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Peter Geschiere & Piet Konings (eds.)

PROCEEDINGS/CONTRIBUTIONS

**CONFERENCE ON THE HISTORICAL ECONOMY OF
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**COLLOQUE SUR L'ECONOMIE POLITIQUE DU CAMEROUN
- PERSPECTIVES HISTORIQUES**

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A la mémoire de notre collègue, N'Sangou Arouna, qui a joué un rôle si important dans l'essor des études camerounaises et qui nous a cruellement manqué lors de nos discussions.

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SESSION VI - ACCUMULATION: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Jean-Pierre Warnier

Communications présentées:

Martin Njeuma and Nicodemus Awasom - The Fulani and the political economy of the Grassfields, 1940-1960.

Philippe Laburthe-Tolra - Elements de réflexion sur le rôle historique du christianisme dans le développement économique du Cameroun, 1845-1915.

William Gervase Clarence-Smith - From cocoa plantations to peasant-produced cocoa in German Kamerun.

Michael Rowlands - The material culture of success: Households and consumption in the Bamenda region.

Les quatre communications présentées lors de la présente session portent sur: 1°/ l'accumulation des terres et du bétail par les peuls de Bamenda à partir de 1916 (M. Njeuma et N. Awasom); 2°/ L'accumulation du savoir faire et de l'éducation par les chrétiens du Sud à partir de 1845 (Ph. Laburthe-Tolra); 3°/ L'accumulation du capital foncier et de la force de travail dans les plantations allemandes à partir de 1885 (G. Clarence Smith); 4°/ L'accumulation des biens de consommation durables par les individus ayant fait preuve d'une certaine réussite à Bamenda dans les années 1960-80 (M. Rowlands).

Contrairement à ce qu'on pourrait croire, les formes d'accumulation qui réussissent le mieux au Cameroun depuis 1845 sont celles dont les formes sont les plus éloignées des formes classiques de l'accumulation capitaliste. En effet:

M. Njeuma et N. Awasom montrent la croissance continue du cheptel bovin des Peuls dans la Province du NW à partir de 1916. Ils décrivent les conflits avec les agriculteurs qui en résultent, les efforts du colonisateur puis de l'Etat camerounais pour les résoudre. Une grande partie de cette histoire se déroule dans le cadre d'une économie monétaire. Cependant l'accumulation de terres et de troupeaux, malgré son ampleur, échoue à prendre un tour capitaliste, faute d'investissements permettant de passer à une production agro-pastorale intégrée.

Ph. Laburthe-Tolra propose une lecture quasi-wébérienne de la conversion des sudistes au christianisme, lequel, dans ses bagages, apporte le macabo et l'intensification du travail éducatif et "civilisateur" dans les secteurs de la construction, de l'ameublement, du vêtement, etc.. Les chrétiens

accumulent l'instruction et les qualifications. Ils font les premiers pas vers la création d'un marché du travail qualifié et l'intensification du travail pour la production et l'échange marchand. S'agit-il d'accumulation capitaliste? Sans doute pas encore.

G. Clarence Smith montre que les projets allemands de production de cacao dans des plantations de type capitaliste, avec de gros investissements en terre et en équipement et une main d'œuvre prolétarisée, ont échoué, au bénéfice d'une production paysanne.

M. Rowlands enfin montre que la trajectoire du succès individuel à Bamenda se traduit par l'accumulation de certains types de biens de consommation durables et par des investissements dans l'éducation des enfants, l'immobilier, et, souvent, le foncier. Des quatre communications, c'est sans doute celle qui touche de plus près à un modèle capitaliste. Elle rappelle les études de Th. Veblen sur le triomphe du business aux Etats Unis dans les dernières décennies du 19^{ème} siècle., avec cette différence majeure que les business-men sont l'exception dans les cas de réussite cités par Rowlands.

Je ne me lancerai pas dans des questions de définition sur le capitalisme, ni dans la question maintenant classique de savoir si l'Afrique souffre de trop de capitalisme, ou d'une insuffisance de capitalisme, ou d'un excès de capitalisme périphérique. Ce débat, qui prend le capitalisme comme référence, invoque les "imperfections" du marché du travail, des capitaux, des terres agricoles, etc.-- imperfections dont il faut cependant souligner qu'elles sont d'ordre social et culturel, ce qui nous ramène au centre du problème sur les déterminants sociaux et culturels de l'accumulation. Je me limiterai à un rappel, à une interrogation, et à quelques remarques de détail inspirées par les communications.

Un rappel: par la force des choses, les communications, étant ciblées sur quelques thèmes très précis, ne donnent pas une vue d'ensemble du processus d'accumulation capitaliste dans les 150 dernières années. Il convient donc de rappeler qu'il y a, au Cameroun, un secteur capitaliste reposant sur une main d'œuvre salariée, des investissements importants, et une économie de marché. Ce capitalisme est un capitalisme privé, ou d'Etat, national ou étranger. Cela dit, l'importance des tontines, les déficiences du système bancaire, la faiblesse des investissements productifs, en particulier dans l'agriculture, le petit nombre des entrepreneurs au sens de Schumpeter, font qu'on est loin d'une économie capitaliste et que l'accumulation se fait sous d'autres formes, qui sont très vigoureuses.

D'où l'interrogation suivante: étant donné que, pour l'anthropologue, le capitalisme -- ou plutôt les capitalismes de type occidental -- ne sont que des configurations socio-culturelles parmi d'autres, on peut se poser une question analogue à celle que pose J.-F. Bayart dans son livre sur l'Etat au Cameroun: de même que les théories sur l'Etat néo-colonial sont insuffisantes à rendre compte des processus politiques originaux de construction étatique en Afrique, de même les théories sur l'histoire

du développement (ou du sous-développement) capitaliste ne sont-elles pas insuffisantes à rendre compte des processus d'accumulation spécifiques au Cameroun dans les 150 dernières années?

Les sociétés du sud et de l'ouest sont volontairement évolutives. Elles gardent, dans une certaine mesure, l'initiative de leur trajectoire. La question est de savoir si les modes africains d'accumulation ont une spécificité, et une trajectoire propre, déterminées par les structures de longue durée, à savoir l'action des groupes de filiation, les modes de redistribution, la division sexuelle du travail et sa transformation dans une économie monétaire, les modes de contrôle de la force de travail qui échappent au marché, la capitalisation par les tontines. Les continuités en la matière, soulignées par les quatre communications, expliqueraient l'échec de l'accumulation capitaliste sauf sous ses formes les plus excentrées et parasitaires: l'exploitation minière, forestière ou certaines industries. Corrélativement, la question est de savoir si, sur 130 ou 150 ans, ces modes d'accumulation, là où ils réussissent, forment un ensemble plus ou moins cohérent, facteur de développement.

Les quelques remarques de détail sont les suivantes: Ph. Laburthe-Tolra estime que le manque d'autorité des anciens dans les sociétés de la forêt expliquerait pourquoi les cadets sont libres et par conséquent disposés à explorer les voies nouvelles du développement. On peut objecter à cela que les sociétés de l'ouest, très hiérarchisées, se montrent également innovatrices. En fait, dans les deux cas, les cadets sont mobiles, bien que pour des raisons opposées. En revanche, ce n'est pas le cas, du moins jusqu'à une époque récente, chez les Peuls de Bamenda. La mobilité des cadets, et des catégories dans lesquelles se recrute la force de travail, semble bien être, en tout cas, un facteur propice à l'accumulation.

Autre remarque: les communications font état de la présence de nombreux effets pervers dans les processus d'accumulation. L'un des exemples les plus frappants est celui de la tenure foncière. La législation de 1974 avait pour but de protéger les petits et moyens exploitants agricoles. En fait, elle favorise l'accumulation foncière. Mais cela aboutit-il à l'émergence d'un capitalisme agricole? On a des raisons d'en douter.

Autre thème qui revient dans toutes les communications: la fréquence et l'intensité des conflits autour de l'accumulation, entre pasteurs et agriculteurs, entre le missionnaire, le gouverneur et le colon, entre catégories sociales (hommes/femmes, aînés/cadets), et à l'intérieur des groupes de filiation. Il est possible, à ce propos, que la communication de M. Rowlands sous-estime l'importance des ratés des mécanismes redistributifs et égalisateurs dans les groupes de parenté. La solidarité est souvent sélective. Les enjeux de ces conflits sont l'accès à la terre, à l'éducation, au pouvoir, aux symboles de la réussite, au contrôle de la force de travail, c'est-à-dire à l'accumulation sous les formes qui émergent de l'histoire des 150 dernières années comme les plus attirantes en milieu africain.

Il convient cependant de souligner que le résultat n'est jamais acquis (cf. la communication de Barbara Heintzen), et qu'il existe de vigoureux processus de désaccumulation qui restent mal élucidés. L'accumulation se fait dans un climat de risque économique et politique.

En conclusion, tout n'a pas été dit. Il resterait à prendre en compte l'émergence de classes sociales, surtout par le biais de l'éducation, le rôle de l'Etat, l'accumulation à l'étranger, le changement des normes sociales, les formes de travail sous-payé ou gratuit, en particulier dans le cadre de l'économie domestique, les résistances à l'accumulation et les mécanismes égalisateurs ou redistributifs, et surtout à avoir des chiffres au niveau micro-économique, et des descriptions fines qui permettraient de corriger ce qui échappe aux approches macro-économique et macro-sociale. Cela dit, une conclusion provisoire émerge, à savoir la nécessité de prendre au sérieux les mécanismes *sui generis* d'accumulation au Cameroun dans les 150 dernières années -- mécanismes qui tiennent aux structures de longue durée à l'oeuvre dans la société camerounaise -- et de comprendre leur fonction dans la genèse d'une forme peut-être inédite de capitalisme.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF CAMEROON: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES.

THE FULANI IN BAMENDA GRASSLANDS: OPPORTUNITY AND CONFLICT, 1940-1960.

By Martin Njeuma and Nicodemus Awasom
University of Yaounde, Cameroon.

Bamenda Grasslands cover the entire present day Northwest Province of the Republic of Cameroon with an area of over 7000 square miles. They are situated between latitude 5°40' and 7° north and longitude 9°45' and 11°10' east. Bamenda is highland region consisting of a plateau which stretches about one hundred miles and varies in breadth from 10 to 40 miles. The average plateau level is approximately 5000 feet and from it emerges mountain ranges reaching an altitude of more than 7000 feet. The climate is suitable for cattle rearing because it makes trypanosomiasis infection practically non-existent or easy to eliminate. Also, the climate sustains pasture on the highlands for eight months of the year.

The history of the cattle industry in the Bamenda Grasslands dates from 1919 when the Fulani started settling in the region principally from Nigeria and former German Adamawa in considerable numbers accompanied by herds of cattle.¹ These Fulani were distinctly pastoralists because cattle rearing was their principal economic occupation as well as a way of life. A statistical compilation from 1919 to 1960 shows that cattle population rose from 10,000 in 1922 to 91,782 in 1940 and to 258,796 in 1960 while the population of Fulani staggered from a few persons in 1919 to about 10,000 in 1953.² Both the increase in the population of Fulani and in cattle numbers naturally seriously affected on the political economy of the region, which, until then, had been agricultural. The novelty is reflected in the dominance of the question of farmer-grazier conflicts in the administration of the Bamenda Grasslands in the two decades preceding independence in 1961. The purpose of this paper is to examine perceptions of the problems and the attempted solutions in the 1940s and 1950s.

Less than twenty years after its introduction, pastoralism made significant inroads into the economic mainstay of the Bamenda Grasslands to the point where all concerned started viewing the economy of Bamenda Grasslands from a principally dualist (agricultural and pastoralist)

¹Nicodemus F. Awasom, "The Hausa and Fulani in the Bamenda Grasslands 1903-1960". (Doctorat de 3e Cycle thesis, University of Yaounde, 1984), pp. 65-85.

²See Annual Reports for Bamenda Division from 1946-52; also File B2838A Provincial Archives Bamenda (hcnccforth P.A.B.), Table of Census Figures Bamenda Province 1953.

stance. Thus, for example, in 1939, the Senior Agricultural Officer, who perceived the changes and widespread remarked that "the future of the Bamenda region depended on mixed farming involving farmers and graziers".³ The situation called for reorganization of economic structures, especially those involving land use, to take into account the widespread complaints by the indigenous peoples against crop destruction by cattle and the fact that contributions from **Jangali** (cattle tax) had in fact superseded all forms of taxation in the region.⁴

II.

Accordingly, in the early 1940's M.D.W. Jeffreys (S.D.O.) employing a rather simplistic solution, but acting under the Inter-tribal Boundary Settlement Ordinance, set about demarcating the highlands into grazing and farming lands. The sense behind this was that if farmers and graziers carried out their economic activities in separate and specified areas, the possibility of a clash between the two groups would be low, if not, completely eliminated. The areas with the highest incidence of serious clashes were the Wiya N.A. areas and Sinna, Nsob and Ngulu areas as well as half of Nsaw.⁵ Under his personal supervision Jeffreys completed demarcation of these areas by 1943.

The demarcation exercise greatly reduced farmer- grazer conflicts as evidence by a drastic reduction in the number of complaints brought to administrative officers. But the success was very temporary because the cattle population continued to increase and to force the Fulani to overstep the grazing limits imposed on them by Jeffreys. The native farmers were not prepared to cooperate with the scheme for long, for fear that their rights over certain portions of Fulani grazing land might be lost in the long run. So they took the risk to cultivate on land reserved for grazing to remind the Fulani that they had no title over the land.

A conspicuous weakness in Jeffreys' demarcation exercise was that it perceived the problems created by Fulani cattle exclusively from the angle of crop destruction.⁶ Fulani cattle not only destroyed farmers' crops but provoked soil erosion and exhaustion. Soil erosion and exhaustion were caused when too many cows overgrazed in a single area for a long period

³File B2316, vol. 2 Cameroons Provincial Economic Committee, n.d. (P.A.B.)

⁴See File 676 Bansa native Authority, Current Affairs (n.d.) National Archives Buea (henceforth N.A.B.) for comparative Statistics covering the period 1932-38. Jangali was a major source of revenue in the late 1930s and 1940s. In 1946-47 fiscal year for instance £ 1,900 was derived from poll tax paid by the Nsaw against £ 4,400 which accrued exclusively from jangali.

⁵Ab 17(4), File 10068, vol. 3 1949, (N.A.B.)

⁶This is no fault of Jeffreys. This is how both Fulani and natives presented the problem. See Ab 17/10 (N.A.B.) P.M. Kaberry, Report on Farmer-Grazier Relations and Changing Pattern of Agriculture in Nsaw. Her report written in 1958 and based on minutes of Native Authority meetings, Native court records and her own fields work covers the period from the late 1930s to the 1950s.

without allowing the topsoil to rest and the vegetation to fully recover. The consequence was that wind easily blew the top layer which was reduced to dust by cattle hoofs, and this rendered the area bare and exposed. The success of the demarcation exercise assumed that many more administrative officers would be employed not only to demarcate grazing and farming lands, but to ensure that the graziers and farmers respected their respective zones. Also, the administrative officers were to watch on changes in the cattle population in order to allocate more grazing land. Failure to substantially increase supervisory personnel reduced the effectiveness of the scheme, and, certainly, changes in land use alone were not enough to effect the desired economic structural changes. Thus the Jeffreys scheme proved out-dated only a few years after its was launched and the makers of policy looked for alternatives.

In 1943 N. Clarke, a Senior Veterinary Officer, was called upon to review the situation in the light of his many years of experience in Northern Nigeria. He formulated a comprehensive, multipurpose scheme which became the principal lines of actions of administrative officers for over a decade. The Scheme took into account ecological, veterinary and cultural considerations.⁷ It aimed at (i) preserving and protecting pasture land and the cattle industry, in other words, at fully entrenching the Fulani economy in the region; (ii) improving Fulani - Native or indigenous peoples relations. Clarke suggested that grazing areas in the Bamenda Grasslands should be leased to the Fulani Ardo of a given area who would be responsible for the proper use of the grazing land. A certificate of occupancy would then be issued to the Fulani. The lease method would be useful in controlling cattle and ensuring that they were not overstocked. He suggested the improvement of Fulani-Native relations through drawing up Cattle Control Rules which would check the movement of cattle.

Essential support structures and services were to be created or improved upon. For example, a veterinary center was to be created to handle cattle diseases and a model livestock farm to be set up in the vicinity to demonstrate the technique of animal husbandry involving the preservation of pasture, the provision of supplementary feeding in the dry season, the use of selected bulls, the castration of all males not required for breeding, the prevention of disease, and the care and proper feeding of young stock. A livestock industrial section was envisaged and was to consist of a dairy for the manufacture of milk products, a buying center for cattle, and a hide and skin section. Attached to the livestock industries was to be a cooperative society. Membership was to be open to the Fulani for the sale of cattle or milk products. A committee to manage the affairs

⁷Ab 17(4) File 10068 vol. 3 1949. See also J.M. McCulloch, "Grazing Improvement in Bamenda Division of the Cameroons Province Under United Nations Trusteeship for the year 1948", H.M.S.O. London 1949 pp. 280-84.

of the cooperative was to include the administrative officer of the division and the veterinary and agriculture officers.

A medical section was to include a section for animal diseases and a dispensary. The animal disease section was to include an office, a small laboratory, a dipping tank and houses for Europeans and Africans. A Fulani veterinary assistant had to be trained so that the Fulani could have faith in the center. The medical dispensary was intended primarily for the Fulani, and the workers were to be fluent in fulfulde. A school for only Fulani children was to be built at the Jakiri center. The Fulani were to be granted a muslim court and a separate Native Authority.⁸

The relevance, especially the historical foundation, of the Clarke's scheme was based on the political and economic progress of the Fulani communities as a whole over two decades and on the sympathy which the Fulani won in high political circles. Thus the scheme took off with the assumption that Fulani were putting in more into the state coffers than they got out of them in services and benefits.⁹ Also that the onus of reconciling the farmer-grazier conflict was on the farming populations. There was hardly any inducement to the farming communities for supporting any land lease scheme for the Fulani. A veterinary center was created in 1945 as proposed by Clarke but without a medical dispensary. The center was regularly visited by the Fulani to see how cattle and pasture management was being done and to seek advise on the health of their cattle. The livestock center was, however, faced with an uphill task in its efforts to demonstrate to the Fulani new and better methods of pasture management, and to persuade them of the advantages of quality breeding. At the livestock center, rotational grazing was practised and the Fulani were instructed to maintain herds of about 75 cattle. They quickly accepted everything said by the veterinary officers but scarcely implemented any.

In 1946 C.J. Mayne replaced M.D. Jeffreys as S.D.O. in Bamenda. He saw the issues at stake from a broader perspective of the welfare of the region as a whole, and one in which priority must be given to matters of maintenance of Law and Order. While not rejecting the dualist concept of the economy, he insisted on using existing administrative structures especially the Native Authorities, to effect economic changes and prevent the peoples from taking the law into their hands. Indeed, for him, there was no question of pursuing economic aims independently of the overall political goals. By the way things were going, "the pendulum had swung too far to the side of the Fulani and if there were no changes in policy, the rights of the Natives will be

⁸These themes fall outside the focus of this paper. For full treatment see Awasom "The Hausa and Fulani", chapters 4&5. They got a *de facto* Native Authority in 1942 and an Alkali court in 1945.

⁹Ab 17(4) File no. 10068 vol. 3 1949, (N.A.B.). Clarke's observation that the Fulani were a neglected and exploited minority was not entirely true since the Fulani kept away from the European social services like hospitals and schools on their own accord and not because they were refused.

overridden."¹⁰ The most important task remained the implementation of the Cattle Control Rules whose primary aim was to improve farmer-grazier relations. Mayne therefore undertook extensive consultations through the Bamenda Divisional Committee. The outcome of the Committee's meetings was a foregone conclusion given that the farming interests had greater representation. In submitting the Cattle Control Rules to Government, Mayne underlined the new orientation of policy. Emphasis shifted from demarcation to cattle control, without which, it was argued, both the pastures and the agricultural lands of Bamenda would be destroyed. The Government ordered the cessation of all demarcation exercises and invited the Native Authorities to assume full responsibilities and apply Grazing Control Orders under the Native Authority Ordinance of 1943.¹¹ According to these Grazing Control Orders, cattle were to be limited by the N.A.'s under Grazing Regulations. Cattle in over-grazed areas were to be removed and the remaining herds disappeared to other parts of the division. Large herds were to be reduced to 120 herds of cattle and subsequently to fifty. Two herd boys were to be in charge of the first 50 herd of cattle and an extra herd boy for any additional fifty. Even Mayne's globalist approach to the problem was not without bias. His intervention succeeded in taking off much political pressure from the backs of the British administrative core, but put the grazing community at the mercy of the Native Authorities.

Although the administration was applying the Grazing Rules half-heartedly in 1947, it decided to enforce them fully in the early months of 1948 by allowing the various N.As in Bamenda to apply them. Under the rules the entry and stay of cattle in an area required the authority of the D.O. and N.A. There was no restriction on the length of time for which a permit was valid and none on the conditions under which a permit once issued could be cancelled. The Ardo was charged with informing the administration about the movement of cattle in and out of the division.¹² Cattle Control Officers were provided by the veterinary department and were charged with the role of collaborating with the Ardo in ensuring that the Fulani were allocated to specific grazing areas and that they managed these areas well. Major Walters arrived in Bamenda in 1947 to ensure this role. In the case where overgrazing was noticed, the Fulani had to be removed to another area through persuasion. The Grazing Rules encouraged on-the-spot farmer-grazier arbitration in the event of a conflict. For this purpose Cattle Control Committees were formed. These committees represented the most advanced structural innovation and became central in overseeing and managing problems arising from the farmer-grazier conflicts.

¹⁰Ab 17(4) File no. 10068 vol. 3 1949 (N.A.B.)

¹¹Ab 49 M.D.C. 70/S.1/vol. 1, (N.A.B.). The Administration used the Ardo'en in checking the movements of the Cattle Fulani and in allocating grazing land. See also McCulloch 1949.

¹²Ab 49 M.D.C. 70/S.1/vol. 1, (N.A.B.).

They included an Ardo, a Village Head, a Native Authority member, and a Cattle Control Officer.

However a major defect of the Cattle Control Rules of 1947 was that they were aimed at controlling the activities of graziers exclusively. Given that the natives were often compensated in the Native Courts when Fulani cattle destroyed their crops, the indigenous peoples tended to open farm plots in the middle of grazing land as a trap to cattle. The Cattle Control Rules were therefore revised in 1949 with the aim of checking the activities of both graziers and farmers.¹³ Farmers, for instance, were prohibited from opening farms in areas allocated for grazing and were to receive no compensation in the event of crop destruction by cattle in such areas.

The steady increase in the cattle population required corresponding increase in labour supply at all levels. The shortage of cowboys, under the employment of the Fulani made it difficult for the cattle Control Rules to be effectively implemented. According to the Fulani, the local inhabitants were not keen to be recruited as cowboys and this made it impossible for them to reduce the size of their herds to a minimum of seventy five cows as was required of them by the administration in 1950. While this was true the problem was aggravated by irresponsibility and a general disinterestedness on the part of the Fulani to invest in measures which offered better hopes for controlling the movements of cattle. For example, the few cattle herders of *gainako* were often very careless. During the day they sometimes spent their time inside their rugs gossiping, or travelled to the nearby market leaving their cattle to stray at will. At night cattle tending was still a problem as the *gainakos* slept while cattle strayed into women's farms. Cattle Control Officers suggested hobbling and kraaling to the Fulani as a possible solution to this problem, but this involved more investments which the Fulani were unwilling to make. In reply to a welcome address from the Fulani Council on 26 December 1950, the Chief Commissioner of the Eastern Province was highly critical of the Fulani and put the onus for the success of the Cattle Control Rules squarely on the shoulders of the Fulani.

The law in every country is that a man must build fences against his own stock or control his own stock. Here in Bamenda Province there is little fencing possible, so owners must control stock so that they do not do harm. *Peace and good relations with other people depend on you Fulani controlling stock.* Hobbling and kraaling are two effective means of controlling stock and hobbling is easy work to do as soon as animals are trained for it.¹⁴

¹³Ab 17(4) File no. 10068 vol. 3 1949, (N.A.B.), N.A. Ordinance 1943, no. 17 of 1943, Revised 1949.

¹⁴File 718 (N.A.B.) reply by His Honour the Chief Commissioner to the Address of Welcome from the Fulani Council, Bamenda, December 26th, 1950.

The Cattle Control Staff which was responsible for implementing the scheme was also grossly inadequate. In 1952, the staff for the entire Bamenda Province was made up of one clerk, one office messenger, and five cattle control assistants.

The Veterinary Department attempted to increase the number by recruiting more candidates for training but not a single Middle IV school leaver could be got. The scanty Cattle Control Staff made no attempt to enforce hobbling which was considered an extreme method of treating cattle which the Fulani would not easily comply to.¹⁵ An alternative method was to corral cattle at night, but it was equally difficult to implement in the Bamenda region where timber was scarce, and the local inhabitants could not permit it because they also needed wood for building and as firewood.

III

In the 1950's attention was turned to seeking permanent solutions which involved not only structural changes to accommodate the pastoral industry but a definite orientation of Fulani traditional way of life from nomadism to settlement. Indeed this had been implicit in Clarke's package for his welfare and modernization scheme for the Fulani. In 1952, a British Livestock Mission came back to this idea when it suggested that the settlement of the Fulani was a precondition for the development of a large-scale livestock industry, and the amelioration of farmer-grazier relations.¹⁶ It stated that wandering was not entirely congenial but conditioned by the need for water and grazing. It advocated the permanent settlement of the Fulani by building enclosures within which would be practised rotational grazing methods. The administration supported the Fulani Settlement Scheme but the problems involved with implementing it were (i) how to induce the nomadic Fulani to settle, (ii) how to alter the land tenure system of the Bamenda people without provoking serious disturbances in the indigenous society and (iii) whether Fulani settlement was to be achieved by large-scale measures or by formulation and observation of pilot schemes?

Irrespective of how settlement was to be achieved, when the natives learnt of the Fulani Settlement Schemes under study, suspicion built up. To the natives, settling the Fulani meant granting them rights over large tracts of land thereby making them the biggest land owners in

¹⁵File no. B. 2879(1) (N.A.B.), Handing Over Notes (II) Cattle Control Officers, Bamenda 1952.

¹⁶Ab 17(4) File no. 10068 vol. 3 1949. (N.A.B.). Twentieth Century governments have settled nomads as a precondition for implementing political and economic policies in their favour (see Z.A. Kouczacki (ed.), *The Economics of Pastoralism: The case study of Sub-Saharan Africa*. (Frank Cass and Co. Ltd. London) 1978, pp. 23ff, 58-60 for detailed analyses of the general principles. Given the financial limitations and the chronic shortage of staff, it is doubtful that the British could have settled the Fulani pastoralists immediately in the way the scheme was conceived.

Bamenda.¹⁷ They imagined that the native children would have no farm land in the future, and they would have to buy land from the Fulani who would also need it for grazing. This feeling renewed widespread Fulaniphobia in the Bamenda Grasslands.¹⁸ Fulani rugas found within grazing zones on the lowlands were set on fire while the foodcrops planted by the Fulani in their neighbourhood were destroyed. In the Nsaw and Nkambe areas, the clandestine maiming of cattle was common place. This situation hurt the Fulani, most of whom were born in the Bamenda Grasslands and knew no other homeland.

Occassions involving visits of foreign dignitaries were often used to articulate the plight and demands of the Fulani for full citizenship of the Bamenda Grasslands. In 1955, for example, the Fulani communities made one of their greatest show of strength before a U.N. Mission visiting the Southern Cameroons. The Fulani in the Bamenda Grasslands met in council under their president, Ardo Sabga. Their petition to the chairman of the Misison was a significant indication of not only how the Fulani perceived themselves but also what they saw as constituting solutions to their problems. Among other declarations they reiterated that they fulfilled all conditions for being considered citizens of Bamenda Grasslands.

We the 10,000 Fulani of Bamenda, have been residing in Bamenda for nearly forty years and most of the present Fulani population have been born in Bamenda.

2. We are a simple, law-abiding people, whose interest is entirely confined to the welfare of our cattle. The cattle tax we pay represents one half of the total revenue of Bamenda.

3. In spite of this we are considered to be strangers, permitted to remain in Bamenda on sufferance. We have no security of tenure, not even in the compounds we have lived in and the grasslands we have grazed on for nearly forty years. In parts of Bamenda the native people are against even our building houses and planting crops.

4. We ask that we may be treated as part of the community, as inhabitants of Bamenda who make a considerable contribution to the economy of Bamenda; and that we may be made to feel secured in the occupation of our grazing lands and dwelling places.¹⁹

¹⁷Native fears were not completely unfounded. Some examples are Ardo Buba of Sabga and Ardo Umaru of Wum who through grants of grazing rights came to own large tracts of grazing land. They feature among the biggest land owners in the Northwest Province today.

¹⁸Ab 17/10, 1958 P.M. Kaberry, (N.A.B.). See also her published work, *Women of the Grassfields*, H.M.S.O., London 1952.

¹⁹File no. B. 2807/5, Petition to the U.N. (P.A.B.). Petition from the Fulani of Bamenda to the Chairman, U.N. Visiting Mission at Bamenda 10th November 1955. As a Trust Territory of the U.N., visiting missions toured the territory after every three years starting 1949. During such visits the U.N. missions collected petitions from peoples on various issues.

Thus, for the Fulani, a permanent solution boiled down to two issues. Firstly, solving the question of right to full ownership of land and ensuring security of tenure over the land under their control, and secondly, considering the Fulani people as part and parcel of the indigenous population of the region.

On the question of landownership, the U.N. expert on land use was categorically favourable to the Fulani view point. He recommended the lease of land to the grazier for it was only when the Fulani holds his land, backed by a certificate of occupancy, that there would be some incentive for him to improve his grazing. The grazier holding such leased land would be considered as a settled Fulani and would not be subject to Cattle Control Rules. The grazier would have complete control over the land leased to him and would be subject to interference by other graziers, or the farmers. An important condition in the certificate of occupancy would be that the grazier must not allow his grazing area to deteriorate and must spend about fifty pounds yearly for the improvement of his grazing.

When faced with this sort of reasoning the view of the British administrators had always been ambivalent. On the one hand, it was held that the Fulani would always be looked upon as strangers so long as they did not have land which they could call their own. On the other hand they knew the natives would not allow the Fulani to pose as land owners in their villages. The Fulani however expected the government to intervene on their behalf and prevent the natives from interfering with their grazing lands under any pretext whatsoever. As one D.O. put it:

It cannot be expected of the present occupiers (i.e. the natives) that they would renounce more than users rights in favour of the Fulani. I think the Fulani themselves appreciate this. But they do think that Government should intervene and by so doing acknowledge the importance which is due of the cattle industry.²⁰

Clearly a situation of stalemate developed in as far as a search for permanent solutions was concerned because the administration made no attempts to formally grant land to the Fulani. It was evident that the reaction of the natives to such a move would lead to a break down of law and order. Political realities pointed to the fact that much time and further studies were required to realise permanent solutions and that for a considerable time emphasis would be put on improving Fulani and native relations as prelude to settle Fulani. The popular way out was implementing mixed farming schemes in several parts of the territory.

²⁰File no. B. 280/5, Petition to the U.N. (P.A.B.).

The concept of mixed farming was not new in the administrative reports, but in the 1950's its widespread implementation was seriously considered. Mixed farming involved the alternate use of land by farmers and graziers for their mutual benefit. A section of a plot of land is reserved for farming while grazing takes place on another section. After several years of farming and grazing farmland would be transformed into grazing land and vice-versa. This would permit crops to grow on former pasture-land that had been fertilized by cow dung, while cattle would thrive on a new type of vegetation on the former farmland. The idea behind promoting mixed farming was that the native people would realise the advantages of farmer-grazier land interchange. In order to bring the native people to appreciate the advantages of co-existing with the Cattle Fulani, the government proceeded to open mixed farms at Bamungo, Oku, Nsaw, Wum and elsewhere in the 1950s.²¹ These mixed farms were to serve as experimental and demonstration farms to the local people.

The first mixed farm was the Bambui experimental and demonstration farm which was started in 1944 with a 100 per cent Fulani staff. In 1951 only one Fulani herdsman was still in the farm, the rest having deserted.²² No explanation is given for this desertion in the sources, but it is probably linked to the dislike the Fulani had for permanently staying in one area. Local people were however, recruited to fill the vacuum left by the Fulani. The Nsaw demonstration farm was started in 1952 and the main activities involved were planting of kikuyu grass on two acres and the opening of one acre of eucalyptus trees. Cattle in the farms which consisted of four bullocks and six young bulls was able to produce fifty-six tons of manure for the farm prior to February 1954. The agricultural department realised that it was a failure because the young men, with the exception of one, showed little inclination to work on their own. They were not interested in making farming a career and instead looked forward to become clerks, store keepers or teachers, jobs which commanded more prestige in the colonial society.

The group farms at Babungu, Ndu and elsewhere were also a failure. At Babungu ten houses and ten cattle kraals were completed in May 1953 and all occupied at once. The settlers were supplied with cattle and a herdsman was engaged and paid for by the government to tend the twenty cattle by day in order to enable the settlers to be free for farm work. The object of the cattle was to provide manure but settlers failed to provide bedding grass in spite of the fact that unlimited quantities grew within a short distance of their kraals. The settlers had at their

²¹Ab 17(4) File 10068 vol. 3 1949 (N.A.B.). The ultimate aim of mixed farming was to introduce block farming which is a type of mixed farming at grand scale. The theory of block farming involves whole or large groups of people farming together for a certain number of years. When the time came to shift cultivation in the traditional way, a further similar parcel of land would be taken, probably from the Fulani graziers and given to farming while old farms would then be opened to grazing.

²²Ab 17(4) File 10068 vol. 3 1949 (N.A.B.)

disposal a bullock plough and a Ferguson tractor. Water supply was brought to their farmlands by means of an open channel. Of the ten settlers who started in January 1953, only three remained at the end of the year. The agricultural department realised that the settlers had no interest in farming together.²³ The Cattle Control Officer, Mr. Griffith, also noted resistance among native population to allow the Fulani into the sections of their ancestral lands which had not been under use for decades for fear that the Fulani would end up usurping them with the assistance of the British Officers.²⁴ The mixed farming scheme therefore failed to have the fullest impact because of lack of support from both the Fulani and native populations.

Moreover, complicated technical knowledge was a prerequisite for the correct realization of such a land use scheme in the Bamenda region. It required a survey of the land in order to assess the relative merits of the different area for different purposes. The agricultural and veterinary departments needed to know the form of land utilisation best suited to each particular area with reference to the competing demands for farming and grazing since there was a considerable variation in the soil and vegetation from one area to another. The administration lacked the personnel and means to carry out such a study. The project had been discussed during a meeting of the Cameroons Provincial Economic Committee and the result of the deliberation was that an aerial survey of the Cameroons Province was put second on the priority lists of aerial surveys in the Eastern Provinces.²⁵ The survey of the land utilisation of the Cameroons was only carried out after 1961 under the aegis of the United Nations Technical Assistance Board.²⁶

The fact that the mixed farming scheme failed meant that the block farming theory could no longer be introduced in the Bamenda Grasslands. Commenting on the demonstration centers which were government run like the one at Jakiri and Bambui to a U.N. team in West Cameroon (1962), George C. Kisob, first Cameroonian S.D.O. of Bamenda stated that such schemes were "well intentioned but misguided".²⁷ The buildings, machinery, and other facilities at Bambui and Jakiri were far beyond the experience of the ordinary farmer or grazier that they could not see the relevance of the work done at these institutions to the difficulties and problems of their own laborious and relatively primitive farming and grazing methods. The

²³File no. 1621 Annual and Quarterly reports, Agriculture Department, 1954 (N.A.B.)

²⁴CC 64/11 Cattle Control Office, Bamenda, 6th May 1964 in File no. B2878 (P.A.B.).

²⁵B.2316/vol. 2 (N.A.B.). Cameroon Economic Committee (n.d) The colonial administration gave first priority to the aerial survey of existing and prospective coalfields east of the River Niger. See also B.2509, Survey of Land Utilisation. (N.A.B.)

²⁶P. Hawkins and M. Brunt, *Report to the Government of Cameroon on the Soils and Ecology of West Cameroon: A broad reconnaissance survey with reference to the Bamenda area*. Vol. 1, F.A.O. Rome 1965.

²⁷No.L.G. 957/25, Buca, 13th April 1962, in File B. 2509, Survey of Land Utilisation, Bamenda Division, 1946 (N.A.B.).

Jakiri Veterinary Center thus never persuaded a single Fulani to build a wall, or try rotational grazing. Like many experts before him George Kisob was for that the administration take the bull by the horns and simply issue the Fulani with certificates of occupancy over their existing grazing area and encourage them to bring their holdings up to the standard of the Jakiri farm. If not, he argued, the grazier would always have the impression that it was impossible for him to develop his own farm up to the standard of the Jakiri demonstration center which was a government sponsored project.

A final attempt which also put emphasis on improving relation was that of Miss. E. O'Keilly's Barb Wire Scheme. During a District Officers' Conference held in 1956 Miss E. O'Keilly, and Adult Education Officer, suggested another scheme for ameliorating farmer-grazier relations, which was similar to the demarcation exercises of the early 1940s.²⁸ The scheme which was known as the barb wire scheme was aimed at providing women with barb wire which would be used to protect their farms from Fulani cows. The barb wire was to be fixed on creosated wooden stakes and trees planted to replace the stakes when they rotted. The barb wire was to be supplied by the hire purchase system. The scheme was supported by the British but its implementation was complicated by the fact that it struck at the roots of the land tenure system of the Bamenda people. To the native, the implementation of the scheme meant sharing their land with the Fulani. The scheme was however accepted by the natives after the organisation of sensitization campaigns during which the advantages of the scheme were explained to them. Its implementation was however restricted to just a few areas in the Nkambe Division because of the insufficiency of barb wire.²⁹

IV

To conclude, we have attempted to contextualize the measures which were taken to promote the interest of both farmers and graziers of rapid increases in both human and cattle population which made clashes between farmers and graziers inevitable. The interest of the administration was to reconcile the two sectors of the economy and give each one of them adequate attention and protection. The 1950's were particularly critical years. Central to the problem was the question of the status of the Fulani and right to own land. The demands for land for subsistence farming as well as for growing cash crops like coffee and tea increased just as that of Fulani for more grazing land. Concerning the status of the Fulani, there was controversy as to whether they should be considered natives of Bamenda or not. According to the Land and Native Rights

²⁸File no. 1400 District Officers' Conference 1956 (N.A.B.)

²⁹*Ibid.* The barb wire scheme was later introduced in other parts of Bamenda Grasslands. Sabga was particularly noted for its barb wire enclosures. other graziers like George Kisob and George Tuma in Mankon used stones to erect enclosures.

Ordinance, Chapter 105 of 1927, a native was defined as a person born of apparent who originated from the area in which he was living.³⁰ All Lands in Bamenda Division and the entire British Cameroons, whether occupied or unoccupied, belonged to the natives with the exception of some Government owned lands and any lands granted to a non-native prior to 4th February 1927, and proved to the Government before 1st December 1930. Only the Governor Genral of Nigeria and the Cameroons had the right to transfer native lands to a non-native and such a transfer had to conform with the native laws and customs.³¹ The British officers in Bamenda feared that the Grazing Rules were tantamount to recognizing and granting land rights to the Fulani, and that was beyond their competence. The grazing land so acquired by the Fulani would be extremely difficult in the long run to challenge in any law court. The authors of the Land and Native Rights Ordinance, did not have in mind nomadic peoples of the Fulani type when the Laws were made. Therefore the indigenization of the Fulani politically and culturally constituted inevitable first steps towards a permanent settlement of the farmer-grazier impasse. The time factor was important and the British administrators played for time especially as the country was moving fast towards ending colonial rule. The Fulani started entering the Bamenda Grasslands which was a traditionally agricultural region only in 1919. More time was required for the pastoral economy to smoothly fit into the region's land use patterns.

In 1960 the farmer-grazier relations took a different turn. Just before the plebiscites it was rumoured that the British Cameroons would opt to join the Cameroon Republic where terrorists were very active. After reunification, the terrorists would prey on Fulani cattle. This rumour, coupled with the unresolved state of farmer-grazier relations, provoked an abrupt emigration of some of the fulani with thousands of cattle. In a telegram to the Chief Commissioner in Buea, the D.O. of Bamenda stated that about 2,000 cattle left Nkambe and 8,000 left Wum. He attributed the massive exodus to the fact that the Fulani felt "they were being humbugged". Thus, all the steps taken to improve and encourage farmer-grazier relations were not completely successful.

³⁰C.K. Meek, *Land Tenure and Administration in Nigeria and the Cameroons*, (H.M.S.O. 1957) pp. 371 ff. Jeffreys held the view that the Fulanis were aliens. They were legally natives of Nigeria since they or their parents had been born within the borders of Nigeria. But J.H.D. Stapleton in an article, "In Their End is Their Beginning a Fulani Crisis", *The Nigeria Field*, vol. 13, no. 2, October 1948 argued that "the Fulani were not alien intruders but genuine, though late coming members of the indigenous population.

³¹C.K. Meek, p. 371. See also File no. 2350, 1943 (N.A.B.) containing correspondence alluding to land tenure.

ÉLÉMENTS DE RÉFLEXION SUR LE RÔLE HISTORIQUE DU CHRISTIANISME DANS LE DÉVELOPPEMENT ÉCONOMIQUE DU CAMEROUN (1845-1915)

Philippe Laburthe-Tolra

Les lignes qui suivent ne veulent que rappeler quelques éléments connus, qui pourraient servir de points de départ à des réflexions ultérieures. Leur optique est délibérément factuelle et donc, d'un certain point de vue, superficielle. A d'autres de céder au besoin de systématiser, - lourde tentation parfois, lorsque l'ivresse du système saccage la complexité du réel, sans laisser aux questions pertinentes le temps de naître et de mûrir...

Si l'on étudie l'histoire du Cameroun, on ne peut qu'être frappé du poids exceptionnel qu'y représente l'action des diverses églises chrétiennes, tant sur le plan social que politique, et ceci depuis la moitié du XIX^e siècle, moment où la signature du pasteur Saker apparaît sur les divers traités anglo-douala, jusqu'à l'indépendance et à l'époque contemporaine, à travers les soubresauts de la période coloniale, dont témoigne *l'Histoire des forces religieuses au Cameroun* de L. NGONGO.

Il me semble que l'on comprenne mieux ces "forces religieuses", et le prestige dont elles jouissent encore, lorsqu'on s'aperçoit à quel point elles ont su faire corps, en quelques points cruciaux ou lieux nodaux, avec les désirs profonds, et en particulier avec les vœux de développement économique, de bon nombre de Camerounais.

J'évoquerai en quelques mots l'œuvre des protestants, surtout dans la région de Douala, et celle des catholiques, surtout autour de Yaoundé, durant les années fondamentales qui vont de 1845 à 1915.

I. LES MISSIONS PROTESTANTES

On sait que tout au long du XIX^e siècle, les côtières du Cameroun réclament à la reine d'Angleterre son protectorat, c'est-à-dire sans aucun doute, dans leur esprit, une assistance technique pour leur permettre l'établissement d'une administration moderne.

Or, ce qui intéresse alors les Anglais, ce ne sont pas de nouvelles annexions territoriales. C'est seulement l'abolition de la traite, et à cette occasion l'établissement de comptoirs, sous la forme de pontons, à l'embouchure des fleuves: à partir de 1830, ces comptoirs feront l'objet de traités

commerciaux entre les autorités locales et le consul britannique résidant à Fernando Poo, qui permet ainsi à ses compatriotes de s'installer tout le long de la côte, à Rio del Rey, Bimbia, Cameroun (c'est-à-dire Douala), Malimba à l'embouchure de la Sanaga, Batanga à l'embouchure du Nyong, Campo à l'embouchure du Ntem.

Des traités sont donc signés régulièrement entre le consul et les rois Akwa et Bell de Cameroun (en 1840, 1841, 1850, 1852, 1856, etc.) pour favoriser le commerce de l'ivoire et de l'huile de palme, en échange de l'abolition des sacrifices humains et de la traite des esclaves. (cf. Brutsch 1955)

En juin 1845, le pasteur baptiste Alfred Saker s'établit à Cameroun-ville, où il restera trente ans. Très mal accueilli au début, il confère un premier baptême en 1849 et donne à mon sens une impulsion décisive à l'église évangélique douala en 1851, lorsqu'il baptise en même temps, parmi 5 néophytes, un prince douala, sous le nom de Thomas Horton, et un esclave nommé George Nkwe, lequel deviendra le premier pasteur camerounais en 1866, succédant ainsi au premier pasteur local africain, Johnson, originaire de Fernando Poo, consacré par Saker en 1855.

A cette date de 1855, les chrétiens se comptent par plusieurs dizaines, mais ils sont ostracisés, mis à l'écart par leurs compatriotes. Saker, aidé par un autre missionnaire, le Jamaïcain Alexander Fuller, qui avait appris le métier de maçon, a l'idée d'enseigner à ses fidèles à fabriquer des briques, à construire les premières maisons 'en dur', et à pratiquer des cultures nouvelles, sans doute la papaye, l'avocat, l'ananas, et le macabo ou chou caraïbe, sur lequel je vais revenir. Les baptistes fondent aussi une école industrielle. Grâce à eux, la ville se distingue vite sur la côte africaine par le grand nombre de ses artisans qualifiés, par ses ressources alimentaires, et donc déjà par sa modernité.

" Dans ce cas précis, écrit Van Slageren (p. 27), la conversion entraîna des conséquences qui allèrent jusqu'à bouleverser tout l'édifice social de Douala et à créer un monde nouveau ".

L'une des critiques majeures faite par certains à Saker fut précisément "de ne promouvoir que l'évolution civilisatrice du peuple, tout en négligeant le côté spirituel de l'œuvre" (Van Slageren 1972 p. 29).

Nous voyons apparaître ici ce trait qui semble si caractéristique de l'histoire du Cameroun: la liaison entre religion d'une part, et d'autre part "développement" ou mise en accord avec le monde moderne.

En 1858, le fils d'Alexander Fuller, Joseph Jackson Fuller, va être consacré pasteur à Douala par Saker; il repère dans la baie d'Ambas, et fait acheter par la mission au roi de Bimbia, sur la côte, au pied du mont Cameroun, un terrain de 16 kms de long sur 8 de large. Là, les pasteurs

édifient une station nommée Victoria en l'honneur de la reine, station qui deviendra la ville actuelle de Limbé, et où ils pourront en particulier établir des plantations: essais de café et de cacao, semble-t-il, et en tout cas extension du macabo, qui deviendra l'une des productions privilégiées ainsi que l'un des aliments de base du Cameroun méridional. Cette plante (*Xanthosoma mafaffa*, Aracées) avait été apportée de la Jamaïque à Fernando Poo en 1841 par le pasteur Clarke et le docteur Prince, puis importée à "Cameroun" par les missionnaires noirs Alexander Fuller et Joseph Merrick. A Victoria et chez les Kpe, elle fut appelée du nom local de l'île de Fernando Poo: *Likao*. Au fur et à mesure de sa diffusion sur la côte et vers l'intérieur (Brutsch 1954, Ardener 1956), elle fut appelée par les Douala *dikao*, par les Bulu-Beti *akaba*, par les Européens *macabo*, pluriel du singulier désignant ce tubercule en mbènè, langue des Bassa.

Actuellement, ce légume (atteint de maladie) devient cher et risque d'être supplanté par des aliments moins nutritifs. Mais ceux qui ont connu le Cameroun des années soixante savent quel rôle il jouait alors dans la diète quotidienne. Les baptistes pouvaient à bon droit être considérés comme les pères nourriciers du sud.

Avec l'annexion allemande, la Mission de Bâle va prendre la relève de la Mission Baptist Society. Elle fonde en 1898 une Société Commerciale propre visant à démontrer qu'il est possible de fournir des marchandises utiles et de promouvoir un commerce sain sans recourir aux boissons alcooliques qui ruinent les valeurs morales. Cette société connaît un énorme succès, puisque les fidèles sont tenus de s'adresser à elle; mais elle entrera en conflit avec les autres sociétés purement commerciales.

On ne pourra guère éviter désormais que le missionnaire n'apparaisse dans le sillage du colonisateur, du marchand et du soldat. Cependant, bien que tous les chrétiens allemands admettent alors la maxime que seul le travail est éducatif et civilisateur, la mission de Bâle s'oppose ouvertement à l'exploitation des ouvriers agricoles camerounais par la West Afrikanische Pflanzungsgesellschaft, dès sa fondation à Victoria en 1898.

Le surintendant de la mission, Bitzer, s'écrit alors:

" Nous contestons le droit du gouvernement de vendre toute une population aux capitalistes et aux spéculateurs. Que l'Eternel tout puissant détruise les dessins préparés par les ennemis de son Royaume ! " (Hallden, *in* van Slageren p.69)

La campagne de la Mission de Bâle durera jusqu'en 1907, date où la complicité du gouvernement avec les abus des exploitants fut mise en évidence, et aboutit au renvoi et au remplacement du gouverneur von Puttkamer.

Cette hostilité de la Mission de Bâle aux Plantations de Victoria allait bénéficier à la mission catholique, que nous voyons alors entrer en force dans la vie économique du Cameroun.

II. LA MISSION CATHOLIQUE.

En 1899, Charles Atangana, jusque là infirmier à Victoria, et zélé catholique, devient interprète des Boulou réquisitionnés comme ouvriers, et déportés provisoirement sur les plantations pour punition de leur mise à sac de Kribi.

Les conditions de travail ne devaient pas être si dures, puisque par la suite, à l'instigation d'Atangana, beaucoup d'Ewondo, en passe de devenir catholiques s'ils ne le sont déjà, viendront de la région de Yaoundé comme travailleurs volontaires à Victoria.

Les catholiques réussissent à faire nommer par la direction des plantations des contremaîtres catholiques, qui ont la charge, outre leur surveillance, d'enseigner le catéchisme aux heures de temps libre. Le directeur Esser fait construire une église catholique en dur à Victoria et donne aux missionnaires le terrain d'Engelberg, où se crée une plantation de café, un élevage de gros bétail, autour d'une ferme et d'une église.

Les protestants enregistreront non sans quelque amertume cette collaboration des catholiques avec ce qu'on peut appeler la "colonisation" au sens propre et étymologique, c'est-à-dire avec la mise en culture des terres, mais aussi avec l'administration étrangère qui l'organise. Ils notent que la mission catholique du Cameroun a pour sceau une croix entourée d'une pioche, d'un sarcloir et d'une pelle, avec pour devise: "Cruce et Labore", ce qui signifie: "par la croix et par le travail". Ce "logo" (dirions-nous maintenant) suggère que l'homme est sauvé par la foi et par le labeur, et il fait écho à l'autre maxime de la mission, reprise de la tradition monastique: "*ora et labora*", "prie et travaille". Mais les protestants reprochent aux catholiques d'inverser la devise pour les Africains: "travaille d'abord ! prie ensuite, s'il t'en reste le temps.."; et de faire ainsi de leur travail une vraie croix. (cf. Van Slageren p. 72).

Quoi qu'il en soit, la tradition des Ewondo ou Beti ne séparait pas la prospérité économique des rituels et des forces invisibles qui étaient supposés leur procurer la richesse. Or, si simple qu'il se voulût, tant chez les catholiques que chez les protestants, le mode de vie des missionnaires témoignait à leurs yeux de cette relation: développement, richesse, instruction et religion paraissaient former système, chez les chrétiens comme dans la vision du monde traditionnelle.

Il ne paraît guère douteux que cette liaison ait animé le zèle de conversion si remarquable des Beti, qui rejoignent ainsi le sentiment des missionnaires sur l'action éducatrice du travail et sur la nécessité de lier l'action spirituelle à un minimum de développement économique.

Le catholicisme me paraît en effet utilisé à Yaoundé comme idéologie, comme âme d'une "révolution culturelle" moderne, avec refus de toute forme de conservatisme, et en particulier de l'introduction d'une liturgie "africaine" proposée par les Pères:

"Nous voulons les cantiques allemands à l'église, exigent les catholiques beti; si c'est pour y mettre nos tambours et nos vieux chants, autant rester païens !"

Le célèbre chef de poste de Yaoundé, Dominik, fait ainsi l'éloge des Pères établis à côté du poste:

" Besonders günstig auf die Entwicklung des Landes hat die Niederlassung der Pallottiner in Mvolye, drei Stunden von der Station, eingewirkt. Mit scharfen Blicken hat der Bischof Vieter ein unweit der Hauptstraße gelegenes, prächtiges Areal dort ausgewählt. Ich schätze die Missionstätigkeit der Pallottiner auch deshalb besonders hoch ein, weil sie den Eingeborenen ein echtes, deutsches, praktisches Christentum predigen; weil diese Missionare von früh bis spät selbst hand anlegen, und nicht nur das Beten betonen, sondern auf ihre Fahne das "Labora" (Arbeiten) geschrieben haben. Handwerkskundige Brüder unterrichten die Eingeborenen in der Zimmerei, Schreinerei, Maurerarbeit, lehren sie Steine brechen und Ziegel machen, sogar die Schwestern habe ich bei der Feldarbeit zugreifen und ihren Schülerinnen mit gutem Beispiel vorangehen sehen. " (*Vom Atlantik zum Tchadsee* pp. 36-37)

("Ce qui a œuvré d'une manière particulièrement favorable au développement du pays, c'est l'établissement des Pallottins à Mvolyé, à trois heures (N.D.T. erreur: à trois quart d'heure) du poste. Dans sa vision pénétrante, l'évêque Vieter a choisi un superbe domaine situé non loin de la grand'route. J'estime au plus haut point l'activité évangélisatrice des Pallottins, parce qu'ils prêchent aux indigènes un christianisme allemand authentique et pratique; parce que ces missionnaires mettent eux-mêmes la main à la pâte du matin jusqu'au soir, et qu'ils ne se contentent pas d'entonner des prières, mais qu'ils ont inscrit sur leur bannière le mot "labora" ("travail"). Des frères ayant reçu une formation manuelle technique enseignent aux indigènes les métiers de charpentier, menuisier, maçon, leur apprennent à casser des pierres et à fabriquer des briques, et j'ai aussi vu les sœurs se livrer aux travaux des champs et y entraîner leurs élèves par leur bon exemple.")

En effet, ce qui caractérise la mission catholique à Yaoundé, comme jadis la mission baptiste à Douala, c'est bien l'exceptionnel développement de l'artisanat. Celui-ci est dû à l'impulsion des nombreux religieux laïcs, puisque, sur les cent missionnaires catholiques présents au Cameroun en 1914, il n'y aura que 30 prêtres, le reste se répartissant également entre religieuses et "frères coadjuteurs".

Ceux-ci sont, comme le dit Dominik, maçons ou menuisiers, mais aussi couvreurs, plombiers, planteurs, et ils forment des apprentis qu'ils catéchisent en même temps (à Minlaaba, le fils aîné du chef Ebede Afodo m'a raconté comment il est devenu chrétien à l'insu de son père, en apprenant la menuiserie avec le frère de la mission).

Si bien que, selon Skolaster, la petite ville allemande de Yaoundé, en 1915, à leur départ, a presque entièrement été bâtie par les missionnaires. Leurs ateliers et leurs plantations leur permettent d'équilibrer leur budget et de jouir de l'autonomie financière (ils n'ont pas besoin de demander de denier du culte; ils peuvent même subventionner leurs voyages de congé en Allemagne).

CONCLUSION

Quelles que soient les autres lectures possibles de l'action missionnaire de 1845 à 1915, il faut constater qu'au Cameroun, depuis l'œuvre des protestants à Douala jusqu'à celle des catholiques à Yaoundé, le christianisme s'est toujours engagé positivement dans la perspective du développement politico-économique, dont il a été considéré comme l'un des principaux acteurs par les observateurs tant européens qu'autochtones (même si Saker a été critiqué à ce sujet; même si le programme liminaire de la revue catholique *Stern von Afrika*, contenu dans son premier éditorial de 1894, critique d'avance les objectifs "douteux", puisque mercantiles, de la civilisation occidentale).

Je m'en suis tenu à la période allemande, mais cette imbrication du christianisme et du "progrès", ou de l'évolution économique, a eu sans doute pour effet de conserver à peu près intact le prestige des missions, même lorsque l'U.P.C. a voulu les dénoncer comme des forces d'oppression ou d'illusion, et même lorsque certains missionnaires, tel Mgr Graffin, ont pris des positions objectivement très réactionnaires.

Dans une vue globalement évolutionniste, le christianisme a pu occuper une position de pointe exceptionnelle au Cameroun, et c'est à bon droit que Louis Ngongo intitule son beau livre *Histoire des forces religieuses au Cameroun* : titre dans lequel il convient de donner toute sa force au mot "forces" !

Resterait à savoir pourquoi, contrairement à tant d'autres sociétés africaines, ces sociétés du sud du Cameroun se sont voulues (et se veulent toujours) "évoluantes" (même si c'est au prix de nombreux malentendus, persistant jusqu'à nos jours). Quel contraste par exemple avec le refus des Lobi, dans ce Burkina Faso qui continue à caresser l'idéal autarcique, et dont l'élite actuelle prend pour modèle l'Albanie socialiste ! Pourquoi cette différence ? Mystère jusqu'ici... Je

serais tenté d'attribuer ce dynamisme particulier des ethnies camerounaises (de la côte et du Centre-Sud) à un caractère interne pré-colonial qu'elles considéraient elles-mêmes comme une faiblesse: à savoir, le manque d'autorité des anciens, corrélatif de la très large initiative laissée aux jeunes. Chez les Bamiléké où au contraire la hiérarchie restait très ferme, le système d'héritage encourageait aussi les cadets à prendre des initiatives.

On pourrait continuer cette historiographie du rôle économique des missions jusqu'à nos jours. D'autres, comme le R.P. Criaud, s'y emploient. Disons seulement que la coupure que constitue la prise en charge du Cameroun par les Français est très importante.

Du côté protestant, il semble que la Société des Missions Evangéliques de Paris n'ait guère pu ou voulu s'impliquer dans les affaires matérielles, car elle connut toujours de gros problèmes financiers de simple survie; sans doute était-elle heureuse de se consacrer surtout à former des élites intellectuelles, préoccupée qu'elle fut, comme le dit Van Slageren (p.284) par l'"attachement aux valeurs morales qui sont propres à la spiritualité du protestantisme français". Du côté catholique, la situation morale et financière devint brusquement critique: 34 prêtres allemands et un nombre équivalent de frères étaient en 1916 remplacés par seulement 6 prêtres français, sans l'aide d'aucun religieux laïc, et sans les ressources des missions, placées sous séquestre comme biens allemands. Tous les bâtiments avaient été pillés, nombre d'entre eux avaient été détruits ou ruinés par la guerre (cas des missions de Kribi, Edéa, Marienberg). Cet état précaire dura jusqu'à la nomination d'un Vicaire apostolique en 1922; celui-ci se plaint alors de ne disposer que de deux Frères, dont un seul constructeur (l'autre étant cultivateur), alors qu'il y aurait de quoi bâtir pour plusieurs années dans les seules missions de Yaoundé, Ebolowa et Minlaba. L'appel aux efforts et même au travail des chrétiens était bien nécessaire: mais il devint dans les années suivantes l'une des pommes de discorde entre les missionnaires et l'administration, qui leur reprocha d'enfreindre le droit du travail, et de séquestrer les jeunes filles dans les "sixa" ou écoles de fiancées. Les Pères répliquèrent en dénonçant sur la scène internationale le travail forcé et ses horribles abus. C'en était fait de l'harmonie germanique entre le gouvernement, la mission et la mise en valeur économique du Cameroun.

Cela ne signifie nullement que les missions, quand elles voient qu'elles le peuvent ou le doivent, se désintéressent du niveau de vie des populations qu'elles évangélisent. On sait que la vie spirituelle est impossible sans une aisance minimale. Mais les écoles et les dispensaires suffirent en général à absorber les investissements depuis la première guerre mondiale.

Après la seconde guerre, une reprise des investissements sociaux se dessine et serait sans doute à étudier de près. Je me rappelle être allé à plusieurs reprises visiter la Maison Rurale de Fignolé, qui s'efforçait de rationaliser la culture chez les Namchi dans les années 1960-70.

Une étude comparable serait fructueuse dans beaucoup d'autres pays d'Afrique. Par exemple, au Burkina Faso, l'artisanat féminin, aussi bien que la culture du haricot vert actuellement si rentable, sont au départ, dans l'ex- Haute-Volta, entièrement l'œuvre des Pères Blancs... En tout cas, il me semble qu'une histoire économique de l'Afrique ne peut guère faire l'économie de cette action des missions...

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FROM PLANTATION TO PEASANT COCOA PRODUCTION IN GERMAN CAMEROUN

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In modern Cameroun, as in other African countries, cocoa is a peasant crop, and yet in the German period it was mainly produced on European plantations.¹ This paper sets out to examine why cocoa was a plantation crop in German Cameroun, and what forces were at work preparing the later triumph of the peasantry. The word "peasant" is used rather loosely here as a synonym for "African". In reality, as indicated below, some Camerounians grew cocoa on a scale and in a nexus of social relations which were far removed from the traditional picture of the smallholder cultivating communal land with family labour. Nevertheless, there was a clear divide between African producers on the one hand and the huge German estates on the other. The central argument of this paper is that the European plantations were giants with feet of clay, whose apparent prosperity was based on a combination of abnormal economic circumstances and more or less disguised public subsidies.

In regional terms, the Camerounian experience lay on a kind of mid-point on a continuum of types of cocoa cultivation in the Gulf of Guinea prior to 1914. At one end of the spectrum, in British West Africa, plantations were excluded from the outset.² In the Ivory Coast, Dahomey and Togo (also a German colony), the few European planters were unable to compete successfully with peasant producers. In Gabon, the French and Belgian Congos and Angola, the reverse was true, and these colonies were closest to the Camerounian model, although their cocoa output was on a much smaller scale. At the other end of the spectrum, plantations had few peasant rivals in the Portuguese islands of São Tomé and Príncipe and in the Spanish island of Fernando Poo, both large-scale producers of cocoa.³

Five crucial variables determined the relative weight of planters and peasants in the cocoa economy, two of them political, and the other three economic in nature. Policy in Berlin was

¹ J. Assoumou, *L'économie du cacao*, Paris 1977 (mainly on Cameroun).

² Gareth Austin, "Rural capitalism and the growth of cocoa farming in South Ashanti to 1914", Ph.D. Thesis, Birmingham University, 1984; Polly Hill, *The migrant cocoa-farmers of Southern Ghana*, Cambridge 1963; Sara Berry, *Cocoa, custom and socio-economic change in rural Western Nigeria*, Oxford 1975.

³ Gervase Clarence-Smith, "Cocoa plantations and coerced labour in the Gulf of Guinea", forthcoming in book on coerced labour edited by Martin Klein; *Der Gordin, Zeitschrift für die Kakao-Schokoladen- und Zuckerwarenindustrie*, Hamburg 1895 ff., passim; C.J. van Hall, *Cacao*, 2nd ed, London 1932, passim; Henri Jumelle, *Le cacaoyer*, Paris, 1900, passim; Walter Stollwerck, *Der Kakao und die Schokoladenindustrie*, Jena 1907, passim; Ch. Chalot & M. Luc, *Le cacaoyer au Congo Français*, Paris 1906; J. Claessens, "Note relative à la culture du cacaoyer au Mayumbe", *Bulletin Agricole du Congo Belge*, 5, 2, 1914, pp. 215-46; José d'Almeida Mattos, *O Congo Português e as suas riquezas*, Lisbon 1924, passim.

affected by overall changes in the nature of German colonialism, notably the size and effectiveness of the central bureaucracy, and its attitudes towards investment, settlement, colonial finance, and "native affairs", which were in turn conditioned by more general political processes. On the ground, colonial proconsuls were able to maintain a fair degree of autonomy from Berlin, and were particularly susceptible to company pressures on land and labour issues. In economic terms, the underlying variables were considerations of price and techniques: cocoa prices on the world market, the type of cocoa required for the rapidly changing processing industries in the West, and the technical and financial barriers to entry into cocoa cultivation. Probably of equal importance were the entrepreneurial strategies of German financial circles. And the final variable consisted of the attitudes and aptitudes of African cultivators.

Phase I, Hesitant first steps, c. 1885 - c. 1895

Bismarck insisted that the costs of colonial administration should be reduced to the absolute bare minimum, and although he had no objections to plantations as such, he did not propose to allow the state to give positive help to planters. There was no provision for colonies in the imperial constitution, and Bismarck preferred not create any political openings for the Reichstag (parliament). Until his fall from power in 1890, there was thus no central colonial bureaucracy, not even a counsellor on colonial affairs in the foreign ministry for much of the time. His successor, Caprivi, gave way to demands from colonial circles for a colonial department in the ministry of foreign affairs, but it took a few years for this department to get it itself organised.⁴

The local administration in Cameroun could thus do little to help the timid efforts at setting up plantations, especially in regard to labour and security. The skeletal military forces were unable effectively to "pacify" the area around Mount Cameroun, where the Germans had quickly discovered that the volcanic soil was highly fertile and apt for intensive cultivation. Although treaties were passed with the Bakweri people of this area in 1884-1885, attempts to exploit land concessions and obtain labour services led to a rebellion of the Buca Bakweri. The expedition sent to put them down in 1891 was unsuccessful and the German officer in charge was killed.⁵ In addition to the security problem, the government was unable to stimulate a flow of labour to the incipient plantations. Dr. Preuss complained bitterly that the Bakweri on plantations insisted on scandalously high wages and rations, amounting to over 20 Marks a month per labourer, and that free Kru labour from Liberia cost about as much.⁶

⁴ Woodruff D. Smith, *The German colonial empire*, Chapel Hill 1978, ch. 3.

⁵ Harry R. Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons, 1884-1914*, 2nd ed., New York 1968, pp. 79-80; 86.

⁶ Archives Nationales du Cameroun, Yaoundé (ANC), Fonds Allemand (FA), 1/774, 13-17, Preuss, Bericht, 7/11/1896.

However, local officials in Cameroun were favourable to the growth of plantations, and, for all their lack of means, they did lay the foundations for future growth. Jesko von Puttkamer claimed in his memoirs that his "conversion" to plantations came when he became governor in 1895 and travelled to São Tomé and Fernando Poo to look into the agricultural situation there.⁷ In reality, von Puttkamer was already clamouring for plantations in 1888, when he was temporarily Imperial Kommissar in Togo. In a long and detailed memorandum, he advanced the racist argument that Africans were unable to develop a cash crop economy. On the basis of information from the German clique active in the Monte Café plantation in São Tomé, he put forward the Portuguese colony as a model, including its thinly veiled slave labour system.⁸ Although the views of other members of the early Camerounian administration are not set out in the same way in the archives consulted, there is nothing to suggest that von Puttkamer's colleagues disagreed with this analysis.

Indeed, the first governor of the colony, Julius von Soden, was personally involved in an unsavoury land deal, which had considerable bearing on the evolution of land alienation in the cocoa plantation zone. Although it is sometimes stated that the plantations grew out of concessions of crown land made in terms of new legislation in 1896, in reality land alienation dated back to the very first years of the German presence.⁹ African chiefs were persuaded to part with vast and ill-defined tracts of land for the sake of some alcohol and assorted trade goods. On the basis of three surviving sets of documents in the archives, it would appear that the average price paid in the second half of the 1880s was between half a Mark and a Mark a hectare (a Mark being worth roughly a British Shilling).¹⁰

The patent irregularities in these land purchases were difficult to reverse once someone as prominent as von Soden was involved, for he had acquired a thousand hectare estate around Buea through an intermediary in 1887.¹¹ This was not unconnected with his earlier career, for he had been consul in Havana for many years, and, knowing what profits could be made with plantations, he had quickly seen the potential of Mount Cameroun.¹² After serving as Governor in German East Africa, von Soden retired from the diplomatic service in 1893, and

⁷ Jesko von Puttkamer, *Gouverneursjahre in Kamerun*, Berlin 1912, pp. 46-7, 63-4, 69-70.

⁸ ANC, FA, 1/3, 110-29, Von Puttkamer, Denkschrift 1888.

⁹ ANC, FA, 1/350, 7-10, Von Soden to Chancellor 1887, for list of land purchases.

¹⁰ Archiv der Basler Mission, Basel (ABM), E-31.8.1, Agreement, 26/10/1886, and Declaration, 13/9/1888, for Victoria Mission; ANC, FA, 1/470, 94-101, Beglaubigte Abschrift, 22/11/1911, for Mokundage; ANC, FA, 1/358, 1-6, Valdau to von Soden 18/2/1887, and 34-52, Preuss, Bericht, 9/1/1897, for Buea.

¹¹ ANC, FA, 1/350, 3-4, G. Valdau to von Soden, 18/2/1887, and annexes, and 34-52, von Puttkamer, 24/12/1896.

¹² Max Esser, *An der Westküste Afrikas*, Berlin 1898, p.50.

three or four years later ceded his Buea lands, through intermediaries, to the financiers who founded the massive WAPV plantation company, of which he later became a director.¹³ The Colonial Department in Berlin complained bitterly of the numerous legal irregularities in this purchase, which had contributed not a little to the Buea uprising, but never dared actually to revoke it.¹⁴

Little was done to develop these speculative land purchases prior to the mid-1890s, for German capitalists were not inclined to invest in large-scale production when security was so poor, labour was so dear, and international commodity markets were depressed. "Finance capital" proved particularly reticent, and the main attempts to grow crops were thus made by the two German trading and shipping companies with a particular interest in stimulating the volume of sales and freight, the Woermann firm in Kriegsschiffhafen, and the Jantzen and Thormählen company in Bibundi.¹⁵ Initial efforts were concentrated on tobacco, but cocoa gradually established itself as the most lucrative crop.¹⁶ However, prior to 1897, cocoa exports from Cameroun remained below 200 metric tons a year. Prices on the world market were quite high and fairly steady, but fine cocoas from Latin America still predominated, and brokers were as yet suspicious of the cheap but bitter and poor quality varieties from Africa.¹⁷

The fact that only 18 tons of cocoa were brought for sale by Africans in 1895-6 is indicative of the low level of peasant production in this period.¹⁸ This said, the plantations often bought up cocoa produced by the Bakweri people to process and sell it, which rather confuses the statistical record.¹⁹ By the late 1890s, there were several references to Bakweri cultivating cocoa, often Christian converts.²⁰ This may have dated back to the beginning of the decade, although the evidence is somewhat murky.²¹

It is quite clear that other Africans were cultivating cocoa in this period, notably the twenty to thirty Victorian families, who actually began growing cocoa before the European planters,

¹³ Karin Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft in Afrika; Wirtschaftsinteressen und Kolonialverwaltung in Kamerun vor 1914*, Zürich 1970, pp. 306, 312-4; Marc Michel, "Les plantations allemandes du Mont Cameroun, 1885-1914", *Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outremer*, 57, 2, 1969 (or 1970), p. 192; ANC, FA, 1/350, 44-5, Vertrag, 17/2/1897.

¹⁴ See numerous documents in ANC, FA, 1/317 & 1/350.

¹⁵ Michel, "Les plantations", p. 186.

¹⁶ ANC, FA, 1/774, 13-17, Preuss, Bericht, 7/11/1896; Esser, *An der Westküste*, pp. 74-7.

¹⁷ C.J. van Hall, *Cocoa*, 1st ed, London, 1914, p. 395 and passim; Stollwerck, *Der Kakao*, p. 30; for prices, Cadbury Papers, University of Birmingham Library, 304.

¹⁸ Albert Wirz, *Vom Sklavenhandel zum Kolonialen Handel: Wirtschaftsräume und Wirtschaftsformen in Kamerun vor 1914*, Zürich 1972, p. 204.

¹⁹ ANC, FA, 1/806, 238, Fickendey to Governor, 14/3/1913.

²⁰ ABM, E-2.11,238, Schuler, 1/11/1898; ANC, FA, 1/39, 155-7, Von Puttkamer to Auswärtiges Amt, 30/5/1899.

²¹ Wirz, *Vom Sklavenhandel*, pp. 204-6 & 282, n. 11.

contrary to Assoumou's assertions.²² Assoumou is probably right in saying that the Victorianer did not bring plants with them, when they came to Cameroun in 1858 as a group of refugee Anglophone black Baptists, fleeing Catholic persecution by the Spaniards in Fernando Poo. But Wirz has clear documentary evidence that they were cultivating cocoa by the second half of the 1870s.²³ The Victorianer generally rented land from the Basel Mission or from the German government, and by the end of the decade some had converted their leases into freehold, on payment of 25 Marks per hectare.²⁴ In 1894, the government obtained additional land from the Woermann concession to put at the disposal of the Victorianer, so that they could increase their cocoa output.²⁵ In that same year, it was reported that hardly a Victorianer family was without its cocoa plot, and one enterprising man at about this time exchanged a house in Victoria for a cocoa farm in the recently established Catholic Mission further inland.²⁶

The Duala took to cocoa cultivation for export a little later. A report in 1884 indicated that there existed isolated cocoa trees in the area, occasionally used to prepare a cocoa beverage, but that there was no trade in the product. The Duala themselves declared in 1912 that they engaged in cocoa cultivation for export only after 1895, when their trade monopoly with the interior was revoked by the Germans.²⁷ However, there is clear evidence for earlier planting. In 1890, Manga Bell, son of King Bell, began to lay out a large cocoa plantation, in association with the German Count Joachim Pfeil. Manga Bell provided the land and workers, while Pfeil, who had recently returned from a stay with the Germans of Monte Café in São Tomé, appears to have provided the initial expertise and political connections, and then to have disappeared from the scene.²⁸ Manga Bell's project was not an isolated occurrence, for in 1894 the Duala chief of Mukuri wrote to his son in Germany that he was laying out a cocoa farm, and it is possible that other Duala were experimenting with cocoa at this time.²⁹

For all these promising beginnings, cocoa planting by peasants remained very limited compared to the Gold Coast. This may have reflected a lesser entrepreneurial dynamism in Cameroun, for the territory was much less penetrated by previous market pressures and contacts with Western

²² Assoumou, *L'économie du cacao*, pp. 156-7 & 161; for general information on Victorianer, ABM, E-10.22.19, Von Puttkamer to Auswärtiges Amt, 28/2/1901 (copy).

²³ Wirz, *Vom Sklavenhandel*, p. 203 - other incorrect references to the introduction of cocoa are listed by Wirz in footnote 2, p. 281.

²⁴ ABM, E-2.6.112, J. Wilson, 7/6/1893; E-10.22.19, Von Puttkamer to Auswärtiges Amt, 28/2/1901 (Copy)

²⁵ ANC, FA, 1/468, 149-55, Beglaubigte Abschriften, document of 19/10/1894.

²⁶ Wirz, *Vom Sklavenhandel*, p. 204.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 203 & 220-1.

²⁸ ANC, FA, 1/808, 8-14, Pfeil to Caprivi, 15/7/1890; Auswärtiges Amt to von Puttkamer, 14/10/1890; Zimmerer to Caprivi 13/12/1890. For São Tomé trip, ANC, FA, 1/21, 1-54, report by Pfeil. Wirz, *Vom Sklavenhandel*, p. 204, does not mention Pfeil and gives the date as 1891.

²⁹ Wirz, *Vom Sklavenhandel*, p. 281, n. 5a.

trading firms than the Gold Coast. The groups which did begin to take up cocoa cultivation in Cameroun were all atypical. The Victorianer were West African immigrants, the Duala were the one group with long trading connections with the West, and the Bakweri who took up cocoa appear to have been those living in close proximity to either Victorianer or missionaries. Official discrimination was not a problem, as the authorities generally welcomed peasant production in these years, as an activity which could co-exist with plantations.

Phase 2, The plantation boom, c. 1895 to c. 1905

The next decade witnessed attempts to limit peasant production, which began to be seen as threatening competition for the rapidly expanding plantations. The planters alleged that smallholder plots were dangerous foci of plant diseases, that they produced cocoa of poor quality, that they were a cover for Africans stealing cocoa from plantations, that they wasted valuable land with their disorderly and ineffective planting, and that they prevented the African population from becoming plantation labourers.³⁰ A plant pathologist who did a survey in 1904 found that accusations of bad planting techniques and disease were false, and instead recommended that the planters should learn from African methods. But the authorities ignored his advice and did what they could to discourage peasant cocoa cultivation.³¹ In 1899, the export of spoiled and improperly dried coca was forbidden, a measure which von Puttkamer admitted was specifically aimed at protecting the plantations from the effects of the uncontrolled expansion of African cocoa growing.³² One official made a distinction between peasant food crop production, which he felt should be encouraged, and cocoa production, which was "too difficult for the Natives".³³

For all this, peasant production was never banned, and it did continue to expand, although slowly and mainly among those who had already begun to grow cocoa. The Bakweri were hampered in their efforts by large scale land alienation, including the expropriation of land on which they had already planted cocoa, but they got some compensation and they intensified production on the scraps of land left to them.³⁴ The Victorianer were similarly hampered by land shortage, but progress in their small reserves was said to be "astonishing". The original Victorianer community grew by assimilating Bakweri and other local Camerounians, as well as

³⁰ ANC, FA, 1/40, 75-7, Weiler to WAPB, 21/10/1903.

³¹ Wirz, *Vom Sklavenhandel*, pp. 206-7.

³² Julius Ruppel, *Die Landgesetzgebung für das Schutzgebiet Kamerun*, Berlin 1912, pp. 989-90; Puttkamer, *Gouverneursjahre*, p. 233.

³³ ABM, E-10.22,20, Schmidt, 3/3/1906.

³⁴ ABM, E-2.11,238, Schuler, 1/11/1898.

ex-labourers from Liberia and Nigeria, although there were still only about 500 of them in 1904.³⁵

More significant was the spurt of cultivation by the Duala, largely based on slave labour. With the loss of their trading monopoly in 1895, they invested their capital and slaves in commercial food and cocoa farms along the rivers which had been their major trading arteries, especially the Mungo. This process was kept hidden from the authorities as far as possible, for the Germans were not at all appreciative of the large Duala farms, with their servile labour.³⁶ International and domestic pressures were building up to put an end to the internal slave trade. After two damning missionary reports on continuing extensive purchases of slaves by the Duala and others, partial measures against the "domestic" slave trade were taken in 1902.³⁷

European plantation production of cocoa grew faster than that of Africans during these years. In 1906, the colony exported 1,247 metric tons, about six times the level reached a decade earlier, but peasant cocoa going through Duala came to only 63 tons.³⁸ Even if one includes peasant cocoa handled by plantation firms, or exported through other ports, it probably came to no more than 10% of the total.³⁹

The plantation boom was due in part to changed political circumstances in Berlin. The Colonial Department created in 1890 became progressively more effective, and it came under the almost complete domination of big business interests. Bismarck's ideal of private development by large companies was maintained, even if there were increasing misgivings. The *Kolonialrat* (colonial council) was set up in 1891, with business groups heavily represented in its membership. Although technically an advisory body, it assumed considerable de facto powers in this period. And although the Reichstag and its budget commission won review powers over colonial policy in 1894, parliamentary control of policy remained weak and largely ineffectual.⁴⁰

Berlin thus encouraged its subordinates in Cameroun to play a more active role in promoting plantations, and this coincided with the proconsular "reign" of von Puttkamer as governor, from 1895 to 1906. Von Puttkamer came from a highly placed Prussian family, enjoying good

³⁵ ANC, FA, 1/39, 141-87, Vietor, 1/12/1902; and FA, 1/65, 348-51, Statistik über die farbige Bevölkerung, Victoria, 1904.

³⁶ Ralph Austen, "Metamorphoses of middlemen: The Duala, Europeans and the Cameroon hinterland, c. 1800 to c. 1960", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 16, 1, 1983, pp. 16-17.

³⁷ ABM, E-2.13.51, Lauffer, Referat über Sklaverei und Sklavenhandel, Okt. 1900; and E-2.14.17, Dietrich, Sklavenhandel und Sklaverei in Kamerun, Jan. 1901; Rudin, *Germans*, pp. 389-96.

³⁸ Stollwerck, *Der Kakao*, p. 30; Wirz, *Vom Sklavenhandel*, p. 217.

³⁹ ANC, FA, 1/39, 141-87, Vietor, 1/12/1902.

⁴⁰ Smith, *The German colonial empire*, pp. 45-7, 122, 131-3, 159.

access to the court, and this enabled him to disobey orders from the colonial department with impunity on a number of occasions. Although it was at times alleged that he was personally financially interested in plantation companies, this was never proved, in contrast to his former superior von Soden.⁴¹ It seems rather that he believed passionately in the superiority of plantations, and was prepared to use all his considerable powers with true Prussian dedication to achieve this end.

The first measure undertaken by von Puttkamer was the systematic herding of the Bakweri into tiny reserves, in order to provide land for the companies, deprive the Bakweri of their own possibilities of growing cocoa, and make them dependent on plantation labour for at least part of their subsistence needs.⁴² Von Puttkamer decided that only the land actually cultivated at the time land concessions to companies were made could be considered the property of Africans, and that 1.5 hectares per hut would be quite sufficient. Moreover, the dispersed settlements of the Bakweri were to be converted into large consolidated villages with numbered and surveyed plots for building and agricultural land.⁴³ The head of the largest plantation company went even further, requesting that all Africans should be moved into only two reserves laid out around the main Catholic and Protestant mission stations.⁴⁴

The coalition of missionaries, traders and political parties in Germany which opposed Von Puttkamer's schemes objected to these proposals on three main grounds. Firstly, the proposed 1.5 hectares per hut (in theory, per family) were insufficient to meet the needs of shifting subsistence agriculture and cash crop cultivation, especially if the future needs of a larger population were considered. On the basis of some rather dubious German parallels, 6 hectares plus land for building were deemed to be necessary.⁴⁵ Secondly, hunting, herding and the collecting of fruit from semi-wild oil palms were excluded from this scheme, and the Bakweri would thus lose important means of livelihood.⁴⁶ And thirdly, the forced relocation of the Bakweri was illegal, and opened up the possibility that they would be given the worst lands, with barren or water-logged soils, or with no access to water supplies.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft*, p. 218, n. 65, & p. 307.

⁴² The main accounts of the land question are to be found in Eric Hallden, *The culture policy of the Basel mission in the Cameroons, 1886-1905*; Horst Gründer, *Christliche Mission und deutscher Imperialismus*, Paderborn 1982; Michel, "Les plantations allemandes"; Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft*. I intend to write a separate and more detailed paper on this immensely complex question.

⁴³ Puttkamer, *Gouverneursjahre*, pp. 104-5; ANC, FA 1/39, 155-7, Von Puttkamer to Auswärtiges Amt, 30/5/1899.

⁴⁴ ABM, E-2.13.2, Esser to Auswärtiges Amt, 19/3/1900.

⁴⁵ ANC, FA 1/39, 153, Ochler to Auswärtiges Amt, 8/12/1898; and 141-87, Vietor, 1/12/1902.

⁴⁶ ABM, E-2.11.238, Schuler 1/11/1898; for an unconvincing refutation, ANC, FA, 1/39, 155-7, Von Puttkamer to Auswärtiges Amt, 30/5/1899.

⁴⁷ ABM, E-2.17.5, Leuschner to Auswärtiges Amt, 30/5/1904.

Rudin asserts that this coalition triumphed over von Puttkamer⁴⁸ but the reality was somewhat different. The company lawyers cleverly argued that the plantation lands had generally been acquired by purchase from African chiefs prior to the 1896 decree regulating the establishment of reserves, and that subsequent concessions merely confirmed prior freehold rights. The land commissions set up to arbitrate in the matter ended up by roughly doubling the initial allocation of land from c. 1.5 hectares per family to around 3 hectares - still far short of the 6 hectares demanded by the opposition and required by law from 1904.⁴⁹ The disruptions to hunting, herding and fruit collection were simply ignored. And although forced relocation was prohibited and compensation was paid for land planted in cocoa, the many Bakweri who had already been moved obtained no further redress.⁵⁰ It was at best a mitigated victory for von Puttkamer's opponents.

However, one major consequence of the decisions of the land commissions was that the Bakweri retained sufficient land for immediate subsistence purposes and were not obliged to work on the plantations, so that other solutions had to be found to the pressing question of labour.⁵¹ It was in any case fairly clear that the numerically weak Bakweri could not meet the planters' voracious and ever growing needs for workers. Von Puttkamer thus thought of copying the Portuguese system of disguised slavery in São Tomé, but found that this was one idea that Berlin would not stomach. The planters got round this difficulty to some extent by a unique agreement with the King of Bali, whereby each free Bali could bring up to five slaves or subject peoples with him to labour on the plantations. It would seem that the free Bali acted as overseers in this system. However, the arrangement worked erratically, for the King of Bali regularly complained of excessive mortality on the plantations. In any case, this peculiar system was unable by itself to produce sufficient labour.⁵² And Berlin was no keener on importing Asian "coolies", for fear of international complications.⁵³

The governor therefore turned to forced labour. Initially, this simply meant seizing hundreds or even thousands of Africans from "rebellious" tribes and sending them to the plantations as a

⁴⁸ Rudin, *Germans*, pp. 367-8 & 400-2.

⁴⁹ ANC, FA, 1/40, Wolff, Bericht, 1/4/1904.

⁵⁰ ABM, E-2.17.6, Berner to Missionsinspektor, 5/10/1904; E-2.17.7, Berner to Auswärtiges Amt, 22/8/1904.

⁵¹ For a general view of the labour question, Adolf Rüger, "Die Entstehung und Lage der Arbeiterklasse unter dem deutschen Kolonialregime in Kamerun (1895-1905)", in Helmuth Stoecker, ed, *Kamerun unter deutscher Kolonialherrschaft*, E. Berlin 1960, Vol I; Michel, "Les plantations allemandes"; Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft*. I also intend to write more fully on this crucial question at a later date.

⁵² ANC, FA, 1/3, Von Puttkamer, Denkschrift, 1888; FA, 1/83, Von Puttkamer to Von Kamptz, 30/3/1899; Esser, *An der Westküste*, pp. 101-2.

⁵³ Rüger, "Die Entstehung", p. 211.

kind of penal labour force, for up to six years and sometimes for no pay at all.⁵⁴ However, there were limits to this predatory activity, which could only function while major military campaigns of "pacification" were being waged, and which supplied labour in an erratic and unpredictable manner. Furthermore, the appalling conditions of the prisoners were vividly denounced by the missionaries, and threatened to become yet another weapon in the hands of the governor's enemies.⁵⁵

Penal labour was thus increasingly supplemented by what von Puttkamer euphemistically referred to as "voluntary labour". This was initially a mixture of privately and publicly recruited labour, till in 1902 official recruitment was legally discontinued. In practice the whole process always depended on the continuous coercive pressures of private recruiters, local officials and suitably bribed African chiefs. The frightening mortality rates, the low wages, and the harsh treatment on the plantations were certainly no attraction for volunteers.⁵⁶ This said, Mandeng is wrong when he asserts that there was never any voluntary labour on the plantations,⁵⁷ for there was one major reason for Africans to work on the plantations in these years, namely the ability to acquire firearms. But the shock produced by the Herero rebellion of 1904 in South West Africa led the Germans to regulate the sale of firearms extremely stringently.⁵⁸ This had immediate negative effects on the trickle of voluntary labour to the plantations.⁵⁹

It might seem that the planters obtained land and labour at extremely favourable rates from von Puttkamer, but this is deceptive, especially if peasant costs are taken as the point of comparison. It can be argued that peasant lands were a free good, although one would have to consider the opportunity costs of growing cocoa as opposed to other crops. It is also true that the Camerounian "peasants" of this time often had to buy, lease or rent their land, notably the Victorianer and the Duala. Similarly, one could say that much of the labour employed by peasants was unpaid family labour, although here again the question of opportunity costs arises. Moreover, both the Victorianer and the Duala hired some labour, and the latter had to consider the cost of purchasing and maintaining slaves. But overall, it is probably correct to say that the production costs of peasants were quite low.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 195-7.; ANC, FA, 1/468, KPLG Bericht, 1894; FA, 1/85, 51-6, Diehl, 8/3/1904; ANC, Nouveau Fonds, 3860, Kribi 1-5 & 74-6, Procès-Verbaux.

⁵⁵ ABM, E-2.19, 129, Lutz to Richthofen, 8/9/1905.

⁵⁶ Patrice Mandeng, *Auswirkungen der deutschen Kolonialherrschaft in Kamerun: die Arbeitskräftebeschaffung in den Südbezirk Kameruns während der deutschen Kolonialherrschaft, 1884-1914*, Hamburg 1973; Rüger, "Die Entstehung".

⁵⁷ Mandeng, *Auswirkungen*, p. 98.

⁵⁸ Rudin, *Germans*, pp. 312-5.

⁵⁹ ANC, FA, 1/68, 441-4, Arbeiterkommissar to Governor, 10/5/1907.

⁶⁰ ABM, E-10.22, 19, Von Puttkamer to Auswärtiges Amt, 28/2/1901 (Victorianer); Austen, "Metamorphoses" (Duala).

As for the planters, their land certainly did not come free, contrary to Assoumou's assertion.⁶¹ Crown land was usually ceded at 5 Marks per hectare, and never less than 3 Marks. A fixed proportion of the land had to be kept as forest, usually one third, and as late as 1914 only about a fifth of conceded plantation land in the Mount Cameroun area was actually under cultivation.⁶² One reason for this waste of money on unproductive land was that much of the land was practically worthless. Concessions of crown lands were often the result of ill-informed drawing of lines on inaccurate maps. Thus the WAPB in 1913 was desperately trying to sell back to the state or exchange 3,000 hectares, which the government surveyor reported to be steep, barren and ravined land, with much bare rock and thin grass. It was worth no more than 1 Mark a hectare, if that, and was of no economic value to the company.⁶³ Land planted in cocoa and taken from the Bakweri through the process of land consolidation had to be paid for at the fixed rate of 25 Marks a hectare.⁶⁴ This corresponded roughly to a missionary estimate of 1902 that plantation land in the Victoria district was selling at between 20 and 30 Marks a hectare.⁶⁵ Five years later, the WAPB cited an average price of 50 Marks per hectare for cultivated land, rising to 100 Marks in exceptional cases.⁶⁶ But this may well have been to reassure the share-holders as to the value of the assets of the company.

There were other hidden land costs for capitalist operators. It appears that after the promulgation of the 1896 land decree, some companies (possibly all) paid the government the crown land fee for estates which had already been purchased from African chiefs. This was probably done to secure a more certain title to the land than the dubious acts of sale by African chiefs, but it meant that the land was paid for twice over.⁶⁷ In addition, these lands had often come into the companies' possession after going through the hands of several speculative intermediaries, and thus at rates considerably above those usually cited.⁶⁸ More work is needed to determine the real cost of land to plantations relative to those of African cultivators, but ignorance, bureaucratic regulations and speculation certainly appear to have pushed up planters' land costs.

The same sorts of problem are encountered in attempting to work out the real cost of labour to planters. From 1898, they had to pay the state 10 Marks per head and the costs incurred in

⁶¹ Assoumou, *L'économie*, p. 169.

⁶² ANC, FA, 1/39, 141-87, Vietor 1/12/1902, Annex 5; ANC, FA, 1/350, 44-5, WAPV, Vertrag, 17/2/1897; ABM, E-2.11.238, Schuler, 1/11/1898; Jumelle, *Le cacaoyer*, p. 200; Michel, "Les plantations", pp. 189, 203.

⁶³ ANC, FA, 1/470, 202-4, Abschrift aus GB IV No. 2838/13, 12/12/1913.

⁶⁴ ABM, E-2.11.238, Schuler, 1/11/1898.

⁶⁵ ABM, E-31.8.1, Lutz, 29/4/1902.

⁶⁶ ANC, FA, 1/470, 48, WAPB, Bericht, 11/6/1907.

⁶⁷ ANC, FA, 1/350, 44-5, WAPV, Vertrag, 17/2/1897.

⁶⁸ For the WAPV, see Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft*, pp. 311-5.

bringing labourers to the coast, in the case of officially procured workers. However, there were complaints in 1903 that this was not being enforced for penal labour. Private recruiters had to be paid, and provided with expenses for bribes to chiefs and for the cost of marching labourers to the plantations.⁶⁹ Once on the plantations, labourers were paid a wage which varied between 4 and 10 Marks a month, and were provided with food, lodging, clothes and rudimentary medical care.⁷⁰ It is certain that non-monetary payments were of very poor quality in these years, but food was mainly imported from abroad, in the form of rice and dried fish, and constituted a significant expense. All of these costs were greatly magnified by very high rates of mortality, sickness and escape, and by the generally abysmally low productivity of workers.⁷¹

All in all, the WAPV reckoned that it spent 220 to 250 Marks a year per unskilled labourer in the 1900s, while the WAPB estimated the cost at 275 Marks in 1897, and the KLPG calculated a slightly lower figure of 240 Marks in 1901. It seems that these figures did not include the indirect costs generated by mortality and flight.⁷² Esser's estimate of 300 Marks a year for the late 1890s may have taken these into account, or may have reflected the high numbers of imported Kru labourers at that time. By 1912, a figure of 300 Marks was again being cited.⁷³

In addition, the plantations paid very dearly for European supervisory and technical labour. Europeans had to be tempted out with particularly high wages, and they were prone to disease and needed to be sent to Europe on regular leave.⁷⁴ The head of the WAPV company calculated that a planter needed about one European for 65 Africans, and that whites cost about ten times as much as Africans.⁷⁵ More detailed calculations by the KLPG company in 1901 showed a white to black ratio of 1:85 and indicated that whites cost over 18 times as much as blacks.⁷⁶ Not surprisingly, the planters were doing their best to Africanise this stratum of labour by the mid-1900s.⁷⁷ It seems likely that there was considerable social resistance to Africanisation, even though this cannot at the moment be proved. What is certain is that this stratum of labour added a burden of cost that no peasant enterprise had to bear.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 277, 283, n.7; Mandeng, *Auswirkungen*, pp. 90-1.

⁷⁰ ANC, FA, 1/68, 441-4, Arbeiterkommissar to Governor, 10/5/1907.

⁷¹ ANC, FA, 1/180, 8-44, Waldow, 1908.

⁷² Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft*, p. 274, n. 57 (WAPV for 1901 or 1907); ANC, FA, 1/470, 7-9, Kostenanschlag für die Pflanzungen der WAPB, 1897-8; ANC, FA, 1/468, 45-6, KLPG, Wirtschaftsplan, 1901.

⁷³ Esser, *An der Westküste*, p. 99; ANC, FA, 1/806, Fickendey, article in *Tropenpflanzer*, 16, 8, 1912, p. 435.

⁷⁴ Wilhelm Kemner, *Kamerun*, Berlin 1937, p. 152.

⁷⁵ Esser, *An der Westküste*, p. 99.

⁷⁶ ANC, FA, 1/468, 45-6, KLPG Wirtschaftsplan, 1901.

⁷⁷ ANC, FA, 1/71, 22, Jahresbericht, Kamerun, 1908-9.

High real labour costs affected profits unfavourably. If we take the example of the WAPB in 1897, total estimated costs were 272,060 Marks, of which 191,625 Marks were spent on unskilled labour, and a further 42,635 Marks on skilled labour (which included some Africans). As total revenue was only 120,500 Marks, this left the company with a large deficit of 151,560 Marks. This was not a typical year, inasmuch as the company was engaged in large-scale new planting of cocoa, which required an unusually numerous work force.⁷⁸ And the WAPB appears to have been a particularly unprofitable company.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, it does raise a question mark against Stoecker's assertion that the plantation companies were "attracted by the prospect of high profits resulting from the exploitation of very cheap labour".⁸⁰

It would seem rather that financiers were attracted by speculative windfall profits arising from temporarily high prices of African cocoa on the world market. Profound changes in technology and markets led to an insatiable demand for West African varieties of cocoa, which had been somewhat spurned in earlier years. Over time, African peasants were to respond to this demand with such enthusiasm that prices fell back markedly. But in the meanwhile, entrepreneurs who could quickly mobilise land, labour and capital stood to make a killing. The key advantage of coerced labour was not so much its cheapness as its ready availability.⁸¹

The entrepreneurs attracted to Cameroun cocoa plantations in these years were a new breed of men, generally quite different from the Hamburg traders and shippers of the previous decade, although these latter continued to have a stake in cocoa plantations. The new men were predominantly drawn from Rhineland industrialists and Berlin bankers. Unlike the Hamburg traders, they had no previous experience of Africa and their businesses in Germany had only the most tenuous relation, if any, to cocoa production.⁸² Immensely wealthy, they never staked enough money in Cameroun to make this more than a kind of exotic game of roulette. For some, the lure of Africa and fame appears to have been as significant as the thoughts of profit. Max Esser, the founder of the WAPV and the dominant figure of the decade, had a fortune of between 5 and 10 million Marks, and was decorated by the Kaiser in person for "fertilizing Cameroun with capital".⁸³ During his visits to Africa, he appears to have enjoyed the almost vice-regal powers conferred on him unofficially by von Puttkamer.⁸⁴ All this is far from the

⁷⁸ ANC, FA, 1/470, 7-9, Kostenanschlag für die Pflanzungen der WAPB, 1897-8.

⁷⁹ Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft*, p. 222.

⁸⁰ Helmuth Stoecker, ed., *German imperialism in Africa*, London 1986, p. 73 (section written by Stoecker).

⁸¹ This is argued in more detail in Clarence-Smith, "Cocoa plantations", forthcoming.

⁸² Details in Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft*; Rüger, "Die Entstehung"; Michel, "Les plantations".

⁸³ Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft*, pp. 313-5.

⁸⁴ ABM, E-2.17,24, Lutz to Missionsinspektor, 7/3/1904. See also Esser's, *An der Westküste*.

rather stereotypical picture of "finance capitalists" presented by the East German historians Rüger and Stoecker.⁸⁵

Phase 3, The rise of the peasantry, c. 1905 to 1914

From about 1903, the rush of hot money into cocoa plantations stopped abruptly, signalling the beginning of the final phase in this story. This did not mean that capital ceased to be invested in plantations as such, but from the mid-1900s new companies had as their main purpose the production of rubber, bananas, palm oil and tobacco.⁸⁶ Nor did it mean that plantation cocoa output immediately stagnated and fell. The long gestation and bearing period of the tree ensured that plantation cocoa output increased until the early 1910s, remained at high levels up to the war, and continued to be produced decades after the original investment decisions had been taken. But the total of some 7,500 hectares laid out in cocoa in the Mount Cameroun plantations, which was reached in 1905 after a decade of rapid growth, was almost unchanged in 1913. It is true that the area under small cocoa plantations scattered elsewhere in Cameroun rose from some 500 to some 1,250 hectares in the same period, but this scarcely alters the basic pattern.⁸⁷

The evolution of prices was one of the reasons for this sudden disenchantment with the wonder crop of the late 1890s and early 1900s. The price of cocoa on the world market, which had risen sharply from 1896 to 1900, began to fall again, gently at first but more rapidly in 1904 to 1905. This was the result of large harvests round the world and speculative activity, which was particularly marked at the cheaper end of the market, in which Cameroun beans were traded. Prices rallied briefly in 1906-8, partly because of a sellers' cartel, but then fell again and remained at roughly 1905 levels till the war.⁸⁸ However, prices were still relatively high in spite of these fluctuations, and this was not by itself a sufficient cause for such a sudden disengagement from cocoa.

Technical problems were also responsible, as the German companies came to realise that the slopes of Mount Cameroun were not the best place to plant cocoa. Although the fertile volcanic soil was a definite advantage, the rainfall was too high, especially in the plantations to the West of the mountain. This had two unfortunate results. The "brown rot" of the cocoa pods, a fungal

⁸⁵ Rüger, "Die Entstehung", passim; Stoecker, *German imperialism*, pp. 73-4 and passim.

⁸⁶ Details scattered through Michel, "Les plantations" and Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft*.

⁸⁷ ANC, FA, 1/66, 367-73, Plantagen Statistik, 1905; ANC, FA, 1/183, 318-26, Verband der Kamerun- und Togo-Pflanzungen to Governor, 16/8/1913; Michel, "Les plantations", p. 211.

⁸⁸ Birmingham University Library, Cadbury Papers, 304 (to 1911); Stollwerck, *Der Kakao*, pp. 49-54, 93-102 (to 1907); Hall, *Cocoa* (1914), p. 492-7 (to 1911); V.D. Wickizer, *Coffee, tea and cocoa*, Stanford 1951, p. 271 (from 1910).

infestation stimulated by very high humidity, reached calamitous proportions in 1906, with average losses of 30 to 40% in that year's harvest. Although this was the worst year, the fungus continued to ravage the plantations till the end of the German period, causing hundreds of thousands of Marks of damage, and it was a major cause of planters' decision to get out of cocoa.⁸⁹ The second problem was that the cocoa of Mount Cameroun had to be artificially dried. Initially, this was done over a fire, which gave the beans a smoky flavour disliked by brokers.⁹⁰ More sophisticated artificial drying equipment, apparently introduced in 1903, proved expensive and technically problematical.⁹¹ One of the major advantages enjoyed by peasants in West Africa, and especially in the Gold Coast, was their ability to dry the beans naturally in the sun.⁹²

In comparison to these economic and technical factors, the effects of the social reforms of the "Dernburg era" on the plantations have been overestimated, particularly by Rudin.⁹³ An upheaval in German colonial policy was undoubtedly caused by the impact on public opinion in Germany of the Herero and Nama wars in South West Africa and the Maji-Maji rebellion in East Africa. This resulted in 1906 in the appointment of Dernburg, a reformist banker, as colonial director, and shortly thereafter as colonial minister. Although his successor Lindequist (1910-11) was in the old mould, Solf then restored the liberalism of Dernburg. Moreover, the Reichstag reformers acquired more real ability to influence colonial policy after the great rebellions. The new policies aimed to protect peasant producers, while reforming land and labour abuses, with the Gold Coast and Nigeria as the models to emulate.⁹⁴

The problem with Rudin's analysis is that he assumes that policy in Berlin was easily translated into achievement on the ground. It is true that von Puttkamer was recalled in disgrace in 1906, and that his successors were both more reformist and more under Berlin's control. But the "new broom" authorities could never envisage actually abandoning the planters of Cameroun, and this gave the companies the ability to wage a largely successful rearguard action against reforms, especially in the fields of land and labour.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ ANC, FA, 1/66, 332-4, Weberbauer, 30/7/1906; ANC, FA, 1/808, Anleitung für Eingeborene zum Kakaobau, 1912; Michel, "Les plantations", pp. 207-8.

⁹⁰ ANC, FA, 1/808, Anleitung für Eingeborene zum Kakaobau, 1912; Hall, *Cocoa* (1914), p. 490.

⁹¹ Assoumou, *L'économie*, p. 169; ANC, FA, 1/66, 332-4, Weberbauer, 30/7/1906

⁹² Hall, *Cocoa*, passim.

⁹³ Rudin, *Germans*, passim; for a critique, which may go too far the other way, see Stoecker, *German imperialism*, passim.

⁹⁴ Smith, *The German colonial empire*, pp. 183-218.

⁹⁵ Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft*, p. 307 and passim; for attitude to plantations, ANC, FA, 1/180, 98, Dernburg, 7/7/1907 & 1/887, 1-14, Denkschrift, 1912.

As far as land was concerned, the acid test for reformist principles came when a new land rush took place in 1909-12 in the Tiko plain, to the East of Mount Cameroun. There has been an unfortunate tendency for those who have looked at the land question in Cameroun simply to ignore this second great wave of land alienation, and yet it provides interesting contrasts with that of 1896-1904. The whole issue was settled smoothly by land commissions, with no opposition from the former coalition of missionaries, traders and members of the Reichstag. The principle of six hectares of agricultural land and one hectare of building land per hut was scrupulously enforced, except where fishing was important, in which case six hectares in all were deemed sufficient. Producers of cash crops were even allowed up to 25 hectares. Relocation of villages was undertaken with the consent of the people involved and with adequate compensation. African freehold rights were upheld, and the blocks of land were much smaller than those ceded after 1896, in accordance with legislation passed in Berlin in 1910-11.⁹⁶

And yet, for all the improvements on the earlier experience, this was a process of land spoliation favourable to the continued expansion of plantations. Large amounts of land were taken from Africans and handed over to plantation companies. Moreover, whole villages were relocated to make way for the planters, especially villages close to the waterfront.⁹⁷ It is true that the companies did not plant the land in cocoa, but rather in rubber, oil palms and bananas, partly because of the low altitude of these lands and partly for the reasons noted above. But the Tiko Plain experience makes it difficult to maintain that the reforms of the "Dernburg era" placed significant constraints on the acquisition of land for any further expansion of the cocoa plantation economy.

This is even more true when one considers labour, for it is hard to see any improvements in this domain - indeed, mortality on the plantations rose during these years, and coercion of labour reached new heights. All the fancy legislation produced in Berlin could do nothing about the mounting labour crisis in the colony. The problem can be simply put - Cameroun's population was too small to meet the combined requirements of plantations, peasant cash crop production, rubber portage and railway building. Moreover, it was feared that the terrible dislocations caused by the ever increasing coercion of labour was contributing to a marked decline in population. For the traders, the solution was to prevent the planters from recruiting and leave

⁹⁶ ANC, FA, 1/354, 8-9 & 34, Öffentliche Sitzung der Landkommission, 5/4/1911 & 6/4/1911; Landkommission to Governor, 11/4/1911; Vermessungsprotokoll, 11/6/1912. See more generally ANC, FA 1/351, 1/352, 1/354, and Rudin, *Germans*, pp. 405-6.

⁹⁷ ANC, FA, 1/354, 35, Map; ANC, FA, 1/468, 210-5, Copies of 1912 documents & map.

the Africans free to concentrate on the other three main activities. But the government could never bring itself to adopt this solution.⁹⁸

Forced labour for the plantations thus intensified, and administrative decisions contributed to rising mortality. Although penal labour did not disappear entirely from the plantations⁹⁹, privately recruited coerced labour dominated until the first of January 1914, when the state took over recruitment.¹⁰⁰ However, this distinction was largely academic. The reality was a generalised man-hunt throughout the colony, which led local officials and missionaries to protest with increasing revulsion and desperation. The basic pattern of "official recruitment" can be succinctly described as follows: the government sent a request to the *Bezirksamtmann* for a number of men to be delivered at a fixed time and place. The soldiers were then sent to the villages. At their approach, all the men who could do so fled. The soldiers demanded so many men from the chief, and seized old men or women and children as hostages. If this was insufficient or too slow in producing results, the soldiers mounted a razzia in the surrounding bush, and seized anybody they could. As a result, a high proportion of the old, the maimed, the sick and the feeble were sent off to the plantations, contributing to enhanced mortality.¹⁰¹

Another major reason for rising mortality on the plantations, in spite of greater efforts by the planters to look after their labourers, was the government's decision to meet the planters' labour needs as far as possible from the densely populated Grassfields area. The people of the Grassfields had less resistance than those of the forest to the terrible diseases which reigned in the plantations, and they died like flies.¹⁰² As the *Hauptmann* of Bamenda remarked bitterly in 1913, "The flower of the Bali people lies on the slopes of Mount Cameroun".¹⁰³

By January 1913, there were officially just under 18,000 labourers on the plantations of Cameroun, the great majority of them around Mount Cameroun,¹⁰⁴ but this frequently cited figure underestimates the disruptions caused by the planters' labour requirements. Because of short contracts and a high turnover of labour, the numbers involved were actually much greater.

⁹⁸ Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft*, pp. 284-90; ANC, FA, 1/181, 68-72, Handelskammer für Südkamerun in Kribi, 1914; ABM, E-10.22.20, Die Arbeiterfrage in Kamerun, 1914.

⁹⁹ ANC, FA, 1/182, 2-3, Waldow to Governor, 21/5/1906; ANC, FA, 1/204, 3-4, Draft circular 1908; Rudin, *Germans*, pp. 321, 325 & 343.

¹⁰⁰ Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft*, pp. 284-90.

¹⁰¹ ABM, E-10.22.20, Die Arbeiterfrage in Kamerun, 1914; see also, ANC, FA, 1/183, 23-6, Bezirksamtmann Jaunde to Governor, 7/1/1912; ANC, FA, 1/208, Lutz, 20/2/1914; ABM, E-2.40.91, Jahresbericht 1913, Buea. See also Mandeng, *Auswirkungen*, passim.

¹⁰² ANC, FA, 1/183, 13-16, Vereinigung Kameruner Pflanzungen to Governor, 9/11/1911; ANC, FA, 1/181, 7-12, Pistner, Sept. 1913.

¹⁰³ ANC, FA, 1/183, 189-90, Hauptmann, Bamenda, to Governor, 13/5/1913.

¹⁰⁴ Hausen, *Deutsche Kolonialherrschaft*, p. 220, citing *Amtl. Jahresbericht*.

In the course of 1911, nearly 40,000 plantation contracts were officially registered, whereas just under 12,000 workers were actually on the plantations on the first of July 1912.¹⁰⁵

In addition, there was a growing number of voluntary labourers in the early 1910s, and it is unclear how many of them signed contracts, although long-distance migrants usually appear to have engaged in one month contracts. Long-distance migrants were no longer coming for guns, but were rather escaping from the despotic authority of their chiefs, especially in the Grassfields.¹⁰⁶ These labourers were also tempted by higher wages for volunteers and by the ability to change employers rapidly, which enhanced the chances of survival.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, the plantations were initiating a policy of settling migrants with their families, which especially attracted forest workers from the Ewondo and Bakossi regions.¹⁰⁸ To these should be added casual Bakwiri labourers, who almost certainly did not sign contracts, and who provided an increasing amount of skilled labour.¹⁰⁹ By the eve of the war, free labour provided up to a fifth of the work force of those plantations with a good reputation for humane treatment of their workers.¹¹⁰

If the reformism of the last phase of German rule did little or nothing to hamper the growth of plantations from the point of view of land or labour, it did at least provide more support for peasant production. The passionate debate in German East Africa and Togo over whether peasants or planters should be supported was paralleled in Cameroun, and the feeling was generally in favour of peasants, with the examples of Uganda and the Gold Coast held up as models.¹¹¹

However, it took time for the new ideas to take root in the Camerounian administration. In 1906, the Governor was still writing that peasants should only be encouraged to grow food. Experiments with coca in the Kumba area had been disappointing and the consensus was that Africans had neither the energy nor the means to grow cocoa. Shoddy cultivation techniques made their cocoa plots sources of pests and diseases for plantations.¹¹² By 1912, attitudes

¹⁰⁵ ANC, FA, 1/183, 85-8, Zusammenstellung der in den Jahren 1910, 11, u. 12 bei den Pflanzungen Kameruns beschäftigt gewesen Vertragsarbeiter; ANC, FA, 1/183, 97, Arbeiterbestand den Pflanzungen an 1 Juli 1912.

¹⁰⁶ ANC, FA, 1/110, 149-50, Jahresbericht, Bamenda, 1912; ANC, FA, 1/183, 42, Bezirksamtmann, Jaunde, 31/1/1912; ABM E-10.22.20, Die Arbeiterfrage in Kamerun, 1914.

¹⁰⁷ ANC, FA, 1/181, 33-5, Bezirksamtmann, Dschang, 6/2/1914.

¹⁰⁸ ANC, FA, 1/181, 100-2, Denkschrift, c. 1914; ANC, FA, 1/181, 50, Württ. Kamerun-Gesellschaft to Governor, 25/1/1914; Michel, "Les plantations", p. 200.

¹⁰⁹ ANC, FA, 1/202, 6-7, Stationsleiter, Buca, to Governor, 20/1/1914 & 21/1/1914.

¹¹⁰ ABM, E-10.22.20, Die Arbeiterfrage in Kamerun, 1914.

¹¹¹ Stoecker, *German imperialism*, pp. 152-3 & 177, for DOA & Togo; ANC, FA, 1/806 for debate in Cameroun, in relation to cocoa.

¹¹² ANC, FA, 1/806, 61, Governor to Auswärtiges Amt, 6/10/1906.

were quite different, and the government was actively encouraging the spread of peasant cocoa.¹¹³ Local officials and missionaries were increasingly denouncing the forced labour demands of planters as the main obstacle to the growth of African production.¹¹⁴ Even one plantation manager confessed that he believed that the future lay with the peasants.¹¹⁵

By 1913, nearly a fifth of Camerounian cocoa exports came from the peasant sector,¹¹⁶ but often from producers who conformed little to the German ideal of *Volkskultur*, that is families cultivating about a hectare of communal land with their own labour.¹¹⁷ The Victorianer took part in the Tiko land rush, and obtained land in freehold tenure on a par with Europeans.¹¹⁸ The Duala did likewise, and one conflict with a European company revealed that a group of Duala had been planting cocoa in the Miselele area since 1902.¹¹⁹ Duala Manga-Rudolf Bell successfully applied for fifty hectares of land in the Tiko plain.¹²⁰ Indeed, it was the Duala who were most aggressively pursuing the expansion of cocoa cultivation in these years, along the Mungo, Wuri and other rivers. Duala Manga had one farm of 200 hectares, employing fifty migrant labourers in 1913. This said, the average size of Duala cocoa farms appears to have been only a little over two hectares in this period.¹²¹ While slavery no longer officially appeared as an issue, the authorities were seriously worried at the scale of Duala land purchases and labour hiring in the territories of other peoples, and talked of the need to prevent this by setting up more reserves. However, even this was insufficient, for the Duala were busy leasing land inside already constituted reserves.¹²²

Nor were less Westernised peasants necessarily conforming to the German ideal of *Volkskultur*. Individual Bakweri families appear to have been cultivating up to 25 hectares in cocoa.¹²³ And in the Centre-South of Cameroun, where cocoa cultivation was spreading rapidly, the pattern was for very large farms. They were run by powerful chiefs with the labour of numerous wives, sometimes running into the hundreds, as well as clients and subjects.¹²⁴ In general terms, cocoa was an unfamiliar plant which took a long time to give a return, and it thus

¹¹³ Wirz, *Vom Sklavenhandel*, pp. 207-19; ANC, FA, 1/807, 1-14, Denkschrift über den Stand und die weitere Entwicklung des Landeskulturwesens in Kamerun, 1912.

¹¹⁴ ABM, E-10.22.20, Die Arbeiterfrage in Kamerun, 1914; ANC, FA, 1/208, Lutz, 20/2/1914.

¹¹⁵ ABM, E-10.22.20, Die Arbeiterfrage in Kamerun, 1914.

¹¹⁶ Hall, *Cocoa* (1914), p. 447.

¹¹⁷ Austen, "Metamorphoses", p. 17.

¹¹⁸ ANC, FA, 1/351, 2-12, Regierungsländmesser to Governor 6/12/1910, and 159-60, Vertrag 10/5/1912, and 217-9, Vermessungsprotokoll 8/2/1912; ANC, FA, 1/354, 8-9, Landkommission to Governor, 11/4/1911.

¹¹⁹ ANC, FA, 1/354, 3, Ngange Nduma et al. to Governor, 16/1/1911.

¹²⁰ ANC, FA, 1/354, 8-9, Landkommission to Governor, 11/4/1911; ANC, FA, 1/352, 84, Vertrag, 16/12/1912.

¹²¹ Wirz, *Vom Sklavenhandel*, pp. 217-21.

¹²² ANC, FA, 1/43, Governor to Colonial Secretary, 1/8/1913.

¹²³ ANC, FA, 1/354, 8-9, Landkommission to Governor, 11/4/1911.

¹²⁴ Jane Guyer, *Family and farm in Southern Cameroon*, Boston 1984, pp. 33-8.

appears to have been particularly suitable for the wealthier and more powerful members of African societies.

In conclusion, one can see cocoa plantations of German Cameroun as a kind of tragic aberration. The racism, arrogance and ignorance of German administrators and financiers created a myth of the superiority of plantations. This myth was temporarily sustained by abnormally high prices of African varieties of cocoa on the world market, to create a short-lived planting boom. In the long run, the lower costs of the peasants doomed cocoa plantations to extinction, although it was not until the 1930s price crash that this evidence was revealed in all its stark truth.¹²⁵ In the meanwhile, tens of thousands of Camerounians paid for this arrogant blunder with their lives. The last word should go to an anonymous woman met by a missionary among a gang of labourers being taken by force to the plantations in the last years of German rule. When asked what was happening to her, she replied: "The *Stationsleiter* wants to send us to our death".¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Assoumou, *L'économie*, pp. 176-7.

¹²⁶ ANC, FA, 1/208, Lutz, 20/2/1914.

THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF SUCCESS: HOUSEHOLDS AND CONSUMPTION IN BAMENDA.

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INTRODUCTION

Use of such terms as household and consumption has led to difficulties in definition and variation in meaning. I will not be contributing to these debates in the paper presented. Instead, I will approach the question by assuming that both terms are constructs rather than 'things' and the outcome of personal and group strategies for achievement and success. In other words, the formation of a household or a certain pattern of consumption is itself an achievement and has to be set within the wider context of how resources are allocated and distributed, the evaluation of success and, in particular, the maximum unit (residential and/or kinship) within which this has to be shared. The setting described is an urban environment in Bamenda, the provincial centre of North West Province, Cameroon. However, as far as the allocation of resources and the distribution of household and 'friendship' networks are concerned no simple urban/rural or one centre approach will do. The scale of such networks can be truly international and I regret that studying their full ramifications has not been possible in this paper.

In this case I describe all acts of consumption, and in particular material consumption, are considered part of strategies for advancing personal success. The term success here is scarcely neutral or of universal importance. I will argue that in the cases I discuss, the cultural language of development and progress and its material appropriation in terms of the consumption of the products of western technologies, has become the ultimate touchstone for confirming and evaluating the nature of personal and group success. In other words, in Cameroon and perhaps more widely in Africa, to be developed is measured in terms of the capacity to consume the products of Western technologies rather than to produce them. Moreover I will attribute this to the dominant role of education, and in particular the pursuit of higher education abroad in Europe and the USA, in restricting access to social status and privilege. In the postcolonial state that has developed in Cameroon, the actual length of time spent in education abroad or the desire to have been abroad producing an imaginary western lifestyle absorbed through magazines, films and TV, form both a system of credentialism on which access to the state bureaucracy depends and a prestige culture of consumerism that is, in itself, living out a fantasy that few if any, either in the West or in Cameroon, actually enjoy.

STRATEGIES OF ACHIEVEMENT AND THE EVALUATION OF SUCCESS

In this section I will describe some personal histories of individual strategies for success. They do not necessarily occupy the same scale and if I adopted a purely informant related perception of his/her personal success, no doubt this would provide a multiplicity of apparently unrelated forms. It is the value of a study of the material culture of consumption that the pervasive influence of 'modernity' as a cultural means of constantly checking and assessing one's rate of success can be found in many different personal strategies.

Case 1

Fofoung Tata is the Provincial delegate for Agriculture of North West province, stationed at Bamenda. He is 46, is now in the top grade of the Civil Service and has nine years to retirement. He expects to reach the top grade in about four years where he will stay until retirement unless he leaves early and follows a plan to complete a PhD in Britain and go into free-lance consultancy work. His success is the result of pursuing a long term educational strategy in which his parents paid for him to go through primary school and he gained a scholarship to get through secondary school up to 'O Level' standard. He then applied and gained admission to and an African scholarship at the American University in Cairo where he spent four years from 1963 to 1967 and completed a degree in economics. This was followed by two years in the USA at the University of Massachusetts where he gained a Master's degree in Agricultural Economics. He returned from the USA in 1972 and entered the office of the Delegate for Agriculture in Yaound where he held various posts responsible for the national census in agriculture, finally becoming assistant delegate and then provincial, delegate for agriculture for North West Province in 1979.

His monthly income is set conservatively at 500,000 FCFA (c. £1000) and his wife earns in addition about 250,000 FCFA. They both come from a village outside Bamenda where they have farmland and acquire a large part of their food, so that except for household expenses and medical expenses, much of their salary goes towards paying interest on loans and making contributions to njangis. They live in a government rented house at the Station, the old colonial residential area of Bamenda, with a cook and two houseboys. The house is furnished in a mixture of government and personally supplied items which at present include a refrigerator, deep freezer, TV, telephone, video, radio and stereo, upholstered chairs, dining table and chairs and carpets laid on a ceramic tile floor. Except for the chairs and table, all of these are imported goods. He also owns two cars, one a mercedes, and a pickup for farmwork. He has six children all in primary and secondary school and the plans to get them all through to 'A Level'

including the girls. At present he has another house in Bamenda which he rents, a second in Wum also rented and he is at present building his 'retirement home' in Bali, his home village. Uptil last year, he would also have enjoyed a free car, petrol allowance and free telephone as well as other allowances such as the paid house staff. Much of his income is therefore set aside for payment of debts to the bank, the Credit Union and the two njangis (rotating credit associations) to which he belongs and which together provide the loans for his building and other projects.

The investment in education eventually paid off in gaining the qualifications to enter government service and gain position and privilege within it. He will now speak of being the first Cameroonian to go to the American University in Cairo as having taught him a lot about 'the West' and Muslum cultures although as a boy 'straight from the village' he admits to great loneliness and wanting to break his studies and return to Cameroon. In part, too much education can be a bad thing - staying too long abroad to complete a PhD has meant for a number of his class mates that they entered the civil service at lower levels than himself and have never caught up. He has instead combined the strategies of gaining a sufficiently advanced qualification in a 'useful subject' with frequent transfers and nominations in the agricultural and extension fields which is the route for rapid promotion in the Cameroonian state bureaucracy.

Whether due to the recent government austerity campaign or personal inclination or both, he chose to describe himself and his household in underconsumptionist terms against much other circumstantial evidence. He would use the cheaper household goods in the market, he would buy in bulk from wholesalers to save time and money; he had only three pairs of shoes and chose imported or bought them himself abroad because they would be more durable and practical; he has six suits for formal and daily use and was not concerned with acquiring more.

Case 2

Jean Tashye is a Bamileke business man resident in Bamenda since before 1950. He at present owns the Taxaco petrol station at the hospital roundabout, runs a fleet of three petrol tankers and sixteen Mercedes trucks which he hires out to Brasseries Cameroun or Guinness Cameroun or to wholesalers in town. In addition he owns several houses in town which he rents whilst he himself lives in a relatively modest house in Metta quarter.

By Bamenda standards, Tashye is one of the richer businessmen, although this is usually qualified by my more educated friends with remarks such as 'the man is illiterate' or 'he can only speak pidgin'. He made the money to buy his first truck by trading in cloth in the markets

from Bamenda up to Nkambe and back (i.e. the northern Grassfields) in the 1940's and early '50's. As he describes it, he would trek with a headload of wrappers (these were callico strips in fathom lengths, worn wrapped round the waist) from Bamenda to markets in Bamessing - Ndot - Ngomeghe - Babessi and Jakiri then on to Kumbo - Kika - Nkosi - Ndu - Binka, finally turning at Nkambe and returning via Tabeken - Lassing - Mbinon to Nso. He would sell the wrappers in local markets for money, then buy potatoes in Kumbo and return to Bamenda. The markets he sold in were synchronised on the 8 day cycle and he could complete the route in one week. From Bamenda, he walked to Calabar with the potatoes and money, where he bought bundles of the white callico cloth (called washgrab) or if it was too expensive there, he would take the canoe to Onitsha and buy there instead. He returned to Bamenda by 'mammy wagon' (12 ton trucks taking people and goods), split the bundles there, sold some to other traders and started off to Nkambe again. Bamenda traders follow the same route today with an enormous range of imported goods carried in half-ton pick-up trucks.

By 1956, Tashye had made enough to buy his first truck which he took down to Calabar and returned with general merchandise for traders in Bamenda old town. He was one of the first to start to break the monopoly of the 'trading houses', like RW King or United Africa, in Bamenda, and to establish independent wholesale/retailing stores on Commercial Avenue. After the plebiscite in 1961 and the reunification of French East and British West Cameroon, he redirected his activities to Douala where he bought Mercedes trucks on special credit terms, buying another as he paid off the last, and hiring out space in them to wholesalers in Bamenda. Tashye originally came from near Dschang, being part of the Bamileke migration into West Cameroon to escape French administration. It is said that he belongs to one of the family 'tontines' whose contributions run into millions of CFA every month. To his transport business, Tashye added the petrol station and then diversified into building materials and constructing houses for government renting. In recent years he has suffered increasingly from bad eyesight and ill health which has begun to curtail his business activities.

Case 3

In Bamenda there are three principal manufacturers of upholstered chairs and many more smaller workshops set up by the apprentices trained by the original three. Augustine Chi is the owner of the Manchester Modern Furniture, one of the three, and he produces both chairs, decorated formica cupboards, tables and pelmet boards for curtains. He says he would like to expand his range to complete interior furnishing having seen the range of styles offered in magazines of matching wallpapers, curtains and floor tiles together with furniture. There are a

number of 'snack bars' recently opened in Bamenda that have pursued these ideals of co-ordinated paints, floor tiles and formica covered furniture.

Chi was originally trained as a carpenter and was sent to be an apprentice by his father. He trained for two years and then worked for his master for a further eighteen months in lieu of paying his fees. He then worked for a carpenter for a year before meeting a man from Bafoussam who was recruiting carpenters to work in his upholstery business there. Chi worked with him for two years and learnt the upholstery business. It is characteristic of achievement through accumulation that he should describe this as "attaching" upholstery to his carpentry business just as - in future - he wants to attach other businesses, such as trading in building materials much in the same ways as a share-owner accumulates portfolios.

He invests with the Credit Union which is a mutual association in which one deposits usually substantial sums - e.g. one million francs CFA - and after one year one borrows double the original investment. In the present economic situation in Cameroon, where the banks have lost considerable public credibility, the Credit Union has expanded its loan facilities. He also belongs to a business njangi in town to which he contributes 100,000 FCFA and two smaller ones in his home village of Mankon which are more social and drinking groups. When he next receives a distribution from the town njangi, he intends to buy a woodworking machine which will cut wood to a pattern, make joints and plane. One of his rivals already has such a machine and is turning out more sophisticated shapes of upholstered chair. He gets many of his ideas for new furniture design from visiting government hotels - that are usually foreign designed and furnished with imports - or from magazines and films. Because he was trained as a carpenter, he claims to be able to see how they are built and to copy them. Considerable ingenuity is shown in the making of substantial armchairs and settees out of timber, plywood, nails and dunlop foam. Each of these sets sell for a minimum of 200,000 FCFA and buyers come regularly from other major cities in Cameroon to acquire them.

He lives in Mankon village, which is about 12 kms outside Bamenda, where he has built a compound next to that of his father. He has two wives and nine children and professes not to want any more because he won't be able to educate them, but his wives do not agree. He says he married his first wife from Bali, a neighbouring village, out of love but his family insisted that he should also have children by a Mankon girl and that he should marry again. Including two dependent relatives, there are 14 in his household and he also sponsors a junior brother and one of his first wife's brothers in secondary school (i.e. he pays their fees). His house is built in modern materials on a traditional compound pattern with an outer courtyard and his own quarters set behind. Each of his wives have their bedroom and parlour with a separate kitchen

where they stay with their children. The public area is floored with ceramic tiles (which at 20,000 FCFA a sq. metre makes its own statement) and the rest with plastic tiles. He has a TV, video, freezer, radio and a telephone in his own quarters and his wives' parlours are furnished with upholstered chairs, table and chairs and a cupboard. he plans to build a new 'more modern' house in front of the existing one which will be self-contained, with water and electricity. He expects his older children would eventually use it, although the plan has been initiated because a water project is about to be completed in the village. He plans to educate all his children up to University level since - as he puts it - with education they will be 'reasonable' people and be able to achieve something for themselves. For himself, he appears to have few needs. He last bought a suit second hand in the market. He has two pairs of leather shoes and a sports pair and his expectation of a special event would be the Fon of Mankon's annual dance when he would wear traditional dress. On the assumption that his upholstery business will be stable and viable, his future plans include diversifying into 'importation and exportation' which in Bamenda is a general term for trading in imported goods.

Case 4

Joseph Chafu pushes a truck in Bamenda central market. He used to have a market store there selling household soaps, toiletries and cleaning materials but the rise in taxes in 1987 pushed him out of business. He sold the remainder of his stock and bought for 60,000 FCFA a truck which is a box-like metal frame on spoked wheels with a T-shaped handle. A man will hire him and his truck usually to owners of loads on lorries who want to break up the load and sell the consignments to retailers in the market. Joseph is 42 and works with three colleagues who try to share work among themselves. He came to Bamenda in 1966 from a village near Mbouda where he has a house and land for farming. He has built a four-roomed house there with three bedrooms and a parlour and visits at least once a month, taking gifts of soap, bread, meat and oil and coming back with cocoyams, maize and beans. In Bamenda he rents one room and a parlour where he stays with his wife and five children and a junior brother. He pays 5,000 FCFA a month rent for the two rooms in a cement block built house with firewood kitchen and latrine outside; it has electricity; water comes from the public tap.

I never knew his income but judging from the fact that he paid 3,000 FCFA to his njangi every Saturday, he probably made on average 8-10,000 FCFA every week. Wednesday and Saturday are the market days when he would make most money. Besides building the house in his village, his main concern is paying the fees for two of his children who are in secondary school: one at Longla and the other at Commercial College, both of which have good reputations for technical education. Otherwise, he buys rice, beans, oil and salt for the house, relies on his

farm for a lot of his starch foods and keeps some money for medical expenses or other emergencies. His wife roasts plantain, maize or fish on the side of the road in the evening to make extra money.

He buys plastic shoes for his work but would prefer leather; he buys material for his clothes and has them sewn up in the market. He shaves his hair once a month and uses a chewing stick to clean his teeth. He washes completely every evening after work. Besides educating his children, if he had the money he would like to have a three-bedroom house, a TV and upholstered chairs and a dining table. Mostly, his ambitions are for his children and their education, but if he could, he would like to go into trading in household items and selling in the village markets around Bamenda.

Case 5

Florence Afik is married to Peter Ngwah, a butcher, and has two children and lives with them and her three junior brothers in a six-roomed house on Ndamukong Street in Nkwen. She has a shed in Nkwen market where she sews clothes but since these aren't selling at present, she also buys beans at the local market in Santa and rice from Ndop and retails them in her store. This gives her daily money whilst the dresses have to pay for the rent of the shed, school fees for her junior brothers, and contribute to household expenses.

She was married directly she left school and her husband paid the fees to her master from whom she learnt tailoring for 19 months. He also bought her a sewing machine and one of his 'aunts' lent her 10,000 FCFA to buy materials to build up a stock. Success in tailoring depends particularly on having a good range of attractive materials and a large stock on display which is taken as a sign by customers that you earn enough to invest in the business. She shares the shed with three other women sewing clothes who jointly pay the rent of 12,000 FCFA a quarter and they are barely making it at present. What maybe a year ago seemed like a very secure income from butchering and tailoring, allowing them to buy new furniture such as a formica cupboard and upholstered chairs, has suddenly been eroded by a declining market in economic difficulties in which buying both meat and clothes is seen as 'luxuries' to be cut down. Moreover, traders now bring what are locally perceived as 'exotic' French clothes from Douala which are in fact pretty cheaply-made copies of expensive dresses with pleats and sashes and decorations which are difficult to copy using a sewing machine. Those that can still afford to buy new clothes are likely to pay the extra and buy these 'exotic' clothes so her trade is suffering doubly and it may well be that with an influx of cheap imports, local tailoring - except for 'country clothes' (i.e. traditional dress) - will be a rapidly declining occupation.

Case 6

Daniel Awasom is the head of a lineage called Mandzem and claims also to be clan head (*ta'atse*) of Awasom Mandzem and therefore to be the successor of the man who first migrated to Mankom and from whom all the other lineages of the *atse* are derived. Moreover, he claims certain rights which define his degree of independence from the Fon and gives him - with only three other *be'table'atshe's* in Mankon - the right not to enter the place or to remove his cap in front of the Fon.

Such claims are not without dispute and present conditions promote constant tensions as to who does or does not have this or that status or right. Old men glumly comment that poverty, carelessness, or 'civilisation' are all responsible for this breakdown in 'traditional order'. However, there is reason to suspect that achieving in such a *cursus honorum* is by no means new although the means of gaining the wealth needed to back up claims has inflated the proceedings.

Awasom emphatically asserts his claim on every conceivable occasion. If he gives you palmwine from his calabash, he will point out how he has put aside the palm leaf stopper which forbids anyone to take his wine. When you enter the parlour in his compound, you are aware of the numerous photographs on the wall of him at different ages dressed in various 'country gowns'. Traditional stools fringe the wall to the left of the door as you enter; all placed at the right height and order, with the stool waiting for the Fon to visit placed correctly in the corner of the room. On the far wall are hung six sets of bags, cutlasses, gunpowder flasks, a dane gun and a spear; one for each of his sons as well as his own which will go to his successor. He has had five wives and two are with him in the compound with eight of his 17 children. He has building plots for all his sons in the compound which he claims he will never sell even though the land is on the outskirts of Bamenda and he is frequently offered large sums of money for a single plot. Until two years ago, he was also the local agent for a Limbe based firm of importers of building materials. They closed down very abruptly and he still has a case pending against them for damages which - if it ever gets paid - he intends to invest in buying the machinery from South Korea to make toilet rolls. In the meantime, he spends his time at home in the compound with the children whilst his wives go out to farm.

He is also a local branch president of the Cameroon Democratic National Party ('the Party') and he moves to and from keeping 'his people' informed. His political commitment and utter contempt for national pastimes such as football and watching unbelievably violent 'spaghetti

westerns' or kung fu movies is underscored by a personal history of having been imprisoned by the British in Buea for supporting KNDC and the reunification of Cameroon at Independence. 'Development' for Awasom is a political matter, about how 'the Mankon man' or 'the Bamenda man' establishes his rights in a modern world. In terms of how he uses modern materials to rebuild his compound or has a radio to listen to the Cameroon news and world news on the BBC world service, this is no different from how the 'Mankon man' first saw a gun or cloth and realised how it could be put to good use. Materialism, or 'being modern', for him means losing one's rights and tradition and it is frankly incomprehensible to him that anyone should wish this to happen.

SOME GENERALISATIONS

I would argue that certain common themes are found in all these cases. One of these is that achievement is not tangible in 'things' *per se* nor does it belong to any one person in individualistic terms. Whatever resources you received from your father, however small, must never be diminished and it is the responsibility of the incumbent to augment it and pass it on. There is a point in a 'career' when your own achievement should be shelved or abandoned in order to facilitate that of children or junior brothers. Hence if you are an elder, you are obliged to ensure that junior siblings should be given their chance. Richard Zama, for instance, feels he must first use his njangi money to educate his two junior brothers rather than invest it in his street hawking business. Florence Afik must earn the school fees not only for her own children but for her three junior brothers who also live with her. None of the households mentioned are without 'extended family' members being supported in one form or another. In a sense the whole mass of household human and material capital is held in trust, must be augmented and pushed forward into future greater achievement. At your death celebration you will then know how many people have followed you, that your music and dance is still being played and the wealth you created has not been diminished. This was and still is the logic of traditional title and status. But it strongly inflects all forms of contemporary accumulation. For example, Augustine Chi would never 'give up' one business and go into another. He added upholstery to his carpentry business and will 'attach' buying and selling building materials to the upholstery business. It is desirable to diversify sources of income rather than increase in only one direction. A civil servant like Tata is forbidden from business and trading interests and hence invests in building and renting houses, often back to the government. If you are in education you may add diplomas and qualifications throughout your life often despite the fact that they may no longer be used to augment salary or advance your promotion. When you invest money in njangis, you add small ones to larger ones, rotating njangis to investment with interest njangis and then put your shares in the bank or the credit union to eventually get the big loan to

start a new project. No sensible person does not have a project in mind and a long term strategy to which all the little bits of money that come one's way will be devoted. Being seen to be careful with what little one has and using it wisely gains more respect than careless spending. Joseph Chafu for instance was constantly cited as a man who had faced misfortune wisely and by keeping his family together and keeping his children in secondary school maintained a long term strategy.

Material consumption is therefore not a straightforward and personal act of gratification. You acquire and add things to yourself and household as part of that strategy as opportunity allows and without it necessarily matching a particular need. 'A time to eat' is ordered by the larger strategy of achievement. Resources will first be channelled into helping other members of the family or building a house or making savings. It is when you have finished a degree and gained a government post, or you have established a business, or you have achieved promotion to a post that carries a budget, it is then that achievement requires recognition and confirmation. It is then correct to spend; otherwise people will not know what you and your 'family' have achieved. Moreover, the higher the promotion or achievement, the larger the family unit that will come to claim its share. The fact that the staff lists of Cameroon TV and Radio are mainly Ewondo names is scarcely unrelated to them having an Ewondo director (or rather no Cameroonian would believe otherwise). Similarly, it is believed that the banks have no money at present because bank managers gave unsecured loans to 'country cousins'. People believe these to be true regardless of their truth value, because the logic of achievement demands that it should be so. Moreover the greater your achievement, the more you would want to share it among your people for in the end, who would bury you and who would remember your name? If you were reluctant to share your achievement, doubts as to how you achieved success and sorcery accusations would arise. It is surely no coincidence that the Bamileke in Cameroon are most highly regarded for their success in business. They are known for their meanness and for having founded both the *njangi* and *fam' la* (a type of witchcraft which explains sudden wealth as due to having caused the death of a close relative).

A fear of what causes failure drives a work ethic, particularly in the young, that prescribes poverty as a sort of disease from which one can be protected by energy, effort and entrepreneurial skill. The major objective of a young person is to become self-employed, wealthy and to rise in social status. Take for example Richard Zama who is now a hawker in the central market in Bamenda. He left primary school at 13 and worked for two years with a mason carrying sand and cement and learning how to mould cement blocks. When he finished paying off apprenticeship fees by working without pay, he supplied stones for building by spending long hours chipping basalt blocks into regular shapes. With the money he earned from

this, he bought the equipment to make cement blocks and hired himself out to people building houses. They would bring sand and cement to the site and he would mould the blocks. He did this for three years, making contributions to njangi of 10,000 FCFA a month and taking care of his junior brothers. When he had accumulated enough capital to buy stock, he took over hawking by buying boxes of soap and carrying them around town to sell them. He started with 30,000 FCFA capital and built up credit with a wholesaler. As he diversified his stock, he carried it in baskets and then bought a truck to display his wares. He will still mould cement blocks at odd periods but eventually he hopes to open a store in the market or on Commercial Avenue where he can stock a greater range and quantity of goods. Similar trajectories could be described for drivers buying a first taxi or men setting up businesses in metalworking, carpentry or other small artisanal type businesses. The drive is to establish one's autonomy resulting in innumerable small businesses competing with each other for customers. Further success depends on diversifying into more stable sources of income where accidents, breakdowns, health factors and elusive markets will not spell immediate ruin and failure. At present, in Bamenda, these outlets are mainly in retailing with importing and exporting goods as local agents, building houses for rent and building a hotel or health clinic. all these require capital and political influence to secure low interest loans. This is when substantial sums may be distributed on special occasions like galas and celebration dinners or in church ceremonies in order to convince others of one's probity and credit worthiness: to be seen to redistribute part of one's wealth to family members and the poor confirms one's upward mobility. Few make this jump and even fewer stay there for long. There are frequent reports of how an important businessman or politician may use his wealth to buy charms or to enlist diviners, marabouts and other specialists to protect his position and to clear his path of obstacles to further success. Either fear of failure or the frustration brought on by insuperable obstacles to further advance - such as not having the requisite educational qualifications or not being able to acquire a loan - often lead to a mid-life crisis in such personalities accompanied by morbid fears of being attacked. This crisis is expressed through guilt and anger over the demands of family members, despair at the decline of what one has built up and loss of autonomy. Depression and resorting to heavy drinking often result. Success is therefore a complex balance of using one's personal power to accumulate wealth, to exercise control over people and exert political influence whilst at the same time not promoting envy or becoming vulnerable to one's enemies.

UNCERTAINTY AND FEAR OF FAILURE.

Representing success is not therefore a simple reading off from established and fixed criteria of achievement that are obvious both to their possessor and to envious spectators. Projecting a life style and defining its form through material consumption can instead be the means of coming to

terms with and negotiating through these often contradictory tendencies in the achievement of success. The principal motive is that of closure; the exclusion of personal and group achievement from criticism and rancor and its presentation as beyond question in its sheer massivity and weight of accumulation.

However this suggests that the exclusionary strategy at work in such acts of social closure is to banish from awareness the conditions of uncertainty and the symptoms of decline on which personal downfall is presaged. But the pressure on personal lives and the fear engendered by the prospect that what little or how much one has gained may suddenly evaporate is manifest in a number of disparate social acts. The violence meted out to 'thieves' in Bamenda is one example. In the last six months there has been a spate of five public beatings and lynchings of persons deemed guilty of theft by public hue and cry. Theft is not a matter of loss of 'things' that have a value independent of their possession. It represents instead a diminution of the massivity of accumulation upon which personal evaluation, confidence and security depends. Cameroonians, used to a long period of 'progress' by which they mean effectively growth in the conditions for accumulation, now faced with recession and the erosion of many of their hard fought gains, mete out both savage punishments and a sort of perverse glory to those who resolve to stay in the swim by taking from others. Cameroon now has its 'National Team of Armed robbers' and its 'Junior national team of robbers'; titles modelled on the national obsession with football. The members of the 'National Team' are photographed on the front cover of the national newspaper along with their captors and some of their stolen goods, smiling and proud in their new found glory even though they are condemned to death by firing squad the next day.

Uncertainty and fear of the conditions of personal downfall are a matter for public space and the possibility this allows of discussing attitudes without personal attributions being made. Public taxis are the most well used space for informal conversations and their interiors are often plastered with stickers that reproduce various mottos and sayings that mix grandiosity with fear and anxiety.

One genre exhorts the reader to deny his inevitable decline due to the malevolence of others or personal 'bad luck':

'Let my enemy live long and see what I will be in the future'

or

'Downfall of a man is not the end of his life'

Another reflects uncertainty and the suspicion of others
 'I am afraid of my friends, even you'.

Another is the need to enlist supernatural aid in one's support, equally reflected in the number of Indian or Chinese charms and amulets that dangle over the windscreen or the Xmas decorations of tinsel and flickering lights, crucifixes and stickers of religious symbols that festoon taxis, and snack bars.

'Don't give up, your miracle is on the way'
 or
 'Education and beauty without God means hellfire'

Finally, there is the unremitting despair of
 'Man no di no'
 or
 'Too much desire of money leads to death'

This unremitting anxiety over loss and downfall in public spaces stands often in sharp contrast to the house and other dimensions of personal life. Clothes, furnishing, the serving of food and drinks are constant renditions of security and the continuation of the conditions of ease and success. The house and its members share food and eat together as an act of closure against the forces that will dissolve and destroy their conditions of existence. This point needs further elaboration since sharing food and honest speech are closely linked as are the sharing of drink and being of 'one voice' in more 'traditional settings'. The room set aside ideally in any house for 'an important stranger' (a stranger is almost literally a 'gift from god' - someone from outside who provides access to resources and a friendship network unavailable to others) combines with the 'parlour' as the site of the best furnishing in the house and also the focus of heaviest religious symbolism.

THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF SUCCESS

Success is motivated by desire i.e. the gap that exists between want and its satisfaction. Consumption in other words is rarely a simple reflection of pre-established success, except perhaps as an underconsumptionist ethic. A lifestyle is more than tastes and dispositions that you rather neutrally acquire as a feature of belonging to some category independent of it viz. class, age, gender etc. In the setting of Bamenda, consumption is more akin to fantasy, a means of resolving a sense of lack or absence, of convincing all concerned, in particular oneself, that

one's career is progressing and on course, of maintaining public confidence in one's credit worthiness and reliability and implicating all concerned with the forces of progress and development and convincing them of one's own special niche within it. If fantasy means personal, private delusion as opposed to public 'reality' then it is clearly the wrong concept to describe such a setting since, while it may in the end be delusionary, the consumption of success in Bamenda is on the grand scale and shared by all.

In the postcolonial era in Cameroon perhaps the greatest illusion has been the incredible esteem bestowed on western education. In a complex manner, it had become internalised as 'truth' that the superiority of western culture was rooted in education. It was through education as a special kind of knowledge that the Whites had achieved superiority in technology and material life. There is a saying in anglophone Cameroon that 'the Whites used their witchcraft to invent things and the Blackman used his to kill his brothers'. The result has been to create an association between modern identity, the consumption of the products of western technologies, and progress in education as the system of credentialism on which access to all privileges and in particular the wealth to acquire these items must depend. Admiration for all things western and a desire to 'catch up' by living in a western manner and consuming western things is accompanied by a scant regard for how this was to be achieved. Cameroon is a setting where 90% of personal resources depend directly on the public economy. Access to bank loans and other forms of credit as well as informal savings as in the different forms of *njangis* are best secured by those with predictable salaries. Hence consumption of western imports and their associated life styles depends largely on the functioning of the state economy and gaining access to it, hence the circuit of education - qualification - civil service position and salary - income diversification - facilitates and is facilitated by a western oriented lifestyle. However it does not result in any simple emulation of being 'western' - to be 'modern' yet African is perhaps a more accurate rendering although for the majority of people for whom an understanding of both 'modernity' and of 'western lifestyle' is derived from TV, films and magazines, it is the fantastic 'Dallas' image of luxury and personal appearance that is established as the ideal standard to be achieved.

Style and succes: Working in an office in Bamenda, going to church on Sunday and public official/government occasions are the settings in which people will display their mobility and wealth through the acquisition of western style clothes and shoes. Imported clothes from France and shoes from Italy are the most favoured at present because although they are more expensive than goods imported from Nigeria, they are considered more elegant and distinctive. Office jobs and administrative jobs also require dressing in a western style, particularly since the advent of President Biya who noticeably dresses always in Western business suits. People also have their clothes made from French mail order catalogues that circulate between the different tailors in the

Central Market. You pick a style you appreciate and a copy will be run up using materials you supply. Comparing the images in the catalogues to the copies made is illuminating. Firstly it is the image of elegance that predominantly white models in the photographs exude which is being grasped but in the rendering it goes through subtle transformation. For example, the catalogues are predominantly of formal clothes for women in pastel and other rather muted colours. Bright colours in the western catalogues are a sign of youthful impetuosity and willfulness and largely limited to the teenage market. The copies made in Bamenda combine the emphasis on pleats and sashes and elegant style of the dresses for 'mature women' with vivid lurex colours often combined in patches or panels to give maximum impact. Again showing the quality of the cloth or the combination of different styles of expensive cloth in the same dress will be emphasised. The imported dresses and their copies should also have numerous pieces of costume jewellery at the shoulder and the waist or/and patterns of sequins on the shoulder areas and chest. Gold jewellery accompanies both male and female smart attire, usually chains and medallions around the neck, heavy gold watches and wrist chains. The various combinations emphasise visual impact and 'being noticed' with imported or ready made, the quality and amount of cloth and the matching of colours with suitable shoes and hats. Secondly what is rejected is the pretty muted sexuality of the catalogues. However, this restraint is compromised by the more explicit sexuality of imported western 'soft pornographic' and Indian films with the former confirming the widespread view that western white girls are incredibly permissive. Bamenda girls who expose flesh in their dressing, wear lipstick or excessive eye make-up risk being called 'free girls' which whilst not meaning prostitutes extends the category to girls looking for 'pleasure in town'. The respectable and responsible women by contrast will be married and have had children and will wear a wrapper and blouse at home or when going to the village, regardless of her work attire. It is rare to see couples kissing or showing close physical contact in public places and overt sexuality is absent from advertising in public places although TV advertising of drinks and cosmetics definitely assert sexual promise which, since they are in French, are another sign of francophone perfidy to anglophone Bamenda parents. Retaining sexual respectability and becoming a housewife is part of a woman's security and there is a lot of talk of girls on their own or living in the father's house with a child having been deceived, knowing it will be difficult for her to find a husband. In other words the undercurrent is one of frequent casual relations and marital infidelity in contrast to the ideal secure woman who has children, particularly sons, and some means of income for school fees and medical expenses which gives her some independence of the vagaries of husbands.

Luxury and comfort: Visitors are welcomed in most households and the parlour is the public meeting space where guests will be given drink and something to eat. They can also form family meeting places if the household head has a title and numerous chairs and stools may be

required in anticipation of family meetings. Even the food sharing and eating group can frequently be more than ten members; so the parlour is usually the largest space in the house where they will also consume food. It is so taken for granted that any household has a parlour that people when talking of the size of their houses will only describe the number of rooms, meaning bedrooms.

The parlour is the centre of comfort that the household can achieve and the quality of the furnishing is taken as a straightforward indicator of the household/family fortunes. If there is a carpet in the house it will be here or in the more luxurious residences like Fofoung Tata's the cement floor will have been covered with ceramic tiles. A parlour will ideally have the following elements of furnishing: dining table and chairs; a cupboard for storing plates, glasses, cups and cutlery and other household effects (note these are not brought in from the kitchen); a TV and video housed in a specially built cupboard that can be wheeled away into a locked room if all the family are out; upholstered chairs with a centre table and side tables all decorated with doyleys (crocheted cloth protectors for the back and arms of the chairs); a stereo and/or a radio; a wall clock and a telephone. In more recently built houses, the dining area will often be separate from the sitting area with a specially built open shelf unit plus cupboard between the two areas. Heavy velvet or thick braided cloth are favoured for curtains which are scarcely needed to keep out the cold.

There are several elements of the furnishing which are worth elaborating upon. Firstly TV is a recent innovation whilst the video is more longstanding - Cameroon is probably one of the few countries where the video preceded TV by a long period of time. TV's are never switched off as long as there is something to see. Unlike the decorous English household where to continue to watch TV when a guest arrives is considered the height of bad manners, it would be considered an insult in a Bamenda household to deprive a guest of a share in the viewing. Due to the fact that most programs are in French, occasionally the TV sound may be turned down and the stereo turned on to accompany the pictures and conversation on disparate subjects will go on whilst all concerned stare fixedly at the screen. TV is a unifying force which draws neighbours from all around and family members from even further afield, especially when the football is on. Given that less than 10% of all programs shown are produced in Cameroon due to the fact that emphasis has been on gaining technical expertise rather than the capacity to produce relevant programs, it is inevitable that most of the viewing time is taken up by cheap, imported western TV programs and films. Secondly, the parlour is often decorated with tinsel, flashing lights and other Xmas-like ornaments that gives a strong impression of festivity to the room. It is an imagery of celebration that, as with clothes, associates strong luminous colours and glitter with success and perhaps the luck or the conditions that have promoted it. Religious symbolism

in the form of calendars, crucifixes and, in particular in Catholic households, patron saints and Christ, can be included in this decoration. Thirdly, the comfort of the upholstered chairs is a focus of some concern. A set of armchairs and accompanying side tables to put your drink on, will cost between 250,000 and 300,000 FCFA (c. £500 - £600) - a not inconsiderable sum. They are made locally using dunlop foam on a wooden frame and covered with a suitable cloth material. Their quality is judged by the size of the chair - it should be as large and as deep as possible; by the thickness and the amount of the foam used; and by the quality of the covering material by which is meant really its weight and thickness. Actually, such devices cover a multitude of sins and frequently the frame breaks due to the fact that soft white wood has been used and it has been hammered together with six inch nails. The older colonial style of hard wood chairs with cushions were probably more durable propositions. However to have wood exposed in the new models is a sign of their cheapness - these are called 'le petit model' versus 'le grand model'. What these large upholstered chairs emulate are the luxury furniture of international hotels and other such 'jet setting' ambiances which for many Cameroonians that have never travelled abroad, are the epitome of the western luxurious lifestyle; a view confirmed by cheap TV programs and by the fact that this is how expensive hotels in Yaounde or Douala will be furnished.

Images of the beautiful: Success, style, luxury have, in material culture terms, strong associations with sheen and a certain luminosity, witnessed in the preference for electric colours in clothing and house decoration. By contrast with an English middle class sensibility of muted colours to promote harmony and tranquility and not to draw attention to oneself, a stridency and overt self declaration of personal or group worth underlies consumption in Bamenda. There are analogues to the way in which English middle class culture looks down upon what it perceives to be the cheap and tawdry vulgarity of working class mass consumption. Images of personal beauty in Bamenda display a similar association of brightness and sheen with personal worth and an equivalent concern that if 'overdone' there is a danger of slippage into 'vulgarity' and being branded as of loose morals. Eye make-up, plucking the eyebrows, heavy red lip-stick and the more luminous nail varnish combined with a short dress were most frequently pointed out to me by men as indicators of 'free women' which in turn are internalisations of bowdlerised western notions of the same. For many women the indicators were more muted. They would often cite to me as a sign of a not quite respectable woman, the use of a toothpaste called Email Landry because it reddened the lips in contrast to use of Macleans which is white and only cleans the teeth.

Both men and women in Bamenda rub their bodies with oil in order to protect their skin against cool weather and the dry season. Skin that is dry and flaky is a sign of ill health and is

decidedly unbeautiful. Some of the worst diseases caused by sorcery, e.g. leprosy, are seen to attack the skin and cause lesions and eruptions. Health, in this sense, is on the skin and witnessed in its retaining a supple and shiny appearance. In a traditional marriage, the girl will be rubbed with palm oil and camwood by the father and mother's father as a blessing before she is sent to the husband's compound. Most men rub their bodies and scalp with liquid vaseline whilst younger men will probably invest in one of the scented body oils. For women there is an enormous range of body oils on sale with the most popular being either a form of clear oil called glycerine 900 that is fairly cheap and can be mixed with a more expensive scented cream or the expensive range of perfumed oils like Mixa or Joanna, imported from France. A good oil stays on the skin and doesn't soak in and quickly appear dry. Hence the more refined and expensive oils are not necessarily the more popular or will be mixed with a heavier base to give a shiny appearance to the skin. Also women would often say that the skin should be 'sweet' (=tangy or salty not sugary) which I took to be not a matter of smell but of taste, an allusion to the close skin/mouth contact between children and mothers in suckling and carrying; in the eating and preparing of food; and in sexual intercourse.

Besides skin care, the hair will be the most important focus of attention. There are a large number of hair products for sale that soften, curl or straighten the hair and if left alone, it should at least appear shiny and bright on special occasions. Otherwise the head is wrapped in a piece of cloth, particularly if a wrapper is worn or else a woman will wear a hat to accompany a western dress. Older men will rub vaseline in their hair whilst younger men are more likely now to have it fashionably cut (shaved at the sides and straightened on top) or softened and curled. But for younger women in town, braiding or perming the hair by adding on 'mesh' i.e. false hair pieces, or having a separate wig made, is preferred. A combination of long curled or permed hair with lightened skin (skin lighteners are used), plucked eyebrows and eyeshadow, emulating a North American 'black aesthetic', distinguishes some young girls who go to nightclubs from older women who may braid their hair or soften and curl it. Among young girls and unmarried women there is a complex code of appearance which basically is about sexual morals and the desire to have a good time without being branded a 'free girl'.

Dirt and cleanliness: Modernity and success have elective affinities with hygiene and the removal of dirt in Bamenda. 'Primitiveness', dirt and nakedness are what are being escaped from although this is a more long standing theme in ideas of progress. But here dirt, as matter out of place, was never a problem except when it came into contradiction with wearing clothes to cover nakedness. Sweeping an earth floor or a compound yard is still for many rural households a matter of keeping matter in place rather than hygiene. Moreover when an old mother comments favourably on the advantages of an earth floor for absorbing children's piss

whereas a concrete floor is 'washed' with a cloth that may be used to next clean the dishes, you may begin to wonder. However all villages and quarters in Bamenda now have primary health care centres that advise on hygiene. Each will have its Good Health Care Committee with political leaders, teachers, religious leaders and traditional herbalists ensuring modern cleanliness. Particular attention is paid to parasitic infections and diarrhoea in children with the prescription of use of antiseptic soaps, sanitary towels and toothpaste in personal hygiene and a major concern to develop the political muscle to have good water supplies introduced. Cleanliness is not only associated with success in a metaphorical sense but getting a water supply or a health centre built and staffed in your village is a certain index of influence in high places. Hence to be clean is full of complex allusions to power and success many of them quite real in their material effects.

The Body: People will claim to bathe at least once a day and washing hands before food is rigorously observed. There are over twenty brands of antiseptic or medicated soaps on sale in Bamenda, all of them imported and varying in price and function. They are thought to prevent scabies, felaria, skin rashes and dry season sores. Teeth are cleaned with a chewing stick or toothpaste, with or without a brush, body hair is regularly cut or shaved and in general a smooth appearance is aimed for. Bathing soaps are used in conjunction with rubbing oils and the combination of highly scented soaps and oils are widely preferred by urban sophisticates.

Clothes: Children from an early age are made to wash their own clothes and adults will either do it themselves or have a junior brother or other relative to do it for them. It is usually done once a week, sometimes more often in the dry season. Clothes are ironed in part because of the risk of flies laying eggs in the cloth, but equally for the appearance.

Household: cement floors may be washed once a day during the wet season or at least once a week during the dry season. Children are raised with this as one of their first duties, together with carrying water. The walls are rarely washed and usually dusted every now and again of cobwebs nor are they regularly painted. However the parlour is particularly well cleaned with the furniture surfaces wiped and polished and chairs dusted.

There exists a ritual of cleanliness which rather like brushing the teeth or reading the newspaper, has the appearance of morning prayer. The association of Modernity and cleanliness from the perspective of disciplinary technologies and surveillance has been systematically explored by Foucault and applies with equal force in Bamenda. This is not to deny its obvious physical effects, but the authority of the state is both challenged and extended depending on its capacity to extend health care. Convincing as many as possible that their welfare and prosperity is bound up systematically with personal and household cleanliness is one of the most widespread indicators of modern identity.

Eating and the preparation of food: 'Modern' households in Bamenda witness the most significant transformation in the area of eating and scheduling of meals and in sleeping arrangements. To contrast this with 'traditional' compounds is overdrawn since various combinations and solutions have arisen. However, many educated and modernising household heads will contrast their lifestyle against that of their parents in terms of husband/wife and children relations and the way this is expressed in the eating and sharing of food and in sleeping arrangements.

A man who prides himself on maintaining traditional life would never eat with his wife/wives. She should instead bring him food in the morning before setting off for the farm and leave it inside his house. He meanwhile will return from tapping his raphia wine, find the food and may invite the children to come and eat with him. The morning meal is not only separate but also a substantial meal of plantain, beans and soup. When his wife returns in the evening she will then prepare the main meal of pounded cocoyam or corn fufu and take him his share. If he has more than one wife, then each is obliged to bring him his share which he may then distribute to children or other members of the compound, if he doesn't wish to eat it himself. Men like Daniel Awasom or Augustine Chi would either eat alone or with other men the food brought them by their wives.

By contrast Fofoung Tata or Jean Tashye would have 'breakfast' with their wife and children. This consists of a hot drink often called 'tea' although it may be tea, coffee, bournvita or ovaltine and bread. A mid day meal is taken usually in a restaurant or eating house and it is the evening meal that will be the substantial food cooked by the wife for the entire household. In other words, a distinction between light and heavy meals has been introduced combined with new foods like bread and beverages (all require imported raw materials or processed foods) and accompanied by a reorganisation of meals into 'family occasions' when sharing and eating together must coincide. With frequently more than 10 or 12 members to be fed, cooking can be a major operation and is one reason why, although the desired 'self contained' house will have its kitchen and gas cooker, a wood fire kitchen outside is still preferred because it can take the large pots needed to cook quantities of corn fufu or colocasia. In a sense this is part of a more general distinction between rules of commensality that effectively serve to separate persons and rules that effectively serve to segment time and define functions and activities within segments of time (breakfast, lunch, dinner etc). A modernising perception of time therefore accompanies this transformation in the sense described by Bourdieu as simple versus cyclical time. Sleeping arrangements effectively follow a similar pattern with the separation of persons particularly of gender (men from women; women with children; older boys separated from older girls)

transformed into the husband and wife sleeping together but separated from children following a principle of separation and conjunction of males and females roughly according to age and generational rule.

CONCLUSION

The main theme of this paper has been to look at patterns of material consumption as a means of negotiating 'modern' identity in a personal and household setting. I take the latter in a perhaps too straightforward sense as founded in an evaluation of personal worth and esteem which, in turn, cannot be separated from that of the immediate household and 'extended family members' whose grievance and envy would radically affect one's own fortunes. The desire for success is matched therefore by a desire to restore and preserve - to mitigate destructiveness and promote a mores of constraint - witnessed in the tendency to brand as 'free' those, and there are many of them, who desire to be too modern and too 'western'. The problem that has still to be resolved is that all the conditions of success and the means of evaluating and confirming achievement are of external origin. Both the means in terms of access to technology, education and specialist knowledge and the images to form identities are rooted in an overt admiration for 'western lifestyles' and affluence. This can be too superficial a view however and it is the merit of studying the subtleties of the way in which these impulses have been internalised as material culture that one can realise an autonomy of expression has been achieved, full of uncertainties and ambiguities, but nonetheless lodged in a lifestyle that is still distinctively Bamenda.

DISCUSSANT'S NOTE

SESSION VII - ACCUMULATION IN AGRICULTURE

Georges Courade

Communications présentées:

Jeanne Koopmann Henn - Food Policy, Food production, and the Family Farm in Cameroon

Peter Geschiere - Accumulation and Non-Accumulation in Agriculture - Reginal Comparisons

Henk Meilink - Price Policy and Food Production

Nassourou Saibou - Paysans et innovation: Le cas des maraîchers des Meskine.

Les aspects historiques de l'accumulation ont été évoqués par Jean Pierre Warnier et les intervenants précédents. Ce qui a été avancé reste d'un grand intérêt pour notre propos.

S'agissant des systèmes agricoles, un certain nombre de questions sous-jacentes méritent attention, si l'on veut se donner un cadre d'analyse et mesurer les limitations internes et externes aux processus d'accumulation dans la production agricole qui n'ont que rarement débouché sur un "capitalisme agraire".

1. UN CADRE D'ANALYSE ADAPTÉ AUX PROBLEMES DE L'AGRICULTURE

A. Le problème technico-économique ne peut être éludé dans la mesure où la productivité du travail et/ou des surfaces cultivées dépendent étroitement des technologies mises en oeuvre dans les exploitations agricoles. La "modernisation" d'exploitations agricoles de petite taille passe par la mise au point de systèmes techniques qui peuvent favoriser ou entraver l'émergence d'unités de production plus importantes et/ou plus performantes quant à la rentabilité des moyens de production. Dans un cas, l'accumulation pourra s'avérer "extensive" (grosse consommation de travail ou d'espace pour obtenir la rentabilité souhaitée), dans l'autre, on la qualifiera d'"intensive" (productivité plus élevée par unité de surface ou de travail considérée).

Ces considérations sont importantes pour l'avenir, dans la mesure où la diffusion de matériel végétal ou animal amélioré n'a touché que quelques filières bien déterminées: cultures d'exportation, riz irrigué. L'enjeu est de taille à l'heure où l'on mobilise les capacités scientifiques et techniques internationales pour mettre au point une "révolution verte" pour l'Afrique. D'autant que les structures sociales et politiques peuvent tirer parti ou ignorer le levier

de l'innovation pour recomposer le paysage social autour de producteurs agricoles d'importance moyenne (plus de 10 ha) ou d'une agriculture fortement liée à des opérateurs marchands ou industriels (agriculture "contractuelle") maîtrisant la filière au-delà de la production.

b. Un deuxième aspect propre à la production agricole reste la gestion à moyen et long terme du patrimoine naturel qu'elle utilise. La question de la reproduction et de la sauvegarde du "*capital écologique*" dans un pays où nombre d'économies agraires sont devenues prédatrices de l'environnement, trace les limites "physiques" de l'accumulation dans le secteur. Faut-il rappeler que la logique agronomique la plus souvent observée au Cameroun est celle qui consiste à économiser le temps de travail plutôt que la terre dans les zones où celle-ci n'apparaît pas comme un bien rare suite à la pression démographique ou à la concurrence entre formes différentes d'exploitation (lati et micro-fundia)?

L'agriculture extensive, la réduction de la durée de la jachère non compensée par la fumure, une modernisation hâtive ne tenant pas compte des cycles écologiques conduisent ici et là à une dégradation irréversible du capital écologique. La fragilité de certains milieux, les fluctuations de l'écosystème n'autorisent pas autre chose que des stratégies de survie chez nombre de populations vivant dans des conditions très contraignantes, compte-tenu des techniques utilisées.

c. *La dimension socio-culturelle* qui constitue le fond de la communication de Peter Geschiere est une variable qui explique les différences constatées entre sociétés ayant une activité agricole dans des milieux semblables. Le mot d'ordre "enrichissez-vous" est loin de faire l'unanimité dans les différentes sociétés camerounaises. Certaines encouragent l'ascension matérielle des individus; d'autres aspirent à ce que l'on a appelé au Sénégal un certain "égalitarisme économique" (Jean-Marc Gastellu); bon nombre exercent un contrôle étroit de leur membres et ont mis en place des mécanismes empêchant efficacement l'apparition d'un capitalisme rural d'origine endogène, voire exogène. Ces *mécanismes de nivellement* sont d'autant plus efficaces qu'ils utilisent à la fois le contrôle des moyens de productoin (force de travail autochtone ou immigrée, par exemple) comme les sanctions sociales ou symboliques à l'encontre de ceux qui cherchent cette promotion individuelle dont le groupe n'en espère rien en tant qu'entité collective. Les exemples donnés dans la communication de Peter Geschiere donnent une idée de l'ensemble des obstacles dressés par les sociétés contre les individus tentés d'accumuler à leur profit et des opportunités qu'offrent certaines circonstances pour le développement des disparités économiques.

d. La construction d'une société politique que recherche l'Etat camerounais depuis sa création peut freiner ou accélérer l'accumulation dans le monde agricole. La recherche d'une *alliance entre couches urbaines marchandes et bureaucratiques et élites agraires* a constitué dans des pays comme la Côte d'Ivoire la clé de voûte du régime. Dans ce cas, l'Etat a mis en place les conditions nécessaires à l'émergence de ces notabilités agrariennes qui lui assureront une base sociale plus large que celle qui se trouve directement impliquée dans sa gestion. Il dispose pour cela de nombreux moyens comme opérateur du développement (il peut soutenir des exploitations capitalistes de taille "moyenne" ou des entreprises agricoles) et comme régulateur du système agro-alimentaire (par les prix, la protection, le crédit, la manipulation du taux de change, les subventions, l'organisation des marchés, etc.). Sur cette question importante, les contributions de Jeanne K. Henn et d'Henk Meilink apportent nombre d'informations sur l'attitude peu "pro-paysanne" de l'Etat camerounais et sur les contradictions qu'il affiche.

Le retour de la priorité agricole après "l'intermède pétrolier" dans la stratégie de développement économique du pays dans la crise repose avec plus d'acuité cette question puisque le dernier plan affiche sa volonté de créer des exploitations de moyenne importance sans autre précision sur les moyens et les itinéraires pour atteindre cet objectif.

e. Un dernier point mérite attention: *les logiques économiques* qui sous-tendent les choix des filières pour l'accumulation dans le secteur agricole et qui président à l'utilisation du surplus dégagé par celle-ci, une fois la "reproduction simple ou élargie" assurée.

On s'est souvent appesanti sur les formes ostentatoires de consommation, le souci de jouir (de "manger") immédiatement la richesse créée plutôt que de la réinvestir dans des activités productives. Bref, on s'est demandé si l'esprit d'entreprise existait au Cameroun. On observera ici que le taux d'épargne en milieu rural camerounais est très élevé par rapport à celui de l'américain moyen (5 fois plus élevé sans doute) et que l'on a souvent reproché aux classes capitalistes d'Occident de préférer le placement financier à l'investissement productif. La publication prochaine de l'enquête budget-consommation permettra d'y voir plus clair sur cette question et, sans doute, de nuancer le propos selon les régions.

On notera enfin que la rentabilité du secteur agricole est faible et aléatoire. On ne peut espérer un amortissement du capital en deux, trois ans comme on a pu l'observer dans le transport ou l'immobilier à certaines périodes. Un investissement dans une cacaoyère ne se conçoit que sur une période de deux décennies après cinq ans d'entretien sans rapport. Et encore, qui peut prédire la rentabilité "réelle" (inflation exclue) d'un tel investissement? De fait, la gestion à court terme du capital en période d'incertitude comme l'existence d'opportunités plus "juteuses"

détourne de l'agriculture nombre d'investisseurs si tout un système d'aides, de subventions, de dégrèvements fiscaux, de primes ou de bonifications de crédit ne viennent créer artificiellement des conditions favorables à l'accumulation dans ce secteur.

Ceci veut dire que si l'Etat camerounais souhaite la création d'un capitalisme agraire, il lui faut mettre sur pied une "véritable" politique agricole qui lui coûtera cher comme à tous les pays qui en ont une. Dispose-t-il de la marge de manoeuvre nécessaire à l'heure où il entre dans une cure d'assainissement qui peut s'avérer assez longue parce que tardive?

II. DES SPÉCIFICITÉS CAMEROUNAISES

Les trois communications soulignent certains traits qui structurent les mentalités camerounaises et qui conditionnent le développement du capitalisme en milieu rural.

a. Les variations régionales

Vis-à-vis de l'enrichissement individuel, les sociétés du Cameroun méridional ont des attitudes très contrastées, favorables dans l'Ouest et le Nord-Ouest, réticentes dans les terres de colonisation, hostiles ailleurs comme le rappelle Peter Geschiere. Le Cameroun doit "gérer" cette hétérogénéité des attitudes.

b. Une préférence de l'élite pour l'accumulation sans risques

"La chèvre broute là où elle est attachée". Voilà une phrase souvent citée au Cameroun qui illustre bien ce souci de profiter d'une situation privilégiée au sein de l'appareil d'Etat, d'une position dominante ou exclusive dans un marché ou une filière pour accumuler sans prendre le risque que court tout investisseur dans son anticipation des profits (ou des pertes) futures. L'accumulation dynastique (sur plusieurs générations) ne semble pas être à l'ordre du jour, sauf dans les sociétés qui s'efforcent de préserver l'héritage.

b. L'accumulation étatique au détriment de l'accumulation privée?

"Il ne peut y avoir deux crocodiles dans le même marigot", dit la sagesse populaire. Sans le "bouclier" étatique, nous l'avons vu, il ne peut y avoir d'accumulation durable dans le seul secteur agricole. Au Cameroun toutefois, l'ampleur des prélèvements étatiques (voir la contribution de J.K. Henn) combinée à la faiblesse des prix internationaux sur les cultures d'exportation provenant de l'agriculture familiale limite sérieusement la rémunération paysanne.

Et comme aucune politique agricole ne vient compenser le manque à gagner par l'aide aux structures ou la protection du marché alimentaire (voir la contribution d'H. Meilink), on voit mal la "cohabitation" de deux formes d'accumulation.

c. La survalorisation du diplôme

"Na degree we de chop". Cette expression pidgin-english traduit bien ce que la masse scolarisée et leurs parents attendent des diplômes en termes d'accumulation dans le sud du pays où les taux de scolarisation dépassent depuis les années soixante-dix, sauf dans le Nord-Ouest, 80 à 90%. Jean Mfoulou n'a-t-il pas rappelé que l'école formelle éloignait du monde agricole malgré tous les efforts de "ruralisation" de l'enseignement tentés dès l'indépendance? Comment les ruraux ne seraient-ils pas tentés, eux aussi, d'investir dans l'éducation au vu de certaines réussites sociales des premiers temps de la mise en place d'un appareil d'Etat important?

d. L'indifférence des pouvoirs publics à l'égard du monde agricole

Les contributions de J.K. Henn et H. Meilink tentent de tracer les contours de l'intervention de l'Etat camerounais au-delà des pétitions de principe, rituellement pro-paysannes.

Les auteurs s'interrogent sur l'indifférence du pouvoir à l'égard du monde agricole et constatent que la régulation élémentaire qui est réalisée (politique des prix des cultures d'exportation, prix de quelques denrées de base souvent importées) se fait, quand elle a une certaine efficacité, au profit des consommateurs citadins. En fait, le projet politique n'est pas pro-agrarien et il n'y a pas de lobby paysan pour prendre en charge les intérêts du monde rural. De plus l'accumulation bureaucratique qui se fait à l'ombre de l'Etat ne se traduit pas nécessairement en investissements agricoles.

Peter Geschiere s'interroge sur la place que peuvent occuper les citoyens absentéistes dans le monde agricole camerounais sans que l'on sache l'importance de cette démarche encouragée beaucoup plus explicitement en Côte-d'Ivoire par Houphouët-Boigny.

III. L'INTERACTION DU DEDANS ET DU DEHORS: DU MACRO-ÉCONOMIQUE AU MICRO-SOCIAL

Les trois communications analysent à des degrés différents les processus réussis ou avortés d'accumulation, d'exploitation ou de répartition des bénéfices de l'intervention étatique en portant une attention privilégiée aux sociétés elles-mêmes (P. Geschiere), à l'environnement macro-économique (H. Meilink) ou à l'interaction entre les dynamiques internes et les contraintes externes (J.K. Henn).

Henk Meilink présente la politique et la production vivrière du Cameroun du point de vue macro-économique soulignant à la fois la faiblesse de l'intervention de l'Etat et, par voie de conséquence, l'évanescence des instruments statistiques permettant de connaître l'évolution du système alimentaire.

Jeanne K. Henn, partant de l'idée que les décideurs ne sont guère favorables à la production vivrière traditionnelle montre, à l'aide d'enquêtes précises sur le temps de travail dans la Lékié, comment les prélèvements relevés sur le cacao entraînent un sur-travail et une paupérisation des femmes engagées dans la production vivrière pour l'auto-subsistance et l'approvisionnement urbain. Elle trace les grandes lignes d'une politique plus favorable montrant la réponse positive des femmes quand elles sont bien reliées au marché urbain.

Peter Geschiere s'interroge sur les mécanismes sociaux, les circonstances historiques et les cultures collectives qui vérouillent de l'intérieur les velléités d'accumulation ou qui les favorisent dans les différentes sociétés camerounaises (Maka de l'Est, Bété du Centre-Sud, Bakossi du Sud-Ouest, Bamileké de l'Ouest).

Le contrôle des moyens de production (notamment du travail), les systèmes d'héritage, l'utilisation de la sorcellerie comme menace, l'existence de mouvements migratoires différencient ces sociétés. Il constate qu'il faut rechercher dans l'existence d'inégalités anciennes, la source de l'"acceptation" des différenciations actuelles.

IV. QUELLES PERSPECTIVES?

La mise en oeuvre d'une politique agricole va s'imposer dans le cadre de la gestion de la crise financière. Elle coïncide avec le développement du vivrier marchand pour l'approvisionnement des villes. Va-t-on vers une accélération de l'accumulation dans le secteur agricole entamé vers les années quatre-vingt par la multiplication des plantations villageoises? Les citoyens seront-ils incités à investir dans l'agriculture et le feront-ils? L'Etat pourra-t-il mettre sur pied une véritable politique agricole autour de la mise en oeuvre de nouveaux systèmes technologiques? Autant de questions cruciales qui commandent le processus d'accumulation dans l'agriculture.

FOOD POLICY, FOOD PRODUCTION, AND THE FAMILY FARM IN CAMEROON

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INTRODUCTION: A BRIEF HISTORY OF AGRICULTURAL POLICY

Since its independence in 1960, Cameroon has enjoyed better rates of growth in the food sector than most other African countries. The record, however, is one of stability rather than growth. Total output has grown about as fast as the population, while the rate of growth in the marketed share has just about kept up with the rate of urbanization (USDA, 1981).

Cameroon's agricultural sector is composed of both a capitalist and parastatal large-scale estate sector and of traditional family farms. The smallholder or peasant sector produces an overwhelming 93% of total agricultural output. But even though the traditional peasantry is the source of a significant share of state revenues and foreign exchange as well as the historic provider of the national food supply, the Cameroonian government has done relatively little to stimulate smallholder production (World Bank, 1984:44). The traditional food sector, in particular, has been seriously neglected. This paper explores the reasons for this neglect and its implications for the goal of food self-sufficiency.

For many years government policy in the food sector was limited to attempts to control food prices and to the promotion of large-scale import-substitution projects in sugar, rice and vegetable oils. I will argue in this paper that both of these policies run counter to the interests of traditional food farmers and therefore have negative implications for the economic welfare of the great majority of the rural population.

When urban food prices rose somewhat faster than overall inflation in the mid-1970s, the official analysis asserted that the traditional small-scale food traders were using "market power" to cheat both producers and consumers. A state food marketing agency was created in order to cut the private sector's "excessive" commercial margins. Perhaps because the margins were not, in fact, excessive, (since the sector is extremely competitive), but were rising due to very rapidly increasing transportation costs, the state marketing operation was unable to reduce its costs below those of the petty traders and, in attempting to do so by squeezing producer prices, was itself accused of trying to cheat the farmers. After a decade of subsidized operation, the state food marketing effort was discontinued. (See Guyer, 1987)

On the production side, nearly all the state's investment in the food sector has gone into the creation and operation of large-scale plantations or centrally managed block farms in which peasant families are assigned a fixed area to cultivate. These relatively heavily capitalized enterprises produce mainly palm oil, sugar cane and rice--all crops which can be and are grown on family farms. Traditional farms, however, have not benefited from modern technology so the policy of allocating state resources to the large-scale estate sector forces the traditional farmer to compete in food markets with state-subsidized producers. To make matters worse, the peasant sector bears a large share of the revenue burden which finances the estate sector's subsidies.

The smallholder food sector has benefited neither from state subsidies nor from more than a token amount of research and extension work on its production and marketing problems. In spite of the inauspicious policy environment, food production in the peasant sector has, until now, continued to grow at nearly the same pace as the population. There are, however, signs that this growth may soon be imperiled. The Cameroonian government's own analysis suggests that increasing ecological and economic pressures on the traditional food sector do not bode well for its future (Cameroon, 1980: 98-113).

This paper explores the reasons that the state has failed to make a significant effort to solve the production and marketing problems of the peasant food producer but has instead created a subsidized modern sector which competes with both traditional food producers and petty traders. It is not irrelevant in this context to point out that in southern and western Cameroon, the great majority of traditional food farmers and petty traders are women. As I will argue later in the paper, this fact both complicates and constrains the state's policy options in ways which are rarely subjected to sustained analysis.

To understand the forces shaping state policy toward the peasant food sector, we need to take a wider view of the economic factors affecting state revenue and expenditure policies, especially long-term price trends in the export crop sector. It bears repeating that in the export sector as in the food sector, small farmers produce more than 90% of total output.

During the 1960s and 1970s, world prices for Cameroon's commodity exports were, with the exception of a short commodity boom in 1974, either stagnant or falling. Throughout this period government attention was focused on political consolidation, administration building, and industrialization. To pay for the ambitious projects undertaken, the smallholder agricultural sector was heavily taxed, primarily by means of state control over producer prices for export crops. By about 1976, the tax squeeze on export crops was extreme. Real producer prices for

most export crops were actually lower than they had been in the early 1960s. Declines in aggregate production data suggested to some observers that farmers might be expressing their anger over declining real prices by reducing output (Cameroon, 1980a).

In the face of declining revenues and declining foreign exchange earnings that followed the downward trends in export crop output, the government decided in 1977 to make a significant increase in real producer prices (Ntangsi, 1987: 21). From 1977 to 1979 real producers prices for cocoa were higher than they had ever been since 1960, but, as luck would have it, just as the improvement in producer prices was beginning to pay off in terms of increasing output and rising real incomes for smallholders, Cameroon began to suffer precipitous declines in the world market prices of both its newly discovered oil and its agricultural exports, a development which soon eroded the late 1970s improvements in peasants' real incomes. Real prices paid to cocoa and coffee planters fell by 10-15% from 1978 to 1981 and have remained stagnant ever since (World Bank, 1984).

This brief review of the history of Cameroon's agricultural policy suggests the following analytically and politically important question: was the short period of pro-peasant policy of the late 1970s unavoidably cut short by the disastrous declines in world commodity prices of the 1980s (a possibility which offers hope that improvements in the global economy will restore a pro-peasant policy environment) or were the social forces arguing for the peasant, so to speak, always very weak and therefore easily swept aside (a possibility which suggests that the peasantry must be much more politically active if it is ever to benefit significantly from state policy)? The remainder of the paper attempts to shed light on the implications of this questions for the future course of economic development in Cameroon.

The paper focuses on production problems and policy making in the traditional food sector. It draws heavily on a major study of agricultural policy recently completed by Professor Joseph Ntangsi (1987). Ntangsi provides a structural analysis of the social interest groups involved in state policy making. He concludes that the factors which best explain the course and substance of Cameroonian agricultural policy are:

(1) the increasing concentration of both political power and routine decision making in the office of the President, and (2) the predominant and growing influence of the urban elite-- state bureaucrats, private and parastatal managers, professionals, and intellectuals--on the course of policy making.

Drawing on the work of Bayart (1985), Ngayap (1983), Mbu Etonga, Pokam, and others, Professor Ntangsi demonstrates that by centralizing its control over the decision making and administrative processes of government, the office of the President has maximized its control

over state patronage resources such as well-paying jobs, credit, and economic subsidies. The regime allocates these resources with the aim of consolidating the allegiance of those groups perceived as politically powerful, essentially the educated, urban elite including the upper ranks of the state administration itself. In contrast to the dominant influence of the elite classes, the interests of peasants and ordinary workers are neither formally represented in the processes of state policymaking nor evident in the outcomes.

This paper provides a critical review of governmental responses to the major economic and technological constraints on the traditional food sector. Section two identifies these constraints for the forest area of southern Cameroon, a region which produces the bulk of Cameroon's cocoa and feeds its capital city. The analysis is based on an extensive review of historical data on the farming systems of southern Cameroon and on evidence from a two village household production survey I myself conducted in 1985 (Koopman Henn, 1978 and 1988). The household survey explores the effects of a significant improvement in marketing conditions experienced by food farmers when their village was linked to major urban markets by a paved road. Data on food output, marketed share and incomes from this village are compared with those of a village from the same area which remained relatively isolated in terms of market access. The data reviewed in this section demonstrate that production is indeed stimulated when constraints on traditional farmers are loosened.

The third section of the paper reviews Professor Ntangsi's analysis of the political and economic dimensions of agricultural policy in Cameroon and draws out its implications for understanding the genesis and probable future course of state policy toward the peasant food sector. The final section attempts to tie the preceding economic, technological and socio-political analyses together. It concludes that the political forces influencing the course of agricultural policy are not only serious political impediments to the realization of pro-peasant policies, but also pose significant risks to the achievement of nationwide food security.

RURAL SMALLHOLDER PRODUCTION AND MARKETING IN SOUTHERN CAMEROON

Structure of Production: Division of Labor and Incomes

In the forest agriculture of south-central Cameroon, the export crop grown by virtually all households is cocoa. The typical male cocoa planter works about ten hours a week on his plantation and receives two hours a week of help from his wife. Cocoa planters also benefit from significant amounts of unpaid labor from children and neighbors during the harvest. In

terms of total labor hours expended on a typical cocoa plantation, less than half are put in by the planter himself (survey data, Koopman Henn, 1985).

On the average, cocoa generates about $\frac{2}{3}$ of a man's income, but only $\frac{1}{8}$ of a woman's (see table one). This is primarily because only plantation owners obtain significant incomes from cocoa production and the only women who are socially recognized as owners of cocoa plantations are widows. Widows' cocoa incomes are usually much smaller than the average planter's income because widows must usually share their inheritance with their sons and with other wives of their husband and their sons. Wives receive only modest "gifts" for "helping" with their husbands' cocoa and may also earn small amounts of income as occasional paid laborers for unrelated planters. The differences in male and female incomes in the cocoa sector are important because in Cameroon, as in most rural areas in Africa, husbands and wives keep separate budgets, and each spouse is expected to meet personal, production, and specific family expenses from his or her own earnings (see table four.)

Both men and women also work on food crops, but only women are held socially responsible for feeding the family, an obligation which requires a major allocation of labor time. Men's work in the food sector is limited to an average of four hours a week of field clearing and plantain/banana production, whereas women spend over 24 hours a week cultivating the entire range of food crops grown in the forest zone. Sixteen hours of a woman's weekly labor time is spent growing food for family consumption, and another eight hours are dedicated to producing marketable crops (see table one). Women obtain nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of their cash incomes from the sales of processed and unprocessed food. Food sales account for only $\frac{1}{10}$ of a male farmers' income (table three).

In order to understand the impact of state policy on the peasant family and on its individual male and female farmers, it is important to recognize that even though women are the predominant food farmers in southern Cameroon, women rarely have independent access to the essential resource for this enterprise--land. Most women obtain access to land via their social integration into a landholding man's family as wife, daughter or sister. In return for access to land, nearly all women must perform the obligatory "wifely" functions (cooking, water carrying, firewood gathering, and family food production) which take up nearly 50 hours of a typical female farmer's work week. Hence, in order to dedicate eight hours a week to producing marketable food, a woman farmer must lengthen her working time to nearly sixty hours a week. This compares to a 31 hour total work week typical of male cocoa farmers (table one).

TABLE ONE: MEN'S AND WOMEN'S AVERAGE LABOR HOURS
(standard deviations in parentheses)

	ALL MEN (n=33)		FULL TIME MALE FARMERS (n=27)		WOMEN (n=47)	
	<u>Annual</u>	<u>Weekly</u>	<u>Annual</u>	<u>Weekly</u>	<u>Annual</u>	<u>Weekly</u>
Total Agricultural Hours	616 (319)	11.8	725 (243)	14.0	1366 (429)	26.3
-Food Production Hours	168 (146)	3.2	196 (145)	3.8	1253 (408)	24.1
=Family Food	133	2.6	154	3.0	850	16.3
=Marketed Food	35	0.6	42	0.8	403	7.8
-Cocoa Production	448 (271)	8.6	529 (230)	10.2	113 (85)	2.2
Hunting or Fishing (for family)	58 (117)	1.1	70 (125)	1.3	52 (123)	1.0
Cassava Processing	0	0	0	0	208 (291)	4.0
Marketed Palm Wine Production	259 (446)	5.0	316 (473)	6.1	0	0
Subsistence Palm Wine Production	121	2.3	145	2.8	0	0
Trade	25 (137)	0.5	31 (151)	0.6	41 (78)	0.8
Full Time Wage Work (12% of men participate)	243 (656)	4.7	0	0	0	0
Other Income Generating Work	137	2.6	126	2.4	48	0.9
Domestic Labor	207 (169)	4.0	221 (168)	4.3	1640 (445)	31.5
<u>TOTAL LABOR HOURS</u>	<u>1666 (899)</u>	<u>32.0</u>	<u>1634 (808)</u>	<u>31.5</u>	<u>3355 (786)</u>	<u>64.5</u>
-Income Generating Labor	1145	22.0	1044	20.1	815	15.7
-Unpaid Subsistence Labor	520	10.0	590	11.4	2540	48.9

TABLE TWO: MEN'S AND WOMEN'S AVERAGE ANNUAL LABOR BY VILLAGE

	<u>Mgbaba Men</u>	<u>Billik Bindik Men</u>	<u>Mgbaba Women</u>	<u>Billik Bindik Women</u>
Total Food Crop Production Hours	199	143	1139*	1375*
Marketed Food Crop Production	18	49	254***	560***
Family Consumed Food Production	181*	94*	885	815
Cassava Processing for Market	0	0	187	230
Export Crop Production (Family Cocoa)	422	472	116	114
Paid Cocoa Labor for non-Family	15	17	26	39
Marketed Palm Wine Production	293	230	0	0
Family Consumed Palm Wine Production	160	89	0	0
Commerce (6% of men; 50% of women)	2	44	43	38
Full-time Wage Labor (12% of men who commute from village)	279	213	0	0
Other Income Generating Labor	130	110	9	23
Fishing and Hunting (Own Use)	58	58	52	51
Fuelwood and Water Collection	16	28	409	415
Cooking	0	0	795	943
Clothes washing, house & tool repair	282	101	424	291
<u>TOTAL LABOR TIME (Excluding Childcare)</u>	<u>1856</u>	<u>1505</u>	<u>3200</u>	<u>3519</u>
Total Labor Hours per Week	35.7	28.9	61.5	67.7
Total Agricultural Labor	636	632	1281**	1528**
Total Income Generating Labor	1159	1135	635**	1004**
Total Non-Income Generating Labor	697**	370**	2565	2515
(as percent of total labor)	38%	25%	80%	71%

(NOTE: Asterisks indicate significant differences between within sex means. * 10%. ** 5%. ***1%)

TABLE THREE: MEN'S AND WOMEN'S AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOMES BY VILLAGE

	<u>Mgbaba Men</u> (n=15)	<u>Billik Bindik Men</u> (n=18)	<u>Mgbaba Women</u> (n=24)	<u>Billik Bindik Women</u> (n=23)
Unprocessed Food Crop Sales	\$18	\$230	\$143***	\$408***
Processed Cassava Sales	0	0	117*	206*
Gross Cocoa Income (From Family Farm)	807	1069	44	59
Cocoa Work for Non-Family Planters	14	17	11	29
Marketed Palm Wine	90	97	0	0
Livestock Sales	3	1	4	8
Commerce	1	70	53	53
Full-time Wage Labor	198	186	0	0
Other Income Generating Labor	125	129	3	10
Gift Income	0	13	18	40
Savings Group Receipts	67	55	26	0
<u>TOTAL MONETARY INCOME</u>	<u>\$1323**</u>	<u>\$1867**</u>	<u>\$419**</u>	<u>\$813**</u>
Value of food produced for family use (based on prices averaged across villages)	78	54	379	395
Value of palm wine produced for own use	59	32	0	0

(NOTE: Asterisks indicate significant differences between within sex means: * 10%; ** 5%; ***2-5%)
Exchange rate used to convert data from CFA to dollars: 400cfa = \$1.00

TABLE FOUR: MEN'S AND WOMEN'S EXPENDITURES AS SHARES OF INCOME
Comparison of Villages with Good (Bilik Bindik) and Poor (Mgbaba) Market Access

	Bilik Bindik				Mgbaba			
	MEN	%	WOMEN	%	MEN	%	WOMEN	%
TOTAL INCOME	\$1866	100%	\$811	100%	\$1323	100%	\$419	100%
Production Expenses	\$ 207	11.1%	\$ 27	3.3%	\$ 170	12.9%	\$ 17	4.1%
Transport ¹	\$ 112	6.0%	\$ 87	10.7%	\$ 95	7.2%	\$ 71	17.0%
Food	\$ 120	6.4%	\$127	15.7%	\$ 109	8.2%	\$ 77	18.4%
Housing, Furniture, Dishes	\$ 162	8.7%	\$ 27	3.3%	\$ 207	15.7%	\$ 612	14.6%
Soap and Kerosene	\$ 42	2.3%	\$ 36	4.4%	\$ 45	3.4%	\$ 27	6.4%
Clothing ³	\$ 161	8.6%	\$ 53	6.5%	\$ 118	8.9%	\$ 25	6.0%
Education	\$ 142	7.6%	\$ 21	2.6%	\$ 164	12.4%	\$ 28	6.7%
Medical	\$ 52	2.8%	\$ 78	9.6%	\$ 93	7.0%	\$ 14	3.3%
Community Charity Fund ⁴	\$ 11	0.6%	\$ 26	3.2%	\$ 6	0.5%	\$ 32	7.6%
Savings Association ⁵	\$ 228	12.2%	\$ 36	4.4%	\$ 135	10.2%	\$ 24	5.7%
Bride Wealth	\$ 47	2.5%	0	0	\$ 47	3.6%	0	0
Gifts	\$ 30	1.6%	\$ 35	4.3%	\$ 5	0.4%	\$ 4	1.0%
Other ⁶	\$ 552	29.6%	\$258	31.8%	\$ 129	9.8%	\$ 39	9.3%

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At least 50% of women's transport expenses can be attributed to food marketing. Men do not take food to urban markets.

²This level of female expenditure on housing is atypical. In this case one woman in Mgbaba was building her own house--a very rare phenomenon among women.

³Part of men's clothing expenditures usually consists of one dress per wife given as a culturally expected recompense for help on the husband's cocoa. Women do not buy clothing for men, but often buy for children.
⁴Most women belong to community charity groups which provide support for members suffering illness or death in the family. Men are rarely members of these groups.

⁵Men save for large expenses such as house building. Women save small amounts for kitchen utensils.

⁶No questions were asked about spending on beer and wine except for drinks purchased for cocoa and food harvesting parties, included here in production expenses. Several persons deplored the opening of two bars in Bilik Bindik after the census.

The food sector is the rural woman's major source of income. A woman farmer's access to male-owned land is essential both for her family's food security and for her ability to earn the money she spends on household necessities, meat and fish, clothing, education and medicine. My data on the allocation of women's subsistence food output and on their patterns of expenditures (table four) clearly demonstrates that women's work in the food sector is a major source of rural family welfare. Furthermore, women's sales of surplus food in urban markets represents by far the major source of Cameroon's commercial food supply (Guyer, 1987).

In contrast, the cocoa sector provides the rural man with a much larger income than that earned by his wife (table three). It also functions as a major source of foreign exchange for the national economy. Male incomes are spent in large part for family necessities (primarily shelter and clothing), but they also support large amounts of luxury consumption (tape recorders, motorcycles, beer and wine). Because men are not held socially responsible for the family's basic food security, they rarely purchase the items needed to prepare the ordinary daily meals, although they do contribute meat and fresh fish during the cocoa season.

Effects of State Policy on Smallholder Production and Incomes

A major goal of agricultural policy in southern Cameroon has been to increase yields and output in the smallholder-dominated cocoa and coffee sectors. The state has sponsored elaborate extension programs, subsidized the use of pesticides and fungicides, and developed incentive schemes to induce planters to regenerate aging trees. For the most part these interventions have been financed from the revenues of the state marketing board, revenues which are generated by the wide spread between state controlled producer prices and world market export prices (Koopman Henn, 1978: 331; Ntangsi, 1987: 21).

A parallel, though unarticulated, goal of agricultural policy has been the maximization state revenue. The state's major source of revenue in the agricultural sector derives from its ability to control the producer price of export crops. Although the stated aim of export crop price controls is the stabilization of the producer price, there is little doubt that ever since the colonial period the state has extracted the bulk of its claims on the agricultural surplus by maintaining a wide differential between the world price and the producer price of export crops. Producers prices declined significantly in real terms from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s (Koopman Henn, 1978: 306-307) and in most years were less than half the world price (Ntangsi, 1987: 21) .

While the contradictory nature of state pricing and incentive policies may seem obvious to the reader (how can the state expect planters to increase time and money spent on export crop production while it is reducing the real producer price?), the fact that the contradiction has intensified over several decades suggests that policy makers have consistently been more interested in maximizing short-term revenues than in raising yields. (I use the term "short-term revenues" advisedly because higher yields would presumably increase long term output and revenues, at least to the extent that increases in output did not reduce world prices.) To explain the stagnation in yields and output which has persisted despite two decades of extension programs and the provision of subsidized inputs, innumerable state sponsored studies have cited peasant and plantation characteristics ("aging planters" and "aging plantations") but only a few have mentioned disincentive effects of price policies. (See, for example, Cameroon, 1980a, 1980b)

In spite of these discouraging price trends, peasant families in south central Cameroon have remained heavily dependent on cocoa as their major source of income. This is undoubtedly explained by the fact that rural men can still earn a higher hourly return to their labor by producing cocoa than by participating in almost any alternative activity, including wage employment (Koopman Henn, 1988). I contend, however, in contrast to the standard economic analyses of the cocoa sector, that this situation results less from the superior economic efficiency of cocoa production than from the structure of socio-economic power in the rural household.

Income earned from cocoa production accrues almost entirely to male heads of households ("plantation owners") even though women, children, and younger men who are not plantation owners do a great deal of the work. Women and children must "help" the planter for a very minimal return because they are dependent on him: women for access to land on which to grow food which can provide them with small independent incomes and children for shelter and sometimes for the payment of school fees. The availability of this "unpaid" family labor effectively raises the hourly return the planter himself enjoys.

The mobilization of unpaid family labor in the cocoa sector has two very important implications for food policy:

(1) the revenue the state extracts from the cocoa sector depends only in part on the labor of the planter, a significant part also depends on the labor of women food farmers, and

(2) when women who are already working some 60 hours a week on food production and household maintenance are drawn into cocoa work, a scarce resource in the food sector--women's labor time--is being depleted.

The macroeconomic implications of the labor tradeoff between cocoa and food have not been adequately studied, nor have the micro-economic and sociological factors affecting women's and men's incentives in each sector. We need to recognize that socio-cultural practices ("traditions") have important economic implications, thus important implications for policy. The tradition of male ownership of family agricultural resources--land, tools, cocoa trees, and cocoa incomes, for example, provides men with both the ideological justification and the power to mobilize unpaid family labor. The African practice of keeping separate male and female budgets within conjugal units, in conjunction with male ownership of basic "family" resources, sets the stage for the relative and absolute impoverishment of the great majority of rural women. Thus, in Cameroon as in many African countries, the nation's primary food farmers are in a structurally subordinate and economically weak position.

While women produce over three quarters of total food output in the peasant households of southern Cameroon, the cultural tradition which holds that it is women's responsibility to feed the family leaves most female farmers with relatively little marketable output and little time to increase production. In the villages I studied, women allocate well over half their output to family subsistence. Men face no such social "requirement" and are free to sell their entire plantain/banana output should they so choose. Men usually do allocate some self-produced food to family consumption, but the average value of their contribution is only 1/6 that of the average woman farmer (Koopman Henn, unpublished data).

The concentration of peasant family incomes in male hands makes it difficult for the state to devise means of encouraging female food farmers to invest in agricultural inputs. Because women farmers' incomes are low (table three), they are likely to require credit in order to invest in yield-increasing inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides, or improved seeds. But due to the patriarchal structure of power over economic resources, women have no collateral in land or export crop plantations to underwrite the credit needed to modernize food production. To overcome such problems, special types of individual or cooperative arrangements for the distribution of credit would need to be devised.

The difficulties of working with women farmers are not limited to "objective" problems such as a lack of collateral. Various "subjective" or social-ideological barriers also exist. Most male agricultural extension officers, for example, prefer not to risk accompanying a woman farmer to

her food fields for fear of being accused of adultery by a jealous husband. While this problem may not exist in all areas, it is prevalent enough to indicate the need to train a great many more female extension agents.

Since women are correctly perceived as being subject to the social control of their husbands, they cannot always be expected to respond to state policy initiatives as would "free" economic agents. Neither can one expect policy decisions to affect them in the same way they would affect men. Policy analysts must, therefore, make a special effort to understand the particular constraints within which women conduct their economic enterprises. The woman farmer does not fit the orthodox economist's model of the "economic man"!

The state's response to the difficulties of working with women farmers has been one of nearly total neglect of the female dominated segments of the food sector, especially the production and processing of root crops and vegetables. The state's failure to devise production incentives and technologies which respond to women's particular socio-economic constