<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>NIBA, Matthias Livinus</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PG/M.Phil/78/354</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Origins and Development of Colonial Administration Among the Bafut, 1900-1949</td>
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<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
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<td>Department</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>December, 1981</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT
OF COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION
AMONG THE BAPUT, 1900 - 1949

By

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P.C.C.E. (London)
PG/M.Phil/78/354.

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DECEMBER, 1981.
Dedicated to the Memory of My Parents
(a. 1947)
ABSTRACT

The Bafut people, like others in Cameroon, were ruled at different times by two colonial powers, Germany and Britain. While their control of the people lasted, the two countries administered them in accordance with their respective colonial policies. The Germans followed a policy of paternalism, a process which drastically curtailed the people's rights to life and property. The British followed a more liberal policy which they called Indirect Rule. Both powers however sought to rule the people through their indigenous political institutions. In Bafut this was carried out through the king or Fon.

This dissertation therefore examines the nature and implications of colonial administration in Bafut during the German and British eras. In the process we have not only attempted a comparative analysis of the policies but also examined how the Bafut people reacted to them in the light of their institutions. In their operation the Germans recognized the paramountcy of the Fon of Bafut as much as possible within the confines of his pre-colonial kingdom. Under the watchful eye of the Bamenda military garrison, the Fon of Bafut unquestionably carried out such instructions as collecting taxes and contributing labour for government projects. At the same time he had to control and maintain order within his kingdom using whatever 'traditional' means
that were acceptable to the Germans. More serious cases were summarily dealt with by the Bezirksleiter (Station Commander).

The British, on their part, in their bid to reduce costs, created a larger administrative unit by attempting to extend the authority of the Emir of Bafut to include six other neighbouring chiefdoms. They therefore made him the Native Authority, president of the Native Court and the chief tax collector for the area. The first phase of this arrangement coming in the late 1920s, after phasing out the remnants of the German system, followed the Lugardian policy of creating a district with a district head on the Northern Nigerian Model. This followed the amalgamation of the Cameroons Province with Southern Nigeria. Adverse reactions to this arrangement which coincided with the anti-tax movements in the Owerri and Warri Provinces of Nigeria led to a modification of the policy. Thus was ushered in the modifications, under Sir Donald Cameron, which de-emphasized the dominance of one ruler and instead sought to create a council of 'equals' in the area. But other developments outside the area, such as the depression of the 1930s, the Second World War and lack of personnel adversely affected the realization of the new policy. The new local government policy introduced after 1949 brought in another era and thus
led to the abandonment of the Cameroonian 'reforms'.

This study has shown that there were fundamental differences between the German and British administrative policies. These differences which were evident in the application of the policies were determined by the circumstances surrounding the establishment of the colonial rule, the personalities of the administrators and the people's own attitude to foreign rule. In the case of Bafut, the distinction between German and British rule is clearly noticeable in the people's reaction. Although both colonial powers faced problems in administration, the problems which British administrators faced in effecting their administrative policies among the Bafut were similar to those which they faced in these parts of Southern Nigeria with similar political institutions.

Notwithstanding important elements of continuity, Bafut society had, by 1949, undergone fundamental changes as a result of German and British colonial rule.
PREFACE

The study of colonial administration in North-west Cameroon was pioneered by Elizabeth Chilver, formerly Principal of Bedford College, University of London in two seminal essays published in two festschriffts. They are: "Native Administration in the West Central Cameroons 1902-1954" in Essays in Imperial Government Presented to Margery Perham, edited by Kenneth Robinson and Frederick Madden (Oxford, 1962) and "Paramounty and Protection in the Cameroons: The Bali and the Germans, 1889-1913" in Britain and Germany in Africa: Essays Presented to Harry Rubin, edited by Prosser Gifford and Wm Roger Louis (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1967). One notable study made after Mrs Chilver's is Walters Che-Mfombong's M.A. Dissertation, "Banenda Division Under British Administration, 1916-1961: From Native Administration to Local Government" (University of Yaounde, 1980). For all the insights that they provide on the area, these studies deal mainly with the formulation and application of the administrative policies of the colonial authorities, German and British and hence are heavily weighted to one view, namely, the situation as perceived by the colonialists.

In organising the people for administrative purposes, the colonial authorities recognised in some cases and in others
created paramountcies, that is, grouping as many different peoples as circumstances permitted under selected Chiefs or Fons. This was nothing new as paramountcy in the area antedated the colonial era. So far as this subject is concerned, this has been covered by Chilver with regard to the Bali. The other two works listed above however deal with it only in a sketchy and generalised way encompassing an extensive administrative area and hence do not focus on a particular people. Moreover there is need to examine the British system of paramountcy and compare it with that of the Germans.

This dissertation therefore attempts to fill that gap by selecting one people, the Bamut of the former Bamenda Division (Bezirk of the German era) and examining how the broad administrative policies worked in practice. It also focuses attention on how the people’s social and political institutions fared under colonial rule.

Though Germany formally annexed the Cameroons in 1884 and the first German reached Bamut in 1889, yet they (the Germans) did not start a systematic conquest and occupation of the Bamenda Highlands until 1901. Therefore it is appropriate that this study should start from 1900.

The British who expelled the Germans in 1916 administered the people through their stated policy of
Indirect Rule. The implementation of this policy passed through two phases: a model set forth by Lord Lugard and later on modified by Sir Donald Cameron. These operated in the Cameroons until 1949. This study thus ends in 1949 for two reasons: firstly this date marks the setting up of a new structure of native administration in the Bamenda Division manifested in the new Local Government system. By this arrangement the Bafut Native Authority which had been operating since the beginning of British administration was federated with the neighbouring Nkot and Nso areas to form one unit – the South-eastern Federation Native Authority. By this new arrangement the paramountcy of Bafut which had been recognised up to this time ceased to exist. This date also marked the raising of the Bamenda Division to the status of a province. All these developments therefore fall outside the scope of this study.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have contributed in different ways to bring this dissertation to this stage. I owe a special debt of gratitude to Dr. C.N. Ubah who took over the supervision of this work from the former supervisors, Professors A.R. Afigbo and S.C. Ukoojwi who were called to other duties. Though the two Professors had laid the foundation, Dr. Ubah deserves praise for his patience and forbearance in taking over and completing a job started by others. That this work has been pushed to a finish is a credit to him for his incisive insight into the subject, persistent prodding and personal concern to make up for lost time. Professor Chieka Iheazia, Head of Department, in his versatile and fatherly manner more than adequately played his own part. It was his class seminars and later on the departmental seminars that gave me courage to venture on this particular subject. As head, he untangled the bureaucratic web to get the work moving ahead after being stalled for some months. Dr. J.B.C. Anyahye must be mentioned for his stimulating course on research methods which provided me with the tools for research. The following lecturers in the History Department, viz, Dr. J.O. Ijoma, Dr. P.O. Edeibe and ...
Mr. O.N. Njoku not only kindly gave me verbal encouragement but also lent me some reading material. Professor S.N. Nwabara, formerly Director of the Institute of African Studies and now Director of the Division of General Studies, a long-time friend, first aroused my interest in African History. He did not only encourage me to come to Nafukha but was relentless in his moral and material support.

The following friends and relatives also played various roles in aid of the work: Martin Nyewell was ceaseless in his encouragement and advice on all fronts, despite his own problems as a student in this University. It was Emmanuel Ngwa Nebasima, lecturer in the Department of Geography at the University of Yaounde who drew the maps and also permitted me to consult his D.E.S. Thesis on the geography of Bafut. To Walters Che-Mombong goes my profound thanks for his unreserved support and advice when he gave me a copy of his recently defended thesis on "British Administration in Bamenda Division..."

My thanks too go to Dr. Michael Tabwue Ahutum of the Faculty of Law and Economics of the University of Yaounde for giving me most of the material on the indigenous political system of Bafut. Mrs. Elizabeth Chilver of Oxford University helpfully played a great part of this
work by providing me with some translated documents from the German original and patiently answering my questions by mail.

Special tributes go to all who helped me in my library, archival and fieldwork. Thus I gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the Librarians of the Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and of the University of Ibadan for giving me unimpeded access to the African and serials sections of their Libraries. My thanks and appreciation go to the Chief Archivists and their able staff of the Nigerian National Archives, Enugu and Ibadan and of the Cameroon National Archives Annex at Buea for their co-operation in ferreting out documents for me.

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appreciated here. Martin Ninang, Joshua Ayongba, the late Ta Nsonjum, head of the Basut Kwifo, the Fon of Babanki, the Fon of Nwan and Ta Ako Wanki must be mentioned for the enthusiastic way they co-operated.

The Cameroonian Government, as a matter of policy graciously granted me leave of absence (without pay) from my job as a secondary school teacher, to undertake my studies. So this work has been financed purely from private sources. Apart from my immediate family, many friends and relatives have shown concern and contributed their own quota of help in their own way. Hence I cannot forget Dr. Francis Ngwa Cheo, Dr. Howard Ngwa Fube and Cletus Acho of the University of Ibadan for their generous help during my two research trips to Ibadan. Densas and Justina Nima warmly took care of me in their home while I was in Buea. Joseph and Priscia Saha kindly lodged me in Yaounde and in addition generously helped me financially. My brother-in-law, George Forexumji, also contributed in his own way. My colleague and course mate, H.U.B. Kagha understood my situation and contributed more than I ever anticipated. My deepest gratitude goes to him.
The bulk of my thanks and loving acknowledgement must go to my wife Prudencia and our four children, Ngwa, Lua, Suh and Azimwi who have borne all the sufferings and inconveniences of this work. It was not only the material discomfort that they had to endure but, above all, the emotional disturbance of my long absence from home. Their perseverance was a great source of strength and encouragement to me indeed.

Finally, my thanks for a job well done go to I. Uji of the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, who typed the manuscript.
A.D.O. Assistant District Officer.
C.S.E. Central Secretariat, Enugu.
D.E.S. Diplome d'Etudes Superieures.
D.O. District Officer.
H.N.S.O. His Majesty's Stationary Office.
I.A.I. International African Institute.
N.A. Native Administration.
N.A.B. National Archives, Buea.
N.A.E. National Archives, Enugu.
N.A.I. National Archives, Ibadan.
S.S.P. Secretariat, Southern Provinces.
GLOSSARY OF BAMUT TERMS

Acheu: Lineage

Ala-Bufu: The Bamut kingdom.

Atangchue: (Pl. Atangchue - planners of war) A sub-chief with special privileges.

Bukum (sing. Bukum): Titled elders. They were the only ones who could be admitted into kwifo.

Fon(Mfor): The king. This term was used by the British to denote a paramount chief.

Kwifo: The council of titled elders who assisted the Fon in governing the kingdom.

Nemfo: The Queen mother.

Mandong: The Army.

Muma: One of the Fon’s brothers who acted as adviser. He was ‘third in command’.

Mumala’a: The centre of the kingdom. It refers to that part where the Fon’s palace is located.

Nohinda (Pl. Nuchinda): A page boy or attendant to the Fon.

Ndibon: One of the Fon’s brothers who acted as adviser. He was ‘second in command’.

Ndohuru: Used to refer both to a quarter and a village.

Ta: Father. This is used in addressing elders.

Ta-Ndahuru: Head of a quarter or village but having no chieftaincy title.

Tamando: The leader of a manjong unit.
# LIST OF MAPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Map</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Facing Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The Position of Bafut</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Position of Bafut in the Bamenda Grassfields</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The Bafut chiefdom: Morphology and Relief</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The Bafut chiefdom: Some villages and quarters</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Bamenda Division: Projected Political Areas (1922 situation)</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The Bafut Native Authority Area (1926)</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Native Authority Areas of Bamenda Division (1934)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>xvi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLOSSARY</td>
<td>xvii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF MAPS</td>
<td>xviii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>xix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PRE-COLONIAL SETTING
- The Geographical setting                   1  
- The People                                 1  
- Traditions of Origin, Migrations and Settlements 5  
- Social and Political Organisation         9  
- The Judicial System                        18  
- Territorial Organisation And Administration 35  
- Internal and External Security              38  
- The Economy of the Bafut Kingdom           42  
- The Economy of the Bafut Kingdom           45  

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE GERMAN ERA AND ITS AFTERMATH
- Initial Contacts, 1889-1992                 55  
- The German-Bafut Wars 1901-1907             55  
- German Administration                      67  
- German Administration                      75  

xix
The Direction of Change under German Administration

The Expulsion of the Germans and the Coming of the British

TEN

THE BRITISH APPROACH TO ADMINISTRATION, 1916-1929

Administrative Arrangements, Policy and Practice, 1916-1922

The Emergence of the Bafut Native Administration, 1922-1929

The Working of the Bafut Native Administration

FOUR

REORGANISATION AND WORKING OF THE SYSTEM

Reorganisation and Modification of the system to 1938

The Working of the Reorganised Structures during and after the Second World War, 1938-1948

The New Native Court System

The Direct Taxation Ordinance of 1940 and the Establishment of the Bafut Treasury

The Native Authority Ordinance of 1943 and the Immediate Post-War Developments

The Position of the Fon of Bafut in the Administration
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIVE</td>
<td>ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHANGES</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aspects of Economic Changes</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roads</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Livestock Raising</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Changes</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christianity and Western Education</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIX</td>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE
THE PRE-COLONIAL SETTING

The Geographical Setting

The Bafut Kingdom is situated about twenty four
kilometers north-west of Bamenda, capital of the North-west
Province of the United Republic of Cameroon. (See map 1),
Lying between latitude 6°05' and 6°10' north and longitude
10°00' and 10°33' east, it is bounded by the
following kingdoms: to the north by Koma and Beba-Befang in
the Menchum Administrative Division; to the West by Meta
in Meme Division; to the east by Babanki and Bambui and 7
to the south by Nkwen and Mankon all in Mezam Division.
(See 'Map 2'.) With an area of nearly three hundred and
forty square kilometers, Bafut, in 1973 had a population of
slightly over thirty thousand people, thus giving it a
density of some eighty seven persons per square kilometre. 2

1Emmanuel Ngwa Nebasina, The Bafut Chieftaincy: A study in
Rural Geography (Unpublished Diploma d'Etudes Superieures

2Ibid., p.4.
Topographically the area is part of the Bamenda Plateau or Highlands. Broadly speaking, this plateau is a continuation of the Western Cameroon Highlands which stretch from the Cameroon mountain on the coast and run northwards along the Nigeria - Cameroon border to Lake Chad. But the Bamenda Plateau forms a distinct geographical unit, rising at its highest point to about three thousand metres above sea level. It is marked off from the Upper Cross River Basin by a sharp escarpment and from the middle basin of the Katsina Ala River by a range of hills. It is also marked off from the Takum area and southwest Adamawa Plateau by an arch of mountains which forms one flank of the Upper Donga and Kari River Valleys. The Bamenda Plateau therefore constitutes the watershed for some of the affluents of the Cross River such as the Mo and the Manyu; of the Katsina Ala River such as the Kiibi and the Menchum and of the Ndam River such as the Nun.

Bafutland itself occupies an elevated basin rising to about one thousand five hundred metres, surrounded by the Oshie-Ngie Range to the west and by the Oku and Kom.


4 Ngwa, op. cit., p.9.