known as the A-Fon, Ajayi A.F.J. and Espie I. (1965:45-65). What is important to note about centralized polities is that they started as a clan and expanded by subjugating neighboring states thereby making them their vassals. The empires of western Sudan expanded through this method, Harris (1987:53-64). It is through the attempt of the centralized fondoms of the Bamenda Grassfields to expand in this manner of state formation that ethnic conflicts have become common place. Bambili and Babanki-tungoh are under the centralized system of fondoms.

On the other hand, leaderless societies included the Widekum, Mbembe, Chamba and Aghem. In these types of societies there is little concentration of authority. It is difficult to point to any individual or limited group of men as the ruler or rulers of the society. Such authority roles as exist, affect a rather limited sector of the lives of those subject to them. The wielding of authority as specialized unit within which people feel an obligation to settle their disputes according to agreed rules without resort to force tends to be relatively small, Ajayi (1976). Each of these villages was under the tutelage of a village head who had little or no political authority. Village government instead of resting on a government was run by a council of Elders comprising the constituent lineage heads known as Meukum Si. This council met at regular intervals and in times of emergency in the village head's compound. These meetings were usually presided over by the village head and matters of social, religious, economic and judicial importance were discussed. Decisions were usually taken only when consensus had

been reached. Matters affecting the village, lineages or individuals were usually thrown open for the councilors to voice their opinions before final decisions were taken. More often than not the audience was swayed by the most eloquent speaker who was listened to in silence while an unimpressive speaker was often hushed down. Decisions which were arrived at by the council of Elders were disseminated in the lineages by the councilors who also enforced their execution, Chilver and Kaberry (1967).

From the foregoing analysis, evidence points to the fact that more than 80 per cent of the Tikar ethnic groups in the Bamenda Grassfields claim a common descent, or origin. What is more surprising is that despite this claim, these ethnic groups have shown a lot of inter-ethnic confrontations. The rationale behind these numerous conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields will be analyzed later using the conflict in Bambili and Babanki-tungoh as a case study. In other words, why is the Bamenda Grassfields rife with several ethnic conflicts?

2.1.4 - Conclusion

This section has described the geographical and ethnographic survey of the Tikars in the Bamenda Grassfields. It discusses the distribution of plant and animal life and also human occupation. It has also discussed the origin and migrations of the Tikars. The section states clearly the division of the people into two political systems based on the degree of centralization or segmentation of the indigenous political organization. Having a close look at this ethnographic survey, it was realized that Bambili and Babanki-tungoh are linked somewhere some how. The next section will focus on the origins and migrations of these two groups: the Bambili and the Babanki-tungo.

B) THE BAMBILI/BABANKI-TUNGOH AND THE GENESIS OF THE ETHNIC CONFLICTS

2.2.1 - Origin and the migratory histories of Bambili and Babanki-tungoh

Bambili and Babanki-tungoh belong to the Tikar group and speak one of the Bantu languages.⁵ As already mentioned the Tikars originated from the northern part of Cameroon-Ndobo and moved to the Bamenda Grassfields in waves. According to an account given by the Fon of Bambili in 1926, the Bambili people were related to the Bafut at Ndobo, and left with Baba at the same time (early 18th century) but instead of following the usual mountain track, the Bambili broke away from the Bafut and went directly to their present site along the Noun plain passing between Babungo and Bambalang in the Ndop plain. The Bambili oral traditions maintain that the Mbili (Bambili) people never settled in Bafut before proceeding to their present site. The Mbili migrated from Ndobo to the Ndop plain and from there they moved to their present site.⁶ When they migrated from the Ndop plain, they went to Awing and settled at Mumfieh. Their settlement at Mumfieh was caused by the fact that it was the area around Lake Bambili which did not only have fresh water but also provided fish and thus contributed to the fertility of the area. When the first migrants arrived at Mumfieh, they named their community Mbili, meaning “to sleep”, because it was during their sleep that they discovered that the area had favorable conditions for settlement. It was from the word Mbili that the village later derived its name, Bambili. They were led to this area by a man called Ishahten who became the first ruler or Fon. The Mbili were not, however, the first settlers at Mumfieh. The indigenous people whom they met were a certain clan head called Nchotilem. The origin of Nchotilem has been difficult to trace. However, a conflict soon developed between Nchotilem and his family and the Mbili newcomers. This conflict stemmed from the fact that Nchotilem wanted to control the dynasty while the Mbili wanted to maintain its sovereign authority with

⁵ The Bantu languages are spoken in Africa South of a line running roughly from the Bight of Biafra to Indian Ocean near Kenya-Somali border. The group includes more than four hundred languages, all as closely related to each other as are Germanic languages. The Bantu-speakers occupy a huge area not only in Africa but in Cameroon. For more on Bantu and Semi-Bantu see Philip Curtin et al., Joseph C. Anene and Godfrey Brown (1966:25-30) *Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* Ibadan Nigeria: Ibadan University Press Nigeria, George Murdock (1959) *Africa: Its Peoples and their Culture History* McGraw Hill, New York.

⁶ E. G. Hawkesworth, “Assessment Report on Bafut Tribal Area of Bamenda Division,” 1926, National Archive Buea (NAB), Interview with Shomboin David, Bambili, North West Province, 28 December 1997.

Ishahten at the head.⁷ The conflict was resolved when Nchotilen accepted the supremacy of the Mbili dynasty. A consensus was forged between the two factions with Nchotilen condescending to become part of the Mbili dynasty. The Mbili further moved and settled at Achi which had been discovered by hunters to be another fertile area. At the time of the settlement, the only neighboring village was Bambui whose inhabitants had arrived the Bamenda plateau much earlier. When the Mbili arrived, they quickly spotted the Bambui hamlet since it was lower down on a plain. The Mbili attempted to launch sporadic attacks to subjugate the Bambui, but all ended in futility due to the strength and fighting tactics of the Bambui. When the attempt failed, the Mbili became contented with Mumfieh because it was fertile.

Babanki, also called and spelled differently as Babanki-tungoh (Tungaw, Tungo or Kidgem-Ketinguh), derived its name from gigantic pillars of rock some hundreds of feet in height that tower on each side of the village. Their oral tradition maintains that Babanki-tungoh and Big-Babanki was one village. They broke away from Big-Babanki because of problems that arose in the royal family. It should be noted that the two Babankis left Ndop together and settled in the present site of Big-Babanki. They live in peace until a disagreement erupted between them on whether to celebrate the annual cultural festival, kabenkendong, or not. This cultural feast coincided with the death of a prince, who just died as the festival was about to begin. This resulted in a split of the people. Wanti, who had succeeded his father, Yufani, as chief declared that the funeral rites must be postponed until the end of the cultural festival. His brothers refused and proceeded to carry out the usual ceremonies. But Kwifon was sent to stop them, and they migrated to a site near Kuwi and established themselves as an autonomous unit. However, when Babanki-tungoh arrived at this new site, there was peaceful co-existence between Babanki-tungoh and her neighbors but later their relations were strained. But before the era of fraternity will be examined, it is imperative to look at the geographical positions and their daily activities.

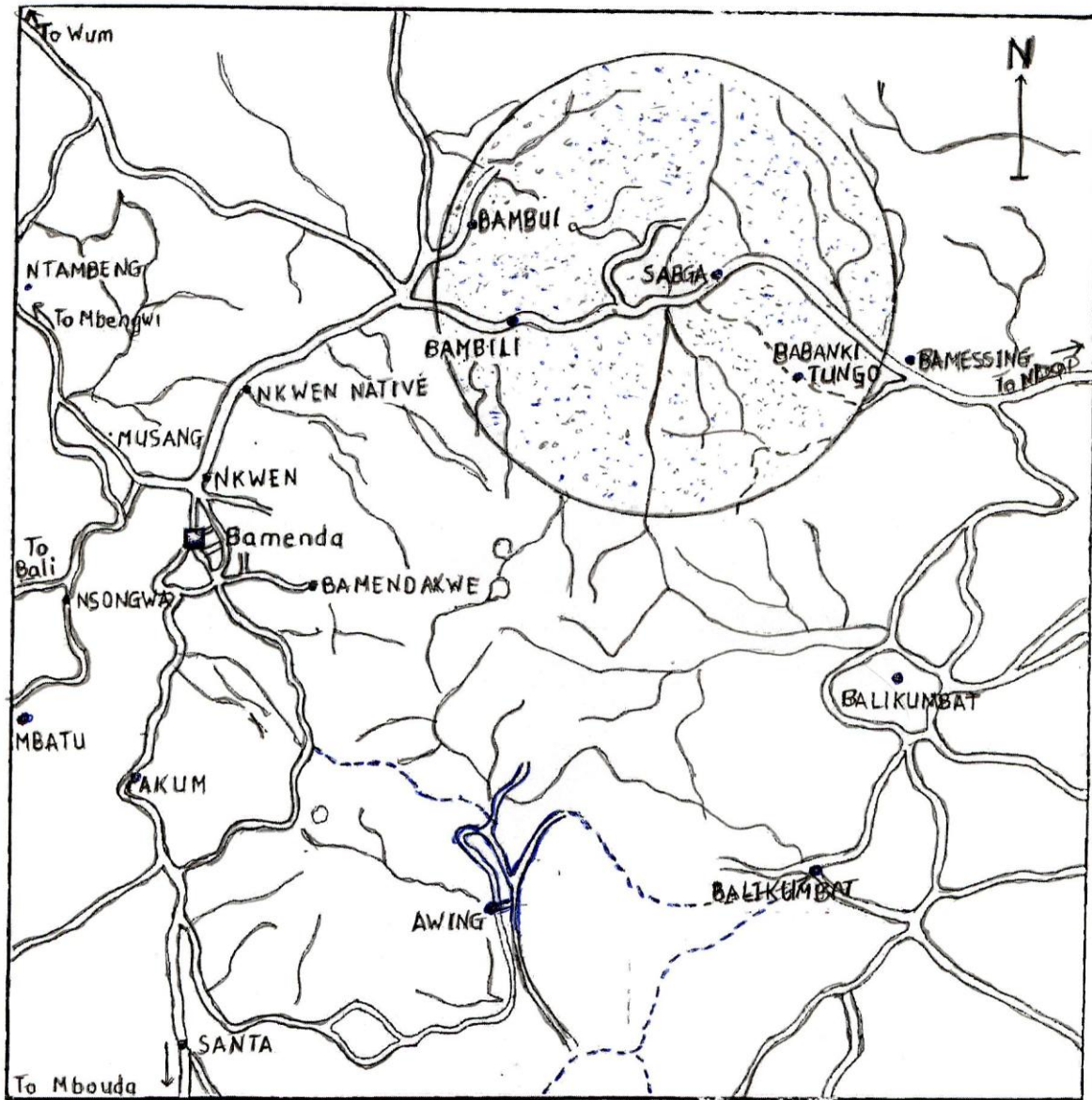
⁷ ibid

2.2.2 - Geographical Locations and Daily Activities

Geographically, the villages of Bambili and Babanki-tungoh formed the group that made up the Bafut Native Authority Area of the Bamenda Division of the Cameroons Province in the 1920s.⁸ These village-group units lived in the fertile valley basin encompassed on the North by the Nkom Mountains; on the West by the distant Meta, Ngie and Ngonu mountains and hill ranges; on the East by the Tingeh hill range and in the South by the escarpment on which the Bamenda Station is perched. Bambili is situated on the lower hill-slope of the area and form a small village about 15 kilometers from Bamenda. It shares boundary with Bambui to the Northwest; Babanki-tungoh to the Southeast and Nkwen to the West. It forms part of Tubah Sub-Division of Mezam Division. Babanki-tungoh is found in the valleys surrounded by hill ranges on the Northern part of the Bambutous Mountains and stretches down to a portion of the Noun plain. It shares common boundaries with Bambili to the North; Bamessi to the East, Sabga to the North East and Balikumbat to the South. (See map II)

⁸ Hawkesworth, "Assessment Report on Bafut Tribal Area of Bamenda Division, 1926, R.J. Hook, An Intelligence Report on the Associated Village groups occupying the Bafut Native Authority Area of the Bamenda Division of Cameroon Province" 1934 (N.A.B)

Map II – A Section of the Bamenda Grassfields Locating the study area



SCALE 1:200,000

KEY

	MAJOR ROADS
	FOOTPATH
	RIVER/STREAM
	STUDY AREA
	VILLAGES
	PROVINCIAL CAPITAL

SOURCE: Surveys Department
Bamenda

The combined forces of climate, bedrock, topography, living organisms, amongst others have made the soil fertile. The soils of the region are a mixture of “forested equatorial” and “Azonal types”. A survey carried out in 1953 presented a broad picture of two soil types; reddish friable porous clays and sandy clays, about 1524.3m above sea level. The soils are well-drained, strongly leached, and of high humus content. The sandy soil form is derived from the volcanic rocks. These are more fertile than any other predominantly “reddish friable porous soils”.⁹ This therefore means the region under study is blessed with fertile soils but Babanki-tungoh is more fertile because it is situated in a valley though in terms of area coverage she is not as fertile as Bambili which is found on the slopes. Here planting can be done for the whole year but in Babanki-tungoh planting can take place only during the planting season.

The arrival of the Germans in this region in the 1890s brought the introduction of cash crops like arabica coffee, Ngoh (1996). Babanki-tungoh produces more food, but has limited or small land for cultivation. Besides, the production of crops like vegetables, groundnuts, yams and maize flourish in this region. The coming of the cattle rearing Fulani was accompanied by another type of farming – animal husbandry. This was however, to become a problem because arable land was to be used now for cattle rearing, thereby making it scarce.

In the late-twentieth century, most of the inhabitants diverted their line of occupation to commercial services. Traders trade on a variety of items and many other fields of occupation has been encouraged through education. Nonetheless, it could be deduced that it is because of the fertility of land which is suitable for agriculture all round the year that the two villages are having incessant disputes (this will be seen in the analyses later). Before the ethnic conflict erupted in the 1950s these two neighboring villages were living in peace.

2.2.3 - From Friends (up to 1950s) to Enemies

The people of Bambili and Babanki-tungoh have lived at their present sites for more than a century. From the period when they arrived their present site to the early 1950s these two

⁹ M. G. Bawden and I. Lagdale-Brown (eds) “An Aerial Photographic Reconnaissance of the Present and Possible Land use in the Bamenda Area, Southern Cameroons” (Department of Technical Cooperation; Directorate of Overseas Surveys, Forestry Land use, 1962) pp. 1-2. In Mbutruh, *The Economy and society of Southern Cameroons under British Colonial Domination c.1916-1961*, pp. 42-43, Buea, Cameroon.

villages which shared a common land, have lived peacefully. The administrations of R.J. Hook, the British, in the 1920s, as the Assistant Divisional Officer (A.D.O.) for the Bamenda Division, made the villages live in peace by coercing them. This was facilitated by creating “The Seven Head Chiefs in Council” which constituted all the seven chiefs making up the Bafut Native Area. The head chiefs declared that they were going to work together. This meant that none of them was going to make or execute any law without the consent of the other chiefs. There was also a consensus of doing everything in union, and this seemed a good reason to accept the assembled chiefs as individuals, and at the same time as a collective unit of the Native Authority to Bafut area. This could be seen as all the villages jointly operated a single court at Bafut which worked satisfactorily and was headed by the chiefs of Bafut and Big-Babanki (which later gave birth to Babanki-tungoh). Apart from this legislative aspect, the two neighbors paid taxes into a common treasury at Bafut. The inhabitants of the two villages, for more than a century, have been freely intermarrying. This therefore meant that they must have experienced social inter-course through market interactions, cultural ceremonies and other festivities. Yet each village seemed to hold herself aloof.

From the foregoing analysis, it is tempting to conclude that the relationship between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh was very cordial. Despite the unanimity with which the chiefs exercised their duties in the Bafut Native Area, they nonetheless, frequently displayed envy of each other, as one was either larger than the other in terms of territory, stronger than the other in times of war (and weapons), more influential in administrative matters as one village hosted most of the institutions in the region. This could be illustrated by the fact that other chiefs of the Bafut area petitioned the position and influence of the Bafut Chief in the area over administrative and traditional issues.¹⁰ Each chief was determined to resist the exercise of any authority except his own inside his territory. Each chief was also ready to recognize the fact that in terms of population, land area wealth and history, his territory was autonomous. The two chiefs were also suspicious of neighboring villages which allegedly nursed aggressive and expansionist tendencies on them.

¹⁰ File No. Ab 3 (3) A 3065, (N.A.B)

Above all, it should be emphasized that if peace reigned during the last half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, it was because of the tact and practical commonsense which the colonial administrators used. Both the Germans and, to a lesser extent, the British used either the divide and rule principle, indirect systems or forceful policies – in maintaining peace. But by 1950s the piece of land between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh became a bone of contention. In examining the reasons for the conflict, it will be realized that many variables, not directly related to the conflict, aggravated the ethnic conflict (will be seen in subsequent paragraphs and the analyses later).

2.2.4 - Ownership of land and its practice

A piece of land between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh is a bone of contention between these two villages as said earlier. This large tract of land is found on top of Sabga. On the high ground adjacent to Bambili the land is purely grazing land. It then drops suddenly into a valley. This valley is very fertile and it is extensively farmed and built over by the Babanki-tungoh people. Babanki-tungoh village is over the ridge on the far side of this valley on the edge of the Ndop plain.

The Bambili people did arrive in this area prior to the Babanki-tungoh people and the area now in dispute was “no man’s land”. Both parties were probably using it for hunting. Then the Fulanis arrived in the 19th century with their cattle and settled on it. With the introduction of law and order (by the State) some Babanki-tungoh people left the valley that they had originally settled in, being short of farming land. They started to farm in the highland known now as the area under study. From the mid 20th century the two villages have made claims and counter claims over this land. What is more disturbing is who owns the disputed land? If we take into consideration the fact that the Bambili people arrived first, then we could as well accept the fact that the disputed land belongs to Bambili. But there is a difference between who makes a claim over the land and who effectively occupies the land. In as much as the Babanki-tungoh people have built and are farming the land, one is tempted to conclude that the land belongs to them. However, for a better understanding of the history of the conflict it is imperative to look at land ownership on the eve of colonization.

Land was one of the most important reasons for the formation of states in the Bamenda grassfields. Even within the states, the ruling authorities struggled to control the resources; land was important for agriculture, hunting, fishing, settlement, crafts and manufacturing, amongst others. Due to these reasons the land tenure system evolved to be fundamentally communal. The German colonialists met the land tenure system on a political basis of control. The land was placed under the household, lineage or clan heads by the state. Each family, as a constituent of a lineage, had the right to land; ownership was transferred to the offspring on ascriptive basis. This took place when the male offspring was getting married and needed land. In this case therefore, land constituted the basic form of property, status and prestige in the society. However, the development of a monarchical system of government and social stratification transformed the basis of land ownership to also include forms of private ownership. In this case, it existed either individually or collectively. Nonetheless, the communal ownership dominated, and all land was, in principle, under the control of the Fons who administered it through their administrative officials like the “quarter” or village heads and developed local laws and customs prohibiting the sale of land, but made it possible for easy transfer from one noble to another. Under this arrangement, the right to perform sacrifices to a local god or other ancestors was also transferred. Only these nobles could own large tracts of land or be designed to do the transfer. Similarly, land could be distributed to non-lineage members, but only after having first considered the interest of the immediate lineage and dependants. In the same way, settlement on any land within a polity by an outsider was only permitted by the Fon through his administrative officials.

The coming of the British colonial administration in 1916 saw the introduction of the certificate of occupancy. This meant that when the Fon possessed land he could lease it out for a period of ninety-nine years to his subjects or tenants. But it should be noted that this did not confer titles because it was leased to the individual, yet the Fon remained the “lord manor”. According to the 1974 land ordinances, the certificate of occupancy was abolished and followed by Decree No 76/165/27 April 1976 in which new conditions were established for obtaining the new document, a land certificate. It is difficult to tell whether it should be regarded as private property. Article one of the Decree stipulates that “land certificate shall be the only authentic document of real property rights” to land. This meant that without this

document it was difficult, if not impossible, to claim land. And with this document (land certificate) land can be sold to someone.

With regard to Bambili and Babanki-tungoh, they have been claiming the piece of land between them, yet none of them can show any document to this claim. Instead, the Bambili point to the lake as their ancestral home. They also maintain that libations are poured into this lake once a year to appease the ancestors and to have a good harvest during the farming season. The Babanki-tungoh also point to the lake as theirs and the entire piece of land. What is more is that none of the villages seem to possess a land certificate of occupancy. The failure of Bambili and Babanki-tungoh to produce a land certificate might be attributed to their ignorance. The administration could have taken off time to orientate them. What is disturbing as far as titleship to land is concerned is who should produce the certificate. Is it the individual or the community? If it is the community, could it be possible for the whole community to possess one certificate? Here the role of the Fon becomes very important. He is, according to what existed before colonization, the “lord of the manor” and leases out land to his subjects. This is evident in a letter written by the Fon of Babanki-tungoh, on June 29 1973, addressed to the Assistant Cattle Control Officer, Bafut Area Council. In that letter, The Fon said:

“...This is to certify that I the Fon of Babanki-tungoh, have given a plot to Mr. Fulum Joseph of Mbuatoh-Tengam nearest to Aigh Ale at the lake. He is going to do farming there and to make a fence round the farming plot. So I hereby wish to inform you and your office so as to let you know...”¹¹

With this it is clear that the Fon owns the land leases or distributes it to his subjects. In the event of ethnic conflict, it is logical that his subjects will come out to defend their land, firstly because the Fon is looked upon as the “hope” of any ethnic group. However, since 1950s the ethnic conflict between these two villages has manifested itself in various ways.

2.2.5 - The manifestation of the ethnic conflict c.1950-1998

The ethnic conflict was manifested in three principal ways. From c.1950 to 1958 it was characterized by law suits filed by the contestants. From 1950 to 1978 it led to the signing of the Bambili/Babanki-tungoh entente. This second period can be called the “thaw” or less

¹¹ Fon of Babanki-tungoh to the Assistant Cattle Control Officer, Bafut Area Council, 29 June 1973 (Bamenda National Archive).

manifested conflict. The last period, from 1973 to 1998, was characterized by skirmishes, threats, suspicion and outright warfare. It ended in 1998 with yet another law suit.

The Bambili people brought a suit against the Babanki-tungoh people in the Bafut native court in 1953.¹² As already mentioned, this claim was made over a piece of land bordering the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh villages, a piece of land given to Babanki-tungoh by Bambili, Bandja and Bamessi when Babanki-tungoh split from Big Babanki. The court judgment of December 11, 1953 drew a line dividing the piece of land on the hills on the West side of the outlet of the lake and valley. The court granted Bambili part of the land which Bambili had claimed. This land stretched from the German drawn boundary¹³ of Babanki-tungoh with Mendankwe at “Kukets”, to the hills west of the lake and valley.

The Bambili were not, however, satisfied with the decision of December 11, 1953. As a result of this, they appealed and in its judgement of July 15, 1955, the Appeal Court shifted the line to the high grazing land near to the escarpment beyond which is the Bambili village. Yet, they were still not satisfied and called for a review by the Colonial District Officer. On September 8, 1956, the Assistant Divisional Officer, Ward, rendered his review judgement. According to Ward’s review judgement it came close to giving Bambili most of their claim. In an attempt to solve the conflict Ward aroused the disgruntleness of the Babanki-tungoh people. As a result of this discontent the people of Babanki-tungoh asked for a review. On May 15, 1958, A.B. Westmacott, colonial resident in Bamenda, gave his judgment.¹⁴ According to Westmacott, Ward’s decision was one-sided, since he maintained that many Babanki-tungoh people were affected and no Bambili man was even required to make a choice. Westmacott inspected the

¹² Civil Suit N°23/53.

¹³ Boundaries mark the sharp edge of the territorial limits within which the states exercise their distinct jurisdictions. They are, therefore, the lines of contact, more often for conflict than for harmony, between rival systems of governmental control. A boundary could also be the line of delimitation or demarcation between administrative units or between geographical regions of various types, Asiwaju (1985). It is imperative to make a distinction between natural and artificial boundaries. While the issue of carving out boundaries is natural to man, these boundaries are artificial. According to Asiwaju (1985), artificial boundaries are those boundary lines which though not being dependent upon natural features of the surface of earth for their selection, have been artificially or arbitrarily created by men. In ancient Greece and Rome, and during the middle Ages, there were no fixed boundary lines between political communities. The limits of a state jurisdiction were vague; there were border zones but no fixed lines. The need for fixed boundaries arose as the modern states of Western Europe replaced the Holy Roman Empire.

¹⁴ In review No. 361(569).

land and decided that Babanki-tungoh should remain in possession of the land which they now occupy, but that all the grazing land on the Bambili side which is (was) then unoccupied should be confirmed as belonging to Bambili. The manifestation of the ethnic conflict moved from one court to another. From the Bafut Native Court to the High Court of Appeal; from the Divisional Officer Bamenda through the advisory bodies to the President, Westmacott. The Westmacott decision has remained on the map. What was required was that the decision on the map should be utilized for visible demarcation. That is physical marking on the ground to show the border through the disputed area. However, when this decision was arrived at on May 15, 1958, the two villages reacted differently to it.

Bambili people were not satisfied with the decision. In April 1959, the Fon of Bambili protested¹⁵ against the decision to the Government of the Southern Cameroons. On July 8, 1959, the Deputy Commissioner of the Southern Cameroons, J.A.A. Tamkoh, replied that the petition was rejected. Babanki-tungoh people were not satisfied with the Westmacott decision either. As a result they paid the sum of 138,400 CFA francs in July 1967 as a deposit for an appeal against part of the marked areas by the 1958 decision. Unfortunately, this appeal was never heard. However, on July 25, 1973 both villages signed an agreement acknowledging and accepting the Westmacott decision as the only authentic document. It was hoped that the decision would put an end to the long standing dispute between the two ethnic groups. The entente was signed by the Fons of Babanki-tungoh and Bambili for their villages. This “understanding” was witnessed by the Cameroon representative, Ngonge Sone; B.N. Mukong for Babanki-tungoh, S.N. Nkindo for Bambili and several land survey officers.

As a result of the entente, peace reigned in the Bamenda region. Though some degree of peace reigned for more than a decade after the Westmacott Decision and the 1973 accord, the manifestation of deep-seated conflict took a different dimension and magnitude in the early 1990s. This witnessed the accumulation of weapons, the rising aspirations of the peoples and their rulers to expand and annex the piece of land under dispute, and also the involvement of politicians and the training of local militia men. These factors increased the amount of threats,

¹⁵ In Civil Suit No. 23/53

tensions and fears amongst the peoples of both villages which culminated in open clashes in the 1991, 1993 and 1995.

Before the 1991 outbreak of war, the 1973 peace accord had been violated. On August 1, 1981, the Fon of Bambili reported to the Civil Administration that the Babanki-tungoh people were still continuing their activities in the disputed area. In response to this, on April 17, 1986, the District Officer of Tubah reported to the Divisional Officer for Mezam what he called a “provocative trespass” into Bambili land by the Babanki-tungoh people. In his reply, the Divisional Officer for Mezam stated that he had convoked the “ring leaders” of the aggressive groups to his office for interrogation and cautioning. The provocation nonetheless continued uninterrupted. On May 24, 1991, the Bambili people, men and women, went to the disputed area and started farming. On May 25, 1991 the Babanki-tungoh community attacked the Bambili community. This led to the outbreak of the first Bambili – Babanki-tungoh war. On July 27, 1991, the Babanki-tungoh reported to the Civil Administration of Tubah that the Bambili people had illegally started activities on the disputed area.

From this account it is obvious that the violation of the agreement between the two communities led to the escalation of the armed conflict. The terms of the agreement explained that any person encroaching on the disputed area would “be penalized by the administration.” This was not done. The only thing that was done to the trespassers was that the “ring leaders” were called and cautioned by the District Officer. But there was confrontation between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh with many people dead and places destroyed. After the confrontation, the Administration of Tubah under the District Officer, M. Jum, and the Mezam Divisional Administration under the Senior Divisional Officer, Bell Luc Rene, set up an administrative commission to investigate and resolve the problem. The 1991 commission began by attempting to retrace on the map the conflict area to satisfy both parties.

In spite of all the painstaking efforts to resolve the dispute, the inhabitants of Babanki-tungoh violated one of the agreed terms of the commission; that is there was to be no farming around the disputed area. The villagers of both villages farmed on the disputed area. The inhabitants from both villages attempted to expand their farms and in so doing they transgressed beyond the line of the other village. Babanki-tungoh people struggled to “dry up” the Bambili Lake so

as to use the water for irrigation on their farms, and they also threatened Bambili women on their farms around the disputed area. The Bambili people destroyed crops on the farms owned by Babanki-tungoh people and blocked the Bamenda road as well as the Bambili-Mbingo highway. All these led to another war.

On January 23, 1993, there were fresh provocations. The Babanki-tungoh people asserted that people from Bambili came up to their side of the land and embarked on crop destruction, chopped down a young eucalyptus forest and set a Babanki-tungoh man's compound on fire. This act was immediately reported to the administration by the Babanki-tungoh elites. The administration claimed that there was no evidence to show that it was the Bambili people who had caused the destruction.¹⁶ According to the administration, the Bambili people should have been arrested when they were in the process of causing the destruction. On January 26, 1993, Bambili people blocked the road leading from Bamenda to Ndop and from Bamenda through Bandja to Babanki-tungoh and attacked the Babanki-tungoh people. This strategy, according to the Babanki-tungoh people, was because most of them had gone to Big Babanki for the annual traditional festival, kabenkendong. The Babanki-tungoh people rushed back and confronted the Bambili. Before the Bambili could launch an assault, the Babanki-tungoh people had burnt down some houses and several people were wounded. The senior Divisional Officer for Mezam, Samuel Sufo, went to the battle front on January 27, 1993 and attempted to appease the belligerents. The warring factions retreated but fighting resumed the next day and continued for more than a week before the administration brought in the gendarmes. Six "ring leaders" were arrested from Babanki-tungoh and detained in the gendarmerie Brigade for having instigated the fighting.¹⁷ It is important to note that the war broke out when the 1991 commission set up by the Administration was still at work in its attempt to find solutions to the dispute. When the battle was over, the Divisional Officer for Tubah inspected the area and found out that both sides violated the laws given to them. He implemented his own decisions and ignored the Westmacott Decision; this move was detested by both parties.

¹⁶ Report by the Bambili Cultural and Development Association on October 7, 1993, on the Bambili land dispute.

¹⁷ *ibid*

A sub-technical commission was formed in 1994 charged with special functions for settling the ethnic dispute in a way acceptable to all the factions. The sub-technical commission, as a matter of fact, made futile efforts to settle the conflict. Yet, activities still went on unabated in the disputed area against the terms of the Commission. The end result was war in 1995. As farming continued to be carried out in the disputed area, in defiance of the terms of the 1994 Commission, there was every evidence to show that conflicts caused by petty quarrels, threats and disagreement could arise in the nearest future. The next thing was the exchange of gun-firing by two hunters from the rival villages who found themselves around the disputed area while on a hunting expedition. In the process the Babanki-tungoh hunter was killed. The Babanki-tungoh immediately declared war on Bambili. The war was fought with renewed ferocity by both belligerent for three days, until the forces of law and order intervened and stopped it. The prompt intervention of the forces of law and order never gave a breathing space for any “terms” to be deliberated upon. And when Samuel Sufo attempted another Decision on the conflict area, the Babanki-tungoh people took him to the Bamenda high court on July 3, 1995 and again in 1998. The Babanki-tungoh claimed that he attempted to impose a line on them in the conflict area without making reference to the Westmacott line. 1998 marked the last court hearing from this ethnic conflict.

2.2.6 - Conclusion

This chapter has described the geographical and ethnographic survey of the Bamenda grassfields. This influenced both the distribution of plant and animal life and also determined human occupation especially the settlement patterns which determined the degree of the ethnic conflict. It has also discussed the origins and migrations of the Tikar. Also, an attempt has been made to divide the people of the Bamenda grassfields into two political systems based on the degree of centralization or segmentation of the indigenous political organisation.

This section has also focused on the origins, migratory and geo-political setting of the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh. As Tikars the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh people originated from Ndobu in Northern Cameroon. They lived originally to the Northeast of their present territory, between Tibati and Ngoundere. They settled to the South of Bamenda station in the Ndop plain to which they gave the name of their country of origin. The Bambili and Babanki-tungoh villages are centralised groups or fondoms with the Fons at the head. The villages of Bambili

and Babanki-tungoh formed the group that made up the Bafut Native Area of the Bamenda Division of the Cameroon's Province. It has further examined the period in their history when they were fraternal friends. It shows how these villages jointly operated a single court which worked satisfactorily. It also brings out the ownership of land and its practices in the area. It shows how Land is one of the most important reasons for the formation of states in the Bamenda grassfields and how local authorities struggled to control resources. We have seen that Land certificate is the only authentic document of real property rights, and Bambili and Babanki-tungoh cannot show any document (land certificate) to claim the disputed land or for the piece of land to be convincingly theirs. The claims of the two villages over the disputed land are not authentic. The chapter has ended with a discussion of the various ways the ethnic conflict has manifested itself since the 1950s.

We can see that the histories of the Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields in general and Bambili/Babanki-tungoh in particular have already started confirming the hypotheses that degenerating land against the background of fast growing population and economic reasons are reasons of the ethnic conflicts and we are now left on the option of seeing how various local people respond to such situation from Bambili/Babanki-tungoh perspectives.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA ANALYSIS OF FIELDWORK

For three months in Bamenda I did field work to collect data necessary for examining the antagonism between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh, two villages that belong to the Tikar of the Bamenda Grassfields in the North West Province of Cameroon. With the theoretical orientation mentioned in chapter one, an attempt will be made to develop a theoretical argument founded on facts from my fieldwork data, and this will be historically, politically, psychologically and socio-culturally inclined. Many analytical opportunities were got which were in line with my research questions. I will unravel both groups' perspectives as to the causes of their present antagonism. Since the conflict between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh has been going on for long and is still going on, it is a protracted conflict. I wanted to know the causes of this protracted conflict. I continued with data from interviews after the study of official documents. The analysis shall proceed along the perspectives of both antagonistic groups. In order to have a balanced perspective, analysis of the views from both antagonistic groups shall also be reviewed. Most of the responses I got from my informants vis-à-vis the cause of the conflict between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh were the same. I struggled to increase the number of informants to see if I can get new knowledge. But all of them have related stories. This has an effect on my analysis, making it to be short contrary to what I had expected. This is because I avoided writing repetition of ideas.

3.1.1 - Bambili – Perspective of the conflict

During the process, I asked my Bambili informants what according to them is the cause of the antagonism between 'them' and the Babanki-tungoh in Bamenda Grassfields, and the role of the administration to solve this ethnic antagonism. Most of them attributed the conflict to the government or administration's policies in the area since 1960s. From the Bambilis' perspective, they thought they were the owners of the land under contention, but the government or administration is slow to take or pass measures to hand the land to them completely. And land is scarce in the area.

They said the Babanki-tungoh came when the Bambili people were already settled at the area. The Bambili people gave them land to settle on. At the time there were no defined boundaries, however, they were shown certain areas that they should occupy. Later on, because of the monetary aspect or the value given to land, problems started between these villages. This is because people began to give a lot of monetary value to land. Based on this, the Babanki-tungoh people did not respect the mutually agreed boundary. Though no definite boundary was given at the time when the Babanki-tungoh people came, the colonial masters, back in the nineteenth century tried to give definite boundaries to the various ethnic groups using maps. Like Westmacott who did quite a lot in drawing maps. This map with all the good intention was intended to avoid the unforeseen circumstances which are now appearing. They said the Babanki-tungoh people have not respected these markings done by the colonial masters.

And that the Babanki-tungoh doesn't want to leave the land because the area is rich economically. They complain for example that their land has been completely alienated from them by the Babanki-tungoh. Some of them objectively complain that there is a high level of expansionist, annexationist and economic greed ingrained in the minds of Babanki-tungoh. To illustrate this, when I asked a Bambili man Mr. Teen age 66 about his view concerning the cause of the ethnic conflict between Bambili and the Babanki-tungoh, this was his response;

“the administration is responsible for the continued antagonism between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh. This is because of its slow policies over the disputed area. For instance, after the dispute in Big-Babanki, the leaders of Babanki-tungoh came to Bambili and begged for land on which to settle. This land was given not only by Bambili alone but was contributed by Bamessi and Bandja. The Babanki-tungoh became the guests while Bambili played the host. Now they don't want to leave our land and the administration can't do anything to help us gain back our land”. This view was also supported by Mr. Tih a 48 years old man.

Mr. Fresh, a 60 years old man explains that the core of the problem lies on the laxity of the civil administration to competently handle the situation between the two contestants. He makes mention of the fact that the problem should be traced from the distant past during the colonial to the post colonial regime. He said that the British colonial administration attempted to demarcate the land under antagonism which led to less conflict in the Bambili/Babanki-

tungoh relations. But between 1965 and 1998 several complaints have been brought before the court. What is more about these complaints is that court injunctions were contravened. When this happens effective sanctions are not carried out on the individuals who go against the law or ruling court. He said, to make the point of the administration's laxity more lucid, it was realized that the two villages reached an entente on July 25, 1973. Unfortunately, the understanding was violated by the Babanki-tungoh and they were never brought to order nor were the Fon of Babanki-tungoh called for interrogation. This certainly gave the impression that the agreement was not considered to be serious by the government of the area. He even claims that "they", the Bambili, are very welcoming and liberal whereas people from Babanki-tungoh are too conservative and tribalistic.

These views were supported by Mr. Kool, a 70 years old man living beside the contested area. This is what he has to say; *"well from my point of view, we Bambili are kind, we do not find them problem, but 'they' don't take to the instruction of the administration. For instance, Babanki-tungoh is at an uncomfortable situation. Their region of settlement is at the rocky and narrow end of the Ndop plain. At the initial time of settlement, the first hamlet was in the valley and it was enough to sustain the small population which necessitated an outward expansion. In an attempt to expand and annex their neighbours, they clashed with us leading to the ethnic conflict"*. This view was also supported by Madam Kojjo, a 54 year old woman.

We can see that the Bambilis consider the Babanki-tungoh as greedy immigrants. According to this view conflict can also be attributed to the lack of cultural understanding and tolerance from both parties. To Mr. Sohh (48 years) a clerical officer at Ecole Normale Superieur Annex Bambili, *we have to look at the antagonism also from a cultural perspective. Though both villages are united geographically, they have quite different values which both groups turn to misunderstand making them to become antagonistic. This is because each group sees its own values as the best and that of the other as nothing*. Mr. Ngwa age 61 also supported this view.

3.1.2 - Babanki-tungoh – Perspective of the conflict

From the perspective of many Babanki-tungoh people on the other hand, Bambili leaders believed in hegemonistic tendencies. This situation is further compounded by the fact that her

population is ever expanding and the available land is getting smaller. The scarcity of land to the Bambili people can be attributed to the government policies in the area since 1960s. The government used most of the Bambili land for government institutions. All these are perspective held by most of the Babanki-tungoh informants. One of my informants of about 49 years Mr. Poll said that he has been farming on the contested land for 15 years and that he uses this land to grow crops to feed his family. And that they have opened up large portion of land, plant many crops and raising of cows, and now the Bambili want them to leave the area so that they take control over the area.

However, he mentioned the fact that naturally, they are in good terms with the Bambili, when no body trespasses the other, but it is the government's unwillingness and laxity in policy making that is the main problem. In a related story, a certain Mrs. Yayah 52 years says: *we have come and developed the area, plant crops and make some areas habitable now they want us to leave.* When a certain Mr. Tass of about 70 years old was asked about his views vis-à-vis the cause of the ethnic conflict between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh, this is what he had to say: *"the scarcity of land to the Bambili people can be attributed to the government policies in the area. The Cameroon College of Arts, Science and Technology (CCAST) which was opened in 1963 took considerable hectares of arable land from Bambili. It was not long afterwards that Ecole Normale Supérieur Annex (ENS); The Regional School of Agriculture; School of Health Sciences (CUSS) and the Gendermarie Brigade were opened. All these took up Bambili land and the only way for Bambili to survive is to expand at the expense of their neighbours"*. This view was also supported by Madam Vero a teacher at Government High School Bamenda age 45.

A certain Mr. Tomm age 70 had this to say to make the point of the government unwillingness more lucid; *from my point of view, the administration is unwilling to handle the case between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh, and thus, is responsible for the antagonism between "us" and "them". The administration has to use colonial maps (Westmacott map) to settle this conflict. But the administration is not giving the true interpretations of this map. What I meant by the unwillingness of the administration is this; in the map, the decision is said to be at the escarpment overlooking Bambili, and there are many escarpments there. They should go there*

and use the real escarpment stipulated by Westmacott. Instead the administration is using but the escarpment over looking Babanki-tungoh, instead of the escarpment overlooking Bambili. It is difficult to reconcile these two situations. We accepted the Westmacott map, though it also altered the 1913 decision, because in 1913 during the colonial period when we were under the Bafut Native Authority, the leaders (Westmacott inclusive) realized that the boundaries between the two villages did not have a natural course, so they pleaded to our elders at the time, and an agreement was reached, that the mapping should be shifted to a natural boundary. They stated that the escarpment overlooking Bambili should be the natural line on the ground. Mr. Liss age 70 and Madam Zah age 67 supported the above as well.

From this perspective it is certain that there is a mix-up among the two villages with the decision made by Westmacott. Both villages admit an escapement different from the other. Meaning the Westmacott map has been altered by the administration. Mrs Chuss age 50 also supported this point, and she has this to say; *it is normal for them to say no we will no more respect the Westmacott decision; we will implement our own decisions. Because I know the decision in the Westmacott states an escarpment over looking Bambili, now they say an escarpment over looking Babanki-tungoh. We will not accept such a decision by which the map has been altered.*

Many informants were of the opinion that the cause of the antagonism between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh is because Bambili want to revenge against Babanki-tungoh for reaching an entente with Balikumbat village. Balikumbat is a village in the Bamenda Grassfields. It is a distant neighboring village to Bambili and Babanki-tungoh. I introduce Balikumbat village because most Babanki-tungoh informants raised this issue to be a cause of Bambili being antagonistic to Babanki-tungoh. From these perspectives, we can say that inter-ethnic wars have not been a new phenomenon in the Bamenda Grassfields. Bambili and Balikumbat went to war. The cause of this included amongst others, the expansionist policies of Balikumbat. To illustrate this, when I asked a certain Mr. Gem age 53, of his views about the on going antagonism between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh, this is what he said;

In a war between Bambili and Balikumbat, Babanki-tungoh once reached an entente with Balikumbat and gave her full military co-operation. The resultant effect was that Bambili was

defeated. The agreement that ended this war was to impose very harsh terms on the Bambili. These terms included: Bambili was to be vassalage to Balikumbat until the payment of tribute was completed. Bambili felt humiliated and decided to revenge on Babanki-tungoh, an ally of Balikumbat. The attempt to revenge against Babanki-tungoh for having assisted Balikumbat is one of the causes of the on-going Bambili/Babanki-tungoh ethnic conflict. This view was supported by Mr. Doh (60 years) and Mr. Pitt 52 years.

3.1.3 – Common views from both perspectives

This section will start by objectively addressing one of the research questions which this thesis sets out to examine. The question is: of what importance is the disputed land between the two contestants under study? Most informants (from Bambili and Babanki-tungoh) also hold that the reason for the antagonism between them is the economic imperative of the area under conflict. The land between these two villages is principally used for economic activities. When the two villages settled in their respective areas, the area under study was jointly used for farming and hunting. When the fertility of this land was discovered and a corresponding increase in the populations of the villages, it became a bone of contention. The area in dispute is farmed throughout the year and informants attested to the fact that eighty percent of the vegetables supplied in the Bamenda metropolitan town and its environs come from this area. This means that this fertile piece of land sustains the livelihood of these villages. The economic imperatives are compounded by the fact that this area is also used for cattle farming or grazing land. The Fulanis who arrived this region at the end of the 19th century preferred to graze their cattle in the higher slopes free from disease-bearing insects. It should be noted that the Fulani are rearing cattle for sale and the indigenous people are also struggling to farm for marketing crops. In carrying out these activities, the piece of land remains limited in supply. The limitation of land, coupled with an increase in demand for the products, facilitates the two neighbours “stepping on each other’s toes”.

Also according to the people’s views, the antagonism can be attributed to the settlement patterns of the ethnic groups. According to Dudley (1966:415), settlement is the act of peopling or colonizing a new country or of planting a colony. It is also an assemblage of persons settled in a locality: hence a village or a collection of houses. There are two types of

settlement – the nuclear and linear settlement. The linear settlement is dotted all over a geographical region in order to grab land. With the nuclear settlement, the inhabitants leave the hamlets and work somewhere else. This type is more pronounced in the Bamenda Grassfields. When men arrived in this region in the 18th and 19th century, each nucleated group acquired fertile land. They could derive their basic necessities from this land. Eventually, with natural increase of population and new arrivals, there was insufficient land within easy reach of the nuclears. Consequently, some moved out to clear and settle new land; and, in turn this secondary settlement eventually hiked off other villages. Such expansion from founder villages has occurred in most parts of the villages leading to their antagonism. It should be borne in mind that the interactions between man and his environment are complex and always changing. His very presence and the actions he takes in order to survive, bring out such changes; and the actions themselves are usually, strongly influenced by environmental conditions. They might not always be logical responses, for man may act in a wayward manner, but on the whole they tend to create recognizable patterns of occupation. In an attempt to do this, there are always claims and counter claims on land hence leading to disputes.

Also demographic influence is behind this antagonism. This is against the background of degenerating arable land. The ramification of this growth is that it leads to internal crisis which will lead to an outward push to accommodate the increasing population. The increase in population is not compensated by an increase in the size of the land in both villages. Thus the demand for food will be incompatible with the accommodation of the growing population. The only safety valve for this problem is an outward push which resulted in the ethnic conflict between the villages. Apart from the 1953 official census, I did not get any examples for population increase statistics. My analysis on population increase is based on the responses I got from the informants.

The two neighbours (Bambili and Babanki-tungoh) believed in expansionist and hegemonistic tendencies. At one time or the other these two villages attempted, although without much success to subjugate their neighbours. For instance, the Bambili had disputes with Bambui, Nkwen (other Tikar villages) and Babanki-tungoh. Babanki-tungoh also had disputes with

Bamessing, Balinyonga (other Tikar villages) and Bambili. The Bambili and Babanki-tungoh, in addition have a problem with their settlement pattern. A case in point is Bambili which is completely hemmed in by rocks. This situation is further compounded by the fact that her population is ever expanding and the available land is getting smaller and smaller. And this is as result of the government policies in the area. The government built institutions that took up Bambili land. For example, the CCAST, ENS, CUSS and Gendarmerie Brigade took up hectares of land. The only way to survive is for Bambili to expand at the expense of her neighbours. Conversely, Babanki-tungoh equally finds herself in an uncomfortable position at the rocky and narrow end of the Ndop plain. This cannot sustain the expanding population which necessitated an outward expansion. In an attempt to expand and control their neighbours, the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh clashed on their common border leading to the ethnic conflict.

Both parties were of the opinion that the uncontrolled circulation of guns and ammunition is responsible for the conflict between them. Cameroon Law requires that to possess a gun, one has to be granted a license by the government. The selling and ownership of arms is commonplace in this region. At the time that guns were strictly controlled, killings in the region were very rare. Fighting with guns during conflicts has become common since the last two decades of the twentieth century as against the use of sticks, stones and knives. Richard G. Dillon reports that “in the Bamenda grassfields a gesture of submission during fighting was enough to inhibit a man from killing his defeated adversary and running away may keep fatal outcomes of fighting to a minimum” (1980:80). As far as the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh are concerned, the presence and free movement of guns have rendered this assertion an illusion. With this advancement and lawlessness, the weapons used in ethnic warfare have changed. With the new situation, killings have become rampant and destruction is immense.

Informants from both villages said that the arrival of the British in the Bamenda region is another cause of the antagonism between them. When the British took over the region they set to establish the pax Britannica. Its administration was organized around the chiefs. Their policy of indirect rule which advocated the administration of the area promoted a very slow and deliberate process of socio-economic development. British colonial policy was an

empirical one in so far as it was never clear cut; they relied on experience and experiment and not on dogmas or fixed principles. The policy was developed at the instance of certain individuals as a panacea to specific problems and when this worked well it was applied to similar situations. It was difficult to assess the extent and nature of a Fon's authority in this region and for this reason the government undertook a systematic series of assessment and intelligence reports to ascertain the authority of traditional rulers, the basis for their power. It was directly because of this that when the first conflict erupted during the British administration, they found it difficult if not impossible to demarcate the area. This first demarcation by the British gave birth to the appellation – boundary. Today, the inefficiency of colonial administration vis-à-vis the boundary cannot be divorced from the ethnic conflict between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh.

Furthermore, both villages were of the opinion that the importance attached to land in the region cannot be separated from the present ethnic conflict. Land rights were and are either patrilineally or matrilineally. Close agnates-brothers, sisters, father's brothers, cousins – comprise an inner lineage in which there is continuous mutual assistance. With the advent of Colonial European rule in the area, their conceptions of the essential relationship between people and land were fundamentally different. Different colonial masters decided to give the appellation “crown land”, indicating that the local communal ownership to land was disregarded.

It is important to take note of the fact that from the perspectives above, it is at least suggestive that the causes of the antagonism are viewed from a “multidimensional eye”. With economy being at the core of the antagonism as they constantly struggle over land ownership, which is the main reason of the antagonistic relations and the policies of the civil administration behind this. The antagonism also appears to have a psychological root, resulting from their past history. This is because these villages see themselves as ethnically different, though they are all Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields and all North Westerners.

3.1.4 – The ethnic aspect of the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh conflict.

At this level what we should have in mind is that, with the rise of the ethnic consciousness from both villages, what outcome should we expect? When for example, some informants said, though both villages are united geographically, they have quite different values which both groups turn to misunderstand, making them to become antagonistic. This takes an ethnic undertone of being a Bambili and Babanki-tungoh. This facilitates the reasoning that the fight did not only result from the struggle over land but there were some psychological forces in their memories regarding Bambili/Babanki-tungoh relations. The situation is more lucid when one thinks of how the Bambili people called the Babanki-tungoh people-greedy people. The Bambili people said a piece of land was given to Babanki-tungoh people to settle for sometime, and the Babanki-tungoh people do not want to let it go. This serves to confirm the high level of ethnic anger of the Bambili people against the Babanki-tungoh people.

From the above it is evident that, ethnic identity (Bambili or Babanki-tungoh) emerges in their relations or encounters. This ethnic identity amongst the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh especially those around the contested area undermines the rights over the piece of land of the other ethnic group because they look at each other as different though they are all Tikars. One might therefore raise an argument that this contested identity over land struggle, is partly responsible for the increasing antagonism between the two villages. Ethnicity is a special form of identification wherein group histories and cultural traditions which when emphasized and associated with characteristics like competition, are capable of producing either constructive or destructive actions. As such identity is an expression, which refers to the ways in which collectives are distinguished in the relations with other collectivities, similarities are the dynamic principles of identity, the heart of social life, echoed by Ger Duijzings. Evidently, the antagonism between the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh as experienced today goes a long way to buttress this theoretical position.

Taking into account the fact that ‘subjective’ dimension of a consciousness of being members of the same group as distinct from comparable groups is combined with ‘objective’ dimension of a group name, shared notions about a collective past and/or common cultural trait, Schilder (1994). It is right to say that the formation of ethnic group psychology against an ‘enemy

other' subsequently leads to hostile behavior and a psycho-social distancing between 'us' and 'them'. The historical experiences between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh tend to shape the beliefs of one group over the intentions of the other. The main problem here is that material dispute like the struggle over land is evolving into a form of identity conflict. This is as a result of the nuclear settlement pattern, where inhabitants leave their hamlets and acquired fertile land for their basic necessities. The truth of the contention is that, with the natural increase in population and new arrivals, there is insufficient land within reach of the nuclears. The result is competition for economic resources which is scarce. The responses from informants also, clearly show how the monetary value given to land, increased the antagonism between the two contestants. Such situations provoke feelings of ethnic anger. Consequently, the most important conclusion that could be reached so far is that the conflict between these two villages is ethnically based conflict. This ethnic aspect of antagonism exists along side and exacerbates objective conflict such as the competition over limited natural resources. Therefore, resource scarcity such as land which by and large appears to be the focal point of antagonism between the two villages is simply an instigating condition to the resurrection of psychological animosities which is expressed through more antagonistic lenses such as ethnic identity, ethnic groupings and boundaries. Ethnic boundaries (language, culture amongst others) are potential source of the antagonistic relation between these two villages. As said earlier, when there are boundaries it means interests are at stake and it is due to this interests that people draw boundaries.

These villages have consistently preoccupied themselves with the identification of differences rather than areas of common Tikars. It could even be argued that economic imperatives have provided a fertile ground for the villages to exploit cultural differences by engaging in discourse that emphasizes ethnic particularities. One can judge from here that, ethnicity breeds more confrontation than concerted action and keeps the villages more on friction.

It has been shown from the specific history of the antagonistic villages and from the perspectives of Bambili and Babanki-tungoh that they hold identities that incorporate their sense of their various villages. It is related to a competitive relationship and thus the product

of a historical process that may extend far back in time and that adds to the explanation of the present situation of increasing animosity between the two villages.

3.1.5 - Conclusion

The major concern of this chapter has been to bring out the causes of the antagonistic sentiments between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon. It has been clearly visible from the analysis that the conflict is shaped by multifaceted factors. From the findings of the study, we have been able to see how conflict between the two groups of people has resurfaced-with the administration behind it. The ethnic factor is mobilized by the quest for land, resulting in ethnic consciousness and ethnic determination by both groups in order to survive. As seen from the Bambili perspective, the administration's slow decision to take measures to hand over the land to Bambili completely aggravates the conflict. The government policies to use Bambili land for government institutions also cause the antagonism between the two villages (Babanki-tungoh perspective). As seen from both perspectives, the causes of the conflict are a result of the expansionist and hegemonistic tendencies of the leaders over land in the area. Both villages have a problem with their settlement patterns. A case in point is Bambili which is completely hemmed in by rocks and Babanki-tungoh which is at the rocky and narrow end of the Ndop. The findings from the data collected indicated that the increase of the population lies behind the conflict between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh. This is against the background of degenerating arable land. Thus, the leaders (Fons) are embarked on an outward push (giving out parts or sections of the contested land to His peoples) to accommodate the increasing population. What is more, the findings also show that the increase in population is not compensated by an increase in the size of the land and the demand for food will be incompatible with the accommodation of the growing population. As such since land is scarce, the people of the two villages with the control and authorities from their Fons make use of the contested land and all these causes the antagonism between the two villages. The findings also show that there is no record for recent census on population, increase in population was referred by interviews. The findings also show that the scarcity of land especially to the Bambili people, can be attributed to the government policies in the area. Government institution took up Bambili land and the only way for Bambili to survive is to expand at the expense of her neighbour, causing antagonism with Babanki-tungoh. The

findings also show that the uncontrolled circulation of guns and ammunition is responsible for the antagonism between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh. Last but not the least, this chapter showed that the cause of the antagonism is found in the people's psychology resulting from their ethnic differences wherein the villages exploit the situation, in order to make use of the economic imperative of the contested land.

CHAPTER FOUR

ATTEMPTS AT SOLUTION

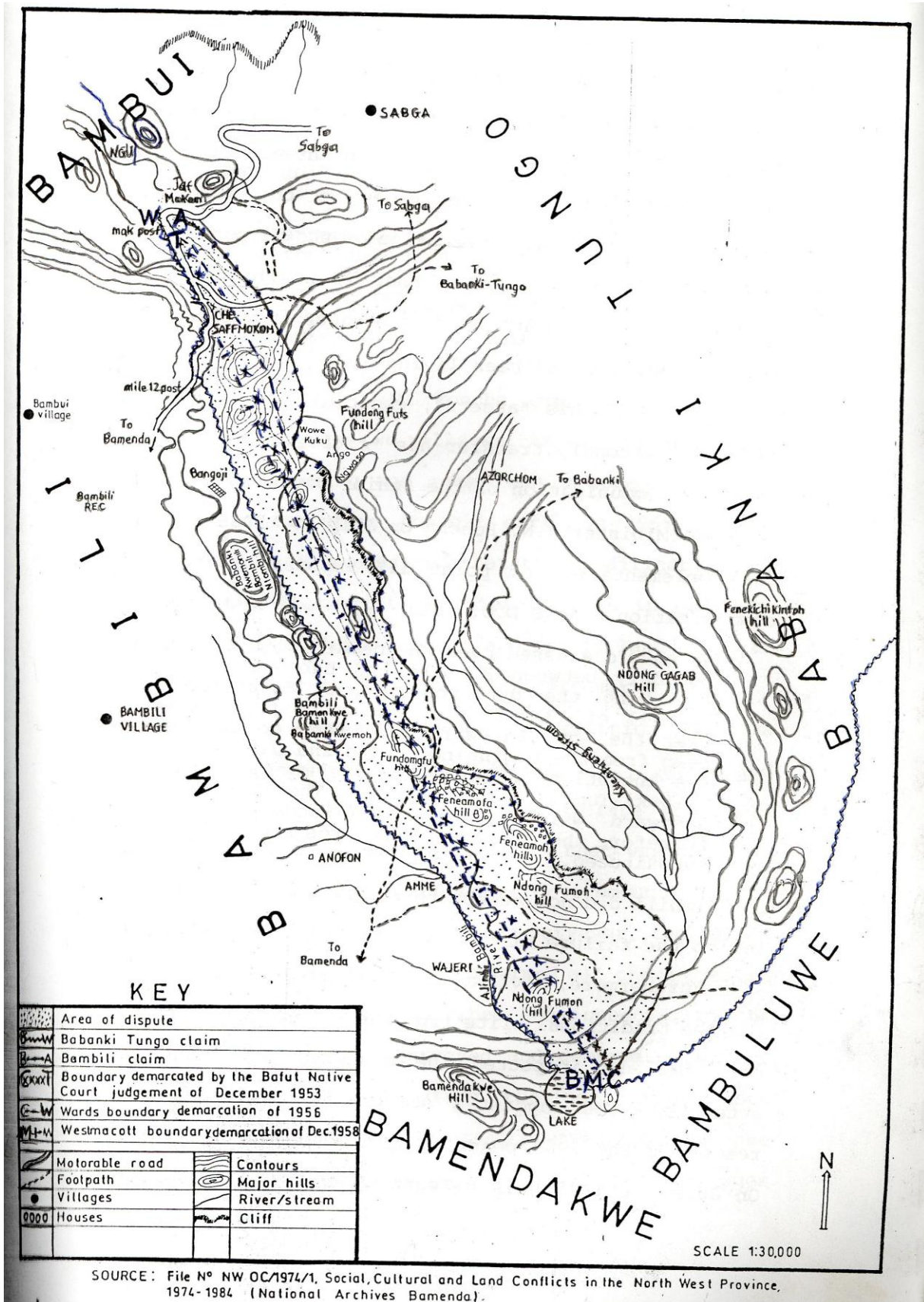
The ethnic conflict between the two neighbouring villages has had ramifications which have affected the lives of the people of both villages. Because of these many efforts have been put forward towards its resolution. This chapter examines the efforts carried out towards the resolution of the ethnic conflict and why these attempts have failed. The chapter will end with suggested solutions.

4.1.1 - Efforts at resolving the ethnic conflict

The sporadic outbreak of conflicts between the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh led to numerous unsuccessful attempts to end the hostilities. As already said, these villages are in conflict because of a fertile piece of land which lies between them. They (the two villages) make different claims as to where the line is/or should be, after the administration decided to divide the piece of land between them. Thus, the main difficulty is to establish a line or to demarcate the land acceptable to both villages. To better understand the endeavour made towards demarcation, it is necessary to examine the claims of each community on the disputed land.

Map III shows the disputed area and this presents the claims of the two communities and the various markings that have been drawn in an unsuccessful attempt to resolve the problem. Section "B-W" represents the claim as made by the Babanki-tungoh; the Bambili claim the section "B-A". None of the communities has been willing to recognize the claim of the other party. The demarcation of the line between these communities by the Bafut Native Court judgement of December 11, 1953 is indicated by section "C-T." This line was established in the presence of Fon Awemo of Bambili and Fon Asik of Babanki-tungoh and it was registered in the Bafut Native Court Civil Suit No. 23/53. Yet it did not satisfy the two communities. After many other attempts, Ward, the British resident in Bamenda, suggested another line which is

Map III – The Bambili / Babanki-tungoh Ethnic Conflict



represented by section “C-W.” This was later rejected by the two communities because it did not coincide with their respective claims. Another line – the Westmacott line represented by section “M-W”, was later established by Westmacott on May 15, 1958 at Bafut.

Besides, several meetings were also convened by the traditional and educated elite of the two neighboring villages in an attempt to resolve the conflict. On February 13, 1965 a meeting of the Bafut Chiefs (the Bafut Chiefs consisted of the Fons of Bambili, Babanki-tungoh, Bafut, Mankon and Nkwen) took place in the Bafut council. According to the minutes of that meeting signed by J.N. Foncha on February 15, 1965, the members arrived at five-point decisions;

- 1) That the area in dispute was allocated to Bambili following the Westmacott decision of 1956.
- 2) That it is desirable for the Babanki-tungoh people to have a market for their potatoes about this area, and so a piece of land should be sliced from the Bambili land on this area and allocated to Babanki-tungoh for this purpose. This piece of land will start from the present V.H.F. beacon to a point somewhat westward to a point 10 meters away from the brick building now being constructed by one Babanki-tungoh man somewhat southwards into Bambili land. Hereafter to join the Westmacott line straight ahead. The rest of the line to follow the Westmacott demarcation towards its terminus.
- 3) All houses built by Babanki-tungoh people on Bambili land should remain in Bambili and be known as Bambili people or to quit to Babanki-tungoh. A statement to this effect was to be got from these men who will enable the administration and the Bambili village council to decide whether they should remain or quit.
- 4) The surveyor should be accompanied by four representatives of the Bafut clan Area, drawn from Bafut West and Bafut East constituencies. Stones were to be collected by both villages to be piled up at various places on the line to be readily visible.
- 5) A copy of the amended Westmacott map with statement as was agreed upon by the Bafut clan chiefs to be given to the chiefs of each of the two villages.

Amongst other things in the five point decisions, the meeting attached great importance to the Westmacott decision and the final demarcation of the disputed area. From the above, it is clear that it was difficult to implement the decision. This is because it was not easy for somebody

who had been living in a place for a long time to give up his “assets”, especially houses and farms and secondly transfer the “citizenship”. What is more, a communication of the Senior Divisional Officer (S.D.O) to the Prime Minister, J. N. Foncha, on July 27, 1965 rendered the implementation of point III impossible. In the communication, the S.D.O said;

“We have discussed over the demarcation of the disputed area between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh following the decision of the Bafut clan council of 13/2/65 and I wish to point out that the word Eastward was wrong as can be seen from the beginning of the 2nd paragraph. The intention is (was) to give more land to Babanki-tungoh for a market. The direction Eastward will curtail the land instead. Therefore the direction Westwards should (be) substituted...”¹⁸

The Bambili people did not accept this interpretation and this led to the failure of the February 15, 1965 decision.

Furthermore, civil administrators from the division and the traditional elite from the warring villages took off time and inspected the disputed area, and also attempted some suggestions. This was as a result of the 1965 peace initiative which had failed. On June 22, 1971 this delegation inspected the area and agreed amongst other things, that;

“The new marking would start from the present J.H.F beacon-in actual fact, this is an I.G.N. that is, Institute Geographique Nationale Control point A, near the 13th milestone on the Bamenda-Banso road. From there, it would run to a point 10 meters from a certain Babanki-tungoh man’s brick building under construction and from there to join the Westmacott (sic) marking straight ahead. The rest of the marking (from here) (there) would follow the Westmacott towards its terminus near Lake Bambili.”¹⁹

On June 22, 1971, J.N.Foncha emphasized that the marking between the two villages, as was agreed upon by Bafut Chiefs Meeting and subsequently accepted by him and his executive council early in 1965, needed modification. He emphasized that this modification was to amend the Westmacott Decision of 1956 in order to give the Babanki-tungoh people a piece of land on which they could carry out their local potatoe market.

While following this description, the Area surveyor and Land Officers for Mezam, B.K. Simo, tried to get the S.D.O. and Foncha to relate what was described to the Map Plan No. BD 235

¹⁸ B. N. Mukong, through the Sub-prefect, Bamenda to the Prefect, Mezam Division.

¹⁹ Prefectoral Field Inspection Notes Decision and Programme of 22 June 1971.

that was obtained from the former ministry of Local Government. On the advice and explanation of the Area Surveyor, the Senior Divisional Officer for Mezam “informed all those present that the area just described and inspected by the team would be properly surveyed and demarcated by the Area Surveyor, Mezam, during the next dry season “November 1971)”²⁰ He further re-iterated that while the S.D.O. would provide security (the use of armed men and forces of Law and Order to protect the survey team, throughout the period of demarcation), the two villages (Bambili and Babanki-tungoh) would supply labour for clearing the area as well as collecting and carrying sand, stones and gravel for the erection of pillars.

Unfortunately, the November 1971 attempted demarcation failed because the Babanki-tungoh people refused to co-operate. This was lucidly expressed by the Area Surveyor to the S.D.O. in the following words;

“I wished to inform you (S.D.O.) that the job had to be stopped, nay suspended, because the Babanki-tungoh people have refused to cooperate. When the job started last week, only Bambili people turned up and continued to work with my team for a couple of days...”²¹

Despite the failure, the Area Surveyor did not relent his efforts as on January 15, 1972 he “advised the Administration and the members of parliament from this area to educate their people properly on this issue”²²

This information was taken seriously by B.N. Mukong and S.N. Kindo who constituted the cream of the educated elite in Babanki-tungoh and Bambili respectively. Meetings were held both at Babanki-tungoh and Bambili with their respective people and the main preoccupation of these meetings was peace. On January 16, 1972 Mukong and Kindo met the traditional Councillors of Babanki-tungoh in the Fon’s palace. In the meeting, the two emphasized that there was no need to fight over a piece of land and that peace was desperately needed for the socio-economic development of the region. According to the minutes of the meeting;

“A member of the meeting suggested that a conciliation committee could be formed consisting of members from Bambili and Babanki-tungoh villages to sit

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Area Surveyor and Lands Officer to the Senior Divisional Officer, 16, November 1971.

²² Area Surveyor and Lands Officer to The District Lands and Surveys Department, Buea 15 January 1971.

and study the situation at the disputed area and to suggest ways of ending the matter.”²³

At the end of the meeting, the Fon and the people of Babanki-tungoh, with the aid of their educated elite, resolved as follows: firstly that for the purpose of peace, the Westmacott map showing the markings should be corrected to work in accordance with his decisions since it was drawn from the said decision; secondly, they maintained that the markings as decided by the Law Court of 1953 between the two villages could be respected to appease the two villages.²⁴

A similar meeting took place in the Bambili palace with the Bambili traditional council, two months later. It was a briefing and a continuation of the peace initiatives of January 16, 1971. According to the meeting, the two traditional councils were to participate fully in the demarcation exercise that was to follow. Unfortunately, when the representatives of the two villages and the surveyor arrived in the field for demarcation exercise, differences developed between Mukong and Kindo. These differences were highlighted in a report by B.N. Mukong;

“...Hon. Kindo made a statement that embarrassed me and kept me wondering as to the role we were playing. I have given you Mukong, here(I) and expect you to give Kindo when we get ahead I (he) maintained and still maintain our roles, should be to bring peace and unity so as to enable government carry on her work and as far possible try to divorce ourselves from our village loyalties. He, Hon. Kindo, also intimated that he was told by his Fon that the marking passed through my farm and that as I was his Fon’s son, he would allow that my farm (to) be kept out...”²⁵

This shows that differences occurred amongst these elites although they attempted to resolve the difference between their villages. This could be due to the fact that Mukong and Kindo misunderstood each other. And also they want their respective villages to claim the disputed land.

Although these differences erupted between the two representatives of the elite, their education and orientation yielded fruit on July 25, 1973 when the Fons of the two villages

²³ Minutes of the traditional council meeting in the Chief’s Palace in Babanki-tungoh to find out a peaceful solution to the Bambili/Babanki-tungoh conflict, 16 January 1972, pp.2-4. (see Appendix III for details).

²⁴ Ibid pp. 3-4.

²⁵ B.M. Mukong, through the Sub-prefect, Bamenda to the Prefect, Mezam Division, 17 January 1972.

signed a “non-aggression pact.” The pact called on the inhabitants of the warring villages to refrain from any action that could provoke war and the two villages were to co-exist as “brothers.” This attempt bore fruits as “peace” reigned in the sub region until 1975²⁶ when it was punctuated by the farmers and graziers of the area.

Besides, in the 1990s, the conflict cropped up again with a vengeance. This was accompanied by the overhauling of the peace initiative machinery. On January 23, 1993, the Divisional Officer for Tubah, Joseph Tangwa Fover, visited the disputed site and realised that a small fence on Babanki-tungoh side had been destroyed. His department from the disputed area was closely followed by the January 26, 1993 crisis between the two villages. According to the report which Tangwa wrote:

“The Chairman of Bambili Traditional Council ran to my (his) office in the morning (of 21/1/93) to alarm me (him) of the disturbances between the two villages. I (he) immediately moved to the place to seek confirmation at about 11:30a.m. I (he) did alarm the S.D.O. who immediately went to the spot on Wednesday the 27 January 1993, and appeased the belligerent, pleaded for peace, the people accepted but did not adhere to their promise.... Again I (he) contacted the S.D.O. who took steps and enough forces were put at my disposal to move and stop the fighting. We talked to a hostile crowd of about 2.000 on each side through their leaders.”²⁷

To further concretise the attempt towards peace, Tangwa created a commission on February 5, 1993 with the two principal objectives: to trace and demarcate the area and to arrange for the release of the Babanki-tungoh people who were “trapped” blocking the road when the January 23, 1993, crisis was raging on. This commission was to start work on February 15, 1993. One of the set-backs which the February 15, 1993 Commission faced was that the original map of the disputed area could not be found. To resolve this, another meeting was held on July 13, 1993. During the meeting, the representatives of the two villages’ traditional councils contacted the Director of the National Geographic Centre in Yaounde (capital of Cameroon) and a new map was drawn following the A.B. Westmacott Decision of 1958. The map was presented to the different delegations in the meeting.

²⁶ The Bambili/Babanki-tungoh entente signed by the Fons on 25 July 1973.

²⁷ A report written by the S.D.O. Tubah, Tangwa Joseph on 19 February 1993.

During the meeting, the S.D.O. for Mezam, Samuel Sufo, read a letter containing two fundamental issues to the representatives. The S.D.O. should assist on the demarcation exercise should the need arise, and secondly, the interpretation of the map should be done on the field with the assistance of topographic experts. The Babanki-tungoh delegation opposed the new map, terming it fictitious and insisted that the original map should be presented for the demarcation exercise. This increased the tension of the conflict.

The Bambili delegation, on the other hand, agreed to accept the final decision to be arrived at by the Administration. The Babanki-tungoh delegation according to a confidential note was “stubborn, sulky and arrogant”.²⁸ The Bambili delegation suggested that a line should be imposed, but their suggestion was rejected by the S.D.O.²⁹ Before the meeting ended, the S.D.O. advised that any farming activity in the disputed area should stop with immediate effect, and the S.D.O. said that the Westmacott Decision was partially in conformity with the Appeal Court Decision of July 15, 1955. He instructed the chairman of the traditional councils of the two villages to obtain the said decision from the Tubah Customary Court within a week.

Meanwhile, on August 23, 1993 the S.D.O. for Mezam, conveyed another meeting in the Governor’s Conference Hall. This meeting was a follow up of the July 23, 1993, meeting which was held a month earlier. It was attended by the representatives of both villages and some prominent administrators of the division. At the meeting, the S.D.O. presented a map drawn up by the National Geographic Centre in Yaounde based on the final decision taken by A.B. Westmacott in 1958. The Babanki-tungoh delegation, once more, rejected the map and brands it as faulty. It was nonetheless, resolved by the S.D.O. that the Appeal Court Decision relating to the dispute should be obtained from Tubah customary Court. It was also agreed that the Appeal Court Decision, the Westmacott Decision, and the newly drawn map should serve as a working instrument during the demarcation exercise.

The August 23, 1993 meeting was part of a continuous process in an attempt to resolve the conflict. The intransigency of the Babanki-tungoh people, coupled with the inherent

²⁸ Confidential note No. 00456/PS/179/TA.1.

²⁹ Ibid.

weaknesses showed by the February 15, 1993 commission led to the formation of another commission on March 28, 1994. This commission was called the Mezam Sub-Technical Commission. This commission aimed at overcoming the weaknesses of the 1993 commission and to demarcate the area once and for all. After having met in three sessions under heated debates, the members of the sub-Technical Committee on April 27, 1994 proceeded to the field. They were accompanied by the Divisional Officers, Tubah.

In an attempt to interpret the Westmacott map on the field, the two parties disagreed. The Bambili delegation disagreed on the grassy spur immediately after the footpath running from Babanki-tungoh to Bamenda while the Babanki-tungoh delegation disagreed on the rocky outcrop on the steep escarpment defining the valley and finally on the cliff-like feature. The Babanki-tungoh blamed the S.D.O. for supporting the Bambili. Despite the fact that the two parties held divergent views as explained above, the commission did not relent its efforts to attempt the demarcation of the area as per Westmacott's description. Despite the above attempts, the desire to bring a peaceful solution to the ethnic conflict has remained an illusion.

4.1.2 - Why the attempted solutions failed

The reasons for the failure of the attempted solutions are many and varied. First of all, the belligerent refused to cooperate in the search for peace. On November 16, 1971, an attempt for demarcation failed principally because of the intransigence of the Babanki-tungoh. This attitude was lucidly made by the Area Surveyor and Lands Officer, Kay Simo, on November 18, 1971 as explained earlier. Simon's report revealed that the demarcation attempt failed because of the attitude of the Babanki-tungoh people. The area surveyor and land Officer and the other administrators used their initiatives to meet the Fon of Babanki-tungoh to cooperate in the search for a solution. He accepted and sent his own working team, but when the team arrived, it rejected the new map.

The "foot-dragging" attitude adopted by the Babanki-tungoh delayed the peace process. Their attitude stemmed from the fact that "...they had paid the usual Land Tribunal deposit and had expected that the Tribunal should go into the matter-that they rejected the Westmacott Administrative marking which is now being imposed on them.

Also the Babanki-tungoh people failed to honour an invitation of the Divisional Officer of Bamenda Central Sub-Division, D.N.N Pufong. On March 8, 1972, Pufong regretted the situation and in his letter to the Area Surveyor and Land Officer said:

Unfortunately, the Fon of Babanki-tungoh and his councillors failed to turn up, although they actually received my invitation. After a short discussion Kindo and Mukong, the Fon of Bambili and his councillors agreed that the Area Surveyor should carry on the erection of the pillars according to the Westmacott decision and if the Babanki-tungoh community felt dissatisfied they were free to petition to the Government...³⁰

From the above it can be concluded at this juncture that the failure of the Babanki-tungoh people to cooperate made the efforts towards solution ineffective.

Closely related to the above fact, injunction order No. 2901.2/C.18.162 of 7 January 1991 was, on the other hand, also violated by the Bambili people. This violation took place on May 7, 1991 when the Bambili started farming in the disputed area.³¹ With this action, it became difficult to arrive at a peaceful solution to the conflict between the two villages.

Another reason that could explain the failure of the attempted solution is the inherent determination of these neighbouring villages to seek revenge. In a letter, ref. No. E2901.2/165/302, from the Sub Divisional Officer, Tubah, Kamga, to the Divisional Officer Mezam on November 16, 1995, Kamga remarked:

It is clear that peace is a far away cry between the two communities (Bambili and Babanki-tungoh). The two are full of reciprocal hatreds at all. The solution doesn't lie in confrontation. They don't take into consideration the serious consequences of preceding conflicts. One even wonders if it is for this strip of land at the summit of the hill that they are fighting so much for, it seems to me that the real problem should be the rivalry between the two neighbours and as long as this sentiment of hatred persists, the risk of confrontation shall remain a permanent phenomenon.³²

This meant that the two neighbouring villages were not prepared to "bury the hatchet."

³⁰ Divisional Officer, D.N.N. Pufong to the Area Surveyor and Lands Officer, 8 March 1972, N.A.B.

³¹ Cited in a communique from the Rents Office, Kedjom Ketinguh, to the Chairman Bambili/Babanki-tungoh Commission of Enquiry, 27 July 1991, National Archive Bamenda.

³² Sub Divisional Officer to the Senior Divisional Officer pf Mezam, Bamenda, 15 november 1995, N.A.B.

Furthermore, there have been many groups and individuals involved in the attempts to resolve the conflict. For instance, the colonial administration, civil administration, the Bafut Chiefs, Traditional councils, and educated elite, were involved in the attempts to resolve the conflict. What is more, is that these groups failed to refer to the past or what had already been done in order to better understand the problem. Thus the independent approaches and varying resolutions confused the parties concerned, and negatively affected the peace efforts.

The authentic interpretation and implementation of the Westmacott decision was not successful. The two villages initially did not believe the decision but saw it as the only objective map to hang on. But when a map was drawn, it was opposed by the Babanki-tungoh. This map was reported to be different from that which was approved by Westmacott. For this and several other reasons the Babanki-tungoh refused to cooperate.

What is even more is that the surveyors charged with the demarcation were not the “local” surveyors agreed upon in the 1973 agreement. These surveyors displayed ignorance on the field with regard to identifying the bearings on the grounds as they were on the map. In a petition against the demarcation by the Babanki-tungoh to the Senior Divisional Officer, the ignorance of the “Yaounde experts” was put in the following words:

...we decided to give the said experts a chance and follow them to the Lake where the Westmacott decision of 1958, page two, paragraph five, line six clearly stated where the markings starts from but the experts and the S.D.O.’s party went parallel to and far beyond the Lake to take their bearings and from there decided, rather embarrassingly, into Babanki-tungoh where people lived long before the Westmacott decision of 1958.³³

The above citation portrayed that the surveyors from Yaounde knew little or nothing about the disputed site. The ignorance displayed by the “experts” made any attempt towards a peaceful resolution far-fetched. The quotation above shows that the technocrats from Yaounde were not conversant with the topography.

³³ Chairman of Babanki-tungoh to the S.D.O., 19 April 1995 NAB.

The suspicion and scepticism of both parties concerning the objectivity of the civil administration also led to the failure of the efforts towards resolving the ethnic conflict. Reports from both parties showed that they doubted the honesty of the Senior Divisional Officer. This explains why the Senior Divisional Officer for Mezam, Samuel Sufo, convened several peace meetings in the Governor's Hall. He was, at one time, accused of favouring the Babanki-tungoh. It was also because of similar suspicion that the Babanki-tungoh withdrew their cooperation during the last demarcation attempt in 1995. When matters came to a head, the S.D.O. for Mezam was taken to court to answer whether he had any powers to change or alter the Westmacott decision which was agreed upon by the two communities.

Another reason why the attempts at reaching a negotiated settlement failed was because the two villages continuously made claims and counter claims on the disputed area. This is because the disputed land is very fertile and the two villages depended on this piece of land for their livelihood.

Besides, the two contestants have failed to recognise the time-lag between the Westmacott decision and current attempts at demarcation. This means that within this long period, new developments have taken place in this area, and because of this any attempt to hinge at the Westmacott decision, without taking into effect the changes ended up in futility. From the foregoing analysis, it is clear that several attempts were carried out to solve the ethnic conflict but they failed for several reasons already mentioned. It is within reason at this juncture to suggest some possible solutions for a resolution of the conflict.

4.1.3 - Suggested Solution

Ethnic conflicts have been going on for a long time and there have always been ways and means adopted towards the resolution of ethnic conflicts. At times solutions geared towards the resolution of ethnic conflicts have failed. It is because attempted solutions to the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh ethnic conflict have failed that the following section provides some suggestions aimed at solving the ethnic conflict.

In the foregoing analysis, it was realised that some commissions were formed with the aim of resolving the conflict. These commissions failed for various reasons. However, from the point of view of concrete institution-building, there is perhaps no better evidence than the creation of a boundary commission. This commission should have a legal backing and a good text of application; preferably an act of parliament or a presidential decree. The commission should comprise the representatives of the state: Ministers of Defence, Territorial Administration, Justice as well as the Delegate General in charge of Internal Security, one member nominated by the president, and representatives from the villages concerned. The commission will be charged with the sole responsibility of resolving ethnic conflicts and conflict prevention in the country. It should operate through two technical committees under the Minister of Territorial Administration.

Besides, it has been evident that attempts have failed because of new developments in cartography that have taken place since the Westmacott Decision of 1958. One suggestion to this effect is what Boggs refers to as “simplification of the boundary function”. The decision taken to be a boundary between the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh should be retained but its function should be reduced to allow it to assume more welcome functions as lines of positive and productive contact. The solution to this conflict might rest in the simplification of the function of the line drawn on ground or boundary.

The solution to conflict like this could lie in increased contact. Contacts can be highly conducive for the reduction of conflict. It is important to note that conflict is reduced when there is contact between equal status members of Bambili and Babanki-tungoh. This is possible because the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh villages are not separated by any natural features-rivers, mountains and valleys. Thus their permeability gives room for contact and therefore if it is better handled, it will reduce conflict. Both villages ought to understand that interaction with the other side is frequently a matter of necessity and even survival. This is especially true with the two neighbouring villages because there is a high level of economic inter-dependence.

Another suggestion that can bring peace between the two villages is to determine who owns the disputed land. From the foregoing analysis, it is very difficult to know who owns the piece of land because none of the villages is ready to show convincing evidence – land certificate; according to Jack Peter (1981:99) Decree No. 76-165 of 27 April 1976 established the conditions for obtaining land certificates. Proviso 1 Article 1 of the Decree states “The land certificate shall be official certificates of real property” (ibid). These two villages do not seem to possess the required land certificate. Therefore, the state has the right to claim the disputed piece of land as state land or National Land. According to part II of Ordinance No. 77-1 of 10 January 1977, “National lands shall of right comprise lands which at the date on which the present Ordinance enters into force, are not classed into the public or private property of the state and other public others” (ibid). Based on the above, the government can transform it into a national forest. The government can accelerate agricultural activities in the area by opening up an experimentation farm which will be an affiliate to the Regional School of Agriculture in Bambili. By doing this the two contestants will retreat from carrying out acts of aggression in the disputed area. The government can build a school or hospital on the disputed piece of land for the people of both villages.

The government can encourage “provincialism”. This means that the inhabitants should have a sense of belonging to a province. In the Cameroon nation is a combination of provinces which are made up of clan lineages, it can safely be said that a problem cannot be solved at a macro-level when the micro-level is ignored. In this case, the inhabitants of the province are compelled to know and carve out certain objectives geared towards the socio-economic development of their province. For instance, the North West Elite Association and the Chiefs Conference should be overhauled in terms of objectives and structure. Above all, a regional organisation, if formed, could be giving a name – the Bambili/Babanki-tungoh Development Association (B.A.B.A.T.U.D.A).

CHAPTER FIVE

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The historiography of the Bamenda grassfields has been subjected to various types of studies. These studies include among others sociological, anthropological and historical works. But very few have gone beyond the hostile inter-societal relations. This study has attempted to provide the causes of the hostile inter-societal relations in the Bamenda grassfields. It is focused on ethnic conflicts in Bamenda grassfields in general and the Bambili/Babanki-tungoh ethnic conflict from c.1950 to 1998 as a case study.

This study has focused on the information from archival materials and local responses of the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh peoples with regards to the reason for the antagonism between them. It has been clearly visible from the analysis that the conflict is shaped by a multifaceted factors. From the findings of the study, we have been able to see how the conflict of the contested land resurfaced and how the government policies in the area provoked the conflict. The findings also reveal how the government's laxity in decision making between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh enhances the conflict between them. From the analysis, it can be said that, due to the population increase and economic imperative of the land, these villages claimed to own the land. The result has been antagonism and animosity between them, leading to ethnic consciousness between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh in order to sustain and accommodate their growing population.

The work reveal that, the population of the ethnic groups in this region has increased (and it is increasing) against the background of degenerating arable land. It also reveals that ethnic conflicts in this region are a product of the ever growing centralised state formation characterised by ambitious, expansionist and hegemonistic rulers. The rulers embarked on an outward push for land to accommodate the increasing population. It also explains why the Bamenda grassfields is rife with ethnic conflicts.

It is evident from the work that the ethnic conflict between the villages stems, to a large degree, from economic imperatives. This is because of the fertility of the disputed piece of

land, and secondly, the two contestants carry out their daily economic activities in the disputed region. Furthermore, the work tried to investigate who was the owner of the disputed area (land). The land under dispute has been claimed by the two warring villages. The Bambili claim that the land is theirs since they were the first to arrive in the area. On the other hand, the Babanki-tungoh claims the disputed land on the ground that the Bambili did not effectively occupy the land. However, if it is accepted that the Bambili first arrived the disputed area it can be argued with a certain degree of probability that the land belongs to the Bambili.

But what could make their claims authentic is the possession of a Land Certificate; Decree No. 76/165 of 27 April 1976 spells out the conditions for obtaining Land Certificates. The land certificate, in Cameroon is the only document to claim land. It further stipulates that without a Land Certificate, the disputed land becomes state land. What is more with regard to the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh conflict is their inability and/or unwillingness to produce a land certificate which can legally give them the land. It is therefore evident that none of the warring villages possesses a land certificate and consequently the disputed land should become state land.

The state (government) could use the land by planting forests, “natural forests” or open up an experimental farm which can remain an affiliate to the Regional School of Agriculture, Bambili. If the government finds it impossible to plant the forests, it could apply what Boggs calls the “simplification of boundary function” which means that the boundary or markings could be demarcated with possible adjustments. This is because there have been new developments in the disputed area since the conflict began in the 1950s.

The work also set out to investigate who are the motivators of the ethnic conflict between the Bambili and Babanki-tungoh. It is evident from the work that the educated elite of the two villages have contributed to the outbreak of the conflict. Furthermore the work set out to answer the question: what made the two villages different? From the study, it is evident that from the beginning the two villages shared many common features and interacted in several domains-social and economic. The two villages inter-married. Economically they shared the same treasury and market activities. Since they were dynamic societies, they were subjected to

internal and external upheavals with the consequent periodic expansion of the territorial framework. This manifested in ethnic conflicts which consequently made the two villages different.

Various attempts were made by various bodies to resolve the ethnic conflict. Some of the bodies included amongst others colonial/civil administrators and legal experts. Some of the attempts included the creation of commissions, attempted demarcations and meetings convened by the civil administration, educated/traditional elite. These endeavours failed because of various reasons – the lack of consensus between the two villages, the difficulties in demarcating the disputed area, the lack of technocrats in the sphere of surveyor, psychological differences (ethnic consciousness and ethnic determinism) and the egoistic, expansionist and hegemonistic tendencies of the two villages.

It has been suggested that the government could take the land as state land; secondly, settlement patterns should be investigated to better know who needs the disputed land most. To accomplish this suggestion, population statistics of the two warring villages should be compiled. Thirdly, the disputed area should be demarcated using Bogg's phrase of the "simplification of boundary function" or the government can forcibly demarcate the boundary according to her whims and caprices which will only enhance peace in the region. Finally, the commissions should be overhauled and endorsed in the state constitution. It could be directly placed under the Ministry of Territorial Administration. These and other suggestions could put to an end to the long outstanding ethnic conflict.

Finally, man remains the architect of his destiny. The long outstanding ethnic conflict that has rocked the belligerents since the 1950s and has led to enormous costs should have been resolved. Since naturally, man's activities are teleguided by greed and ambition, the ethnic conflict is going on. History has revealed that ethnic/land disputes have remained a thorny issue since time immemorial and the Bambili/Babanki-tungoh ethnic conflict is no exception. This work has attempted to show a way by which the ethnic conflict could be resolved. It could equally be used to solve ethnic conflicts elsewhere in the Bamenda grassfields.

APPENDIX I

THE NATIVE COURTS ORDINANCE CAP. 142, LAWS OF NIGERIA

In the Review Jurisdiction of the Resident, Bamenda holden at Bafut, this 15th May, 1958, before Mr. A. B: Westmacott, Resident, Bamenda.

Review No. 84/56.

File No. 361(569).

Bafut Native Court Civil Suit No. 23/53.

Plaintiff: Awemo V. H. of Bambili / Claim: Ownership of land by
Versus

Defendant: Asik V. H of Babanki.tungoh / defendant some years ago.

1. Native Court Judgement dated the 11th December, 1953.

Judgement for plaintiff with a part of the land according to the demarcation of the land. Cost to be refunded to the Court members who inspected the land.

2. Native Court Appeal Judgement dated the 15th July, 1955.

On appeal, judgement modified according to sketch map attached by appeal.

3. District Officer's review judgement dated the 8th September, 1956.

The marking will begin at the very high peak near Bambulue and will come straight down the watershed into the stream known as tuentueng which will follow streams in the same general direction until it reaches the cattle track near market ruga. There a cairn will be erected and the marking will go in a straight line to the raffia bush on the stream that comes across the main road just beyond mile 13. This portion is as claimed by Bambili.

4. Anybody, from either village, who now finds himself on land not owned by his own people will have the choice of moving to his own land or staying where he is and paying tax to the new village. If he chooses to do the later he will be permitted to stay and farm. Persons who choose to move must do so before January 1st 1957. This will give them time to harvest their crops. Cattle owners who Amy is involved will continue to be under the same Ardo as before.

5. Defendant asks for review being dissatisfied with the decision of the Assistant District Officer, Mr. Ward on review. Both parties present on the land in dispute. This is a long outstanding dispute involving a large tract of land on top of Sabga. On the high ground adjacent to Bambili, the land is purely grazing land. It then drops suddenly over a rocky escarpment, over most of the height into a valley. This valley is extensively farmed and build over by Babanki-tungoh people-their village being the ridge on the far side of this valley on the edge of the Ndop Plain. There is a lot of truth in Mr. Wards remarks. The Bambili people

did arrive in this area prior to the Babanki-tungoh people, and there is not the slightest doubt that the high ground now in dispute was “no man’s land”, both parties probably using it for hunting. Then the Fulanis arrived with their cattle and settled on it. With the introduction of law and order, some Babanki-tungohs left the valley they had originally settled in, being short of farming land, and started to farm in the high valley now in the area of dispute. Today they are well established there, even to the extent of building some pan roofed houses. Both parties agree that they have no further evidence to produce other than that already recorded, though the village Head of Bambili points to a spot in the valley referred to above, where, he states, some of his forefathers are buried and where he now makes sacrifices.

Mr. Ward in his decision, stated, in my opinion correctly, that he did not think that the markings or boundary had ever been defined between the parties. It was his opinion that the decisions of the Court of First Instance and the Appeal Court were no more than attempts to arbitrate. They all failed because they choose an unsuitable and artificial line. It was his intention therefore, to create a more suitable natural boundary.

This he did and make a boundary running roughly down the centre of the valley already referred to and extensively occupied by Babanki—tungoh people. He ordered that any body from either village, who now found himself on land not owned by his own people would have the choice of moving to his own village land or staying where he was and paying tax to the new village. If he chooses the later, he could stay and farm. This, however, was very one-sided as although many Babanki-tungoh people would be affected. Obviously in these days you cannot expect a large number of persons, who have occupied land for some years without interference, to suddenly pack up and to move lock stock and lance. I am of the opinion that his decision would cause hardship and be difficult to enforce. I therefore set aside his decision.

On the other hand I am not prepared to reinstate in toto the decision of either the Native Court or of, the Appeal Court. Both decisions run along the high grazing land near to the escarpment beyond which and close to, is Bambili village.

After carefully inspecting the land (3days) I have decided that Babanki-tungoh should remain in possession of the land which they now occupy but that all the grazing land on the Bambili side on which is now unoccupied-with the exception on three Babanki-tungoh houses and several Fulani rugas,-should be confirmed as belonging to Bambili. Starting from Bambili Lake, the boundary will be as decided by the Appeal Court until it approaches the footpath running from Babanki-tungoh to Bamenda. It will then bear almost due north from this point along a grassy spur until it reaches a rocky out crop on the steep escarpment defining the valley. It will run along the edge of this escarpment until the cliff like feature ends and the land becomes rolling down land. The boundary will then follow the line as defined by cairns until it reaches the main Bamenda-Kumbo-Nkambe Road (the ring road) at the sharp corner just beyond mile 13. The village head of Bambili to have the right of carrying out sacrifices at the spot in the valley now on Babanki-tungoh land as heretofore.

Each party to be supplied with a copy of the map showing the boundary.

ABW/Monkam:

Administrative Officer
Class I.

APPENDIX II

DECISION ON LAND DISPUTE BETWEEN BABANKI-TUNGOH AND BAMBILI AGREED UPON BY THE BAFUT CHIEFS MEETING ON THEIR COUNCIL ON 13/2/65

- 1) That the area in dispute was allocated to Bambili following the Westmacott decision of 1956.
- 2) That it is desirable for the Babanki-tungoh people to have a market for their potatoes about this area, and so a piece of land should be sliced from the Bambili land on this area and allocated to Babanki-tungoh for this purpose. This piece of land will start from the present V.H.F. beacon to a point somewhat westward to a point 10 meters away from the brick building now being constructed by one Babanki-tungoh man somewhat southwards into Bambili land. Hereafter to join the Westmacott line straight ahead. The rest of the line to follow the Westmacott demarcation towards its terminus.
- 3) All houses built by Babanki-tungoh people on Bambili land should remain in Bambili and be known as Bambili people or to quit to Babanki-tungoh. A statement to this effect was to be got from these men who will enable the administration and the Bambili village council to decide whether they should remain or quit.
- 4) The surveyor should be accompanied by four representatives of the Bafut clan Area, drawn from Bafut West and Bafut East constituencies. Stones were to be collected by both villages to be piled up at various places on the line to be readily visible.
- 5) A copy of the amended Westmacott map with statement as was agreed upon by the Bafut clan chiefs to be given to the chiefs of each of the two villages.

Signed: J.N. Foncha
P.M 15/2/65

S.D.O

The above are my draft minutes. You will produce the full minutes please, and give the necessary instructions to the surveyor etc.

Signed: J.N. Foncha
P.M. 15/2/65.

APPENDIX III

TRADITIONAL COUNCIL MEETING WITH HON. MUKONG AND HON. KINDO ON THE 16-1-72 IN THE CHIEF'S PALACE IN BABANKI TUNGOH TO FIND OUT A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE BABANKI-TUNGOH/BAMBILI DISPUTE.

At 2:30pm Hon. B.N. Mukong, in the presence of the Chief, Traditional Council members, and a host of other Babanki-tungoh people, introduced the Hon. S.N. Kindo and the topic of his visit. In his brief introduction, Hon. Mukong told the house that on the 13th January, 1972, Hon. Kindo, the District Officer, Mezam, the Surveyor and himself went to the disputed site, and saw things for themselves. He then told the Babanki-tungoh people that as the leaders of the area and also sons of the two villages had deemed it expedient to address the two villages in order to seek ways and means by which they could end the long standing dispute between the two ethnic groups. He then concluded by saying that, that was the reason why they were in the palace that day. He declared the floor opened for Kindo to speak to the people of Babanki-tungoh.

Having addressed the Chief, His Council and the people, Hon. S.N. Kindo told the house that the dispute between the two villages was one of a long standing. He went on to say that, they the parliamentarians of the area had come to seek from the people ways by which the matter could be ended. He pointed out that the Parliamentarians come and go, and that they could leave parliament tomorrow. Continuing, he said that since they were the children of the two villages, they were out to find a suitable solution to the dispute. He added that if they are changed or leave Parliament next day, new persons coming might not know the problems of the people very well, and consequently might not tender the right cure to their problems.

Kindo, said that in the multi-party days there was a lot of enmity, nepotism and tribalism among people but today under the C.N.U. Government peace and security are the only media pf solving disputes. We went to site under conflict, Hon. Kindo went on and saw that one village claims land and puts it into effective use, but on the contrary the other village claims land and never puts into use at all. He said that he was not going to call the spade a spade. Kindo pointed out that it is the role of the Government to make the best use of the land they have and not to allow it stand wasted. Hon. Kindo appealed to the house to think constructively and to resolve at a peaceful and lasting solution to the issue. As a witness of the marking from start to the finish, Hon. Kindo observed:-

- a) That one village is claiming land and using it, while the other is not doing so.
- b) That in certain place on the marking as showed by Westmacott, Babanki-tungoh had trespassed into Bambili land and Bambili had done vice versa.
- c) That when he first came into Parliament he was received first in Buea by Babanki-tungoh elements and that Mukong and himself were not well loved by all in the two villages. He then revealed that the hatred for them cannot make Mukong give part of Babanki-tungoh land to Bambili or claim part of Bambili and give to Babanki-tungoh, likewise himself.
- d) That in certain places on the site, he took to himself the powers of the D.O. to suggest to the surveyor to change the marking so as to avoid problems from either village.

- e) That the deposits giving by the two villages calling on the land Tribunal was not to be returned and that it was small, and should be increased so as to meet up with the cost of stones, sand and labour on the construction of a permanent boundary between Babanki-tungoh and Bambili.
- f) That he Kindo was free of blames in Babanki-tungoh because if he knew of any cause to be blamed he would not have come to address the Babanki-tungoh people without fear. He then opened room for questions from the people.

QUESTIONS

- 1) The first member of the Council asked:- From the time of the Germans to the time of the British rule we had no disputes between Bambili and Babanki-tungoh, why are these disputes coming up this time when the people of Cameroon are ruling themselves?

Hon. Kindo gave no answer to this question,

- 2) The Chairman of the Council asked:- I have always been present at the disputed site from the time of the decisions of the law court to this time. I also travelled with Westmacott for three days along this site, why is the map drawn to show Westmacott's decisions not in accordance with his decision?

Hon. Kindo did not answer the question.

- 3) Westmacott made a boundary between Babanki-tungoh and Bambili in 1958 and gave a decision but he never drew a map of the area he visited. In his decision he gave out 3 Babanki-tungoh compounds to Bambili namely-Toh Meshi, Che Veghwo and Jaff Mukom. The giving out of the compounds did not satisfy the Babanki-tungoh people, and as such they raised a deposit calling on the Land Tribunal to decide the matter.

a) What has happened that the land Tribunal has not come to the site?

b) What has become of the deposit given?

Hon. Kindo said that the deposit given was small to do the work as such it should be increased to make up the cost of sand, stones and labour force to be given.

- 4) Another Council member asked:- When one makes a summon, he wants that his case be tried. If he is tried and he loses the case then, the courts forfeits his summons, do the Babanki-tungoh people now presume that they have lost the three compounds to Bambili? If they did not lost the case,

a) What therefore were the decisions of the land Tribunal?

b) Where is the deposit of the Babanki-tungoh people?

Hon. Mukong in respond said that Hon. Kindo in his talk appeal to the Babanki-tungoh people to forget the past and to explore ways and means to end this issue, because they politicians did not come as judges but as peace makers to end the dispute.

- 5) There were four people who visited the site on the 13-1-72. Why was it not possible that all of them come to address this Council today?

There was no answer to this question.

- 6) Between miles posts 12 and 13, the Babanki-tungoh have a common boundary with Bambui, why do Surveyors and Government Officers who came to make the Bambili/Babanki-tungoh boundary always begin their boundary trace from mile post 13, on the Ring Road to Nso?

In Hon. Kindo's attempts to answer the questions, said that they were not out to receive blames but rather, the people of Babanki-tungoh would have praised him, and made suggestions as to what they as their representatives could do to end the situation.

A member of the Council suggested that a conciliation committee could be formed consisting of members from Bambili and Babanki-tungoh villages to sit and study the situation at the disputed area and to suggest ways of ending the matter.

The Chief and people of Babanki-tungoh resolved as follows:

- 1) That for the purpose of peace, the Westmacott map showing the markings should be corrected to work in accordance with his decisions since it was drawn from the said decision.
- 2) That the law court marking of 1953 between the two villages be respected to appease both villages.
- 3) That something be done about the deposit of the land Tribunal will not come to the site.
- 4) That the council and entire people of Babanki-tungoh are happy and grateful for the giant step taken by Hon. Kindo and Hon. Mukong in their attempts to end this matter. The Council and Chief wished them every success.
- 5) That after consultation with the Council and entire people of Babanki-tungoh, and after a serious study of the Situation the Council and people will tender a report later on the Hons Kindo/Mukong mission to Babanki-tungoh on the 16th January, 1972.

CONCLUSION:- Hon. Mukong thanked the Hon. S.N. Kindo for his endeavour to end the Bambili/Babanki-tungoh dispute. He called on all Babanki-tungoh people to do same.

Hon. Kindo thanked the entire population of Babanki-tungoh for the time and patience sacrificed to come and listen to what he had said. He told the Babanki-tungoh people to wait on the information of the District Officer on when to come to the site for final arrangements. He prayed for a peaceful solution when time came. In conclusion, he said the Governments decisions were final. The rally ended at 5:30pm.

Signed Peter Vewerro
Chairman – Babanki-tungoh
Traditional Council

Signed: Secretary
Babanki-tungoh Council

Copy: To Hon. D.N. Mukong,
To District Officer-Mezam
To Hon. S.N. Kindo.

APPENDIX IV

Pictures Showing the Study Sites



Figure I: Photo of Contested site taken from Bambili



Figure II: Photo of Contested site taken from Bambili



Figure III: Photo of Contested site taken from Babanki-Tungoh



Figure IV: Photo of contested site taken from Babanki-tungoh

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- Review No.84/56 Bafut Native Court Civil Suit No. 23/53, 15th May 1958.
- Decision on land dispute between Babanki-tungoh and Bambili agreed upon by the Bafut Chiefs meeting on their council on 13th February 1965.
- Traditional council meeting with hon. Mukong and hon. Kindo in the chief's palace in Babanki-tungoh to find out a peaceful solution to the Babanki-tungoh/Bambili dispute on the 16th January 1972.

C) Interviews

List of interviews not to be disclosed-but copies will be presented to the examination committee at the oral examination. From the 2nd of June to the 21st of June I was engaged with interviews in Bambili village. I spent 20 days in this interview process with 29 persons interviewed (21 men and 8 women). In Babanki-tungo, the interview process started on the 22nd of June to the 10th of July. In this village I had 27 respondents (17men and 10 women).

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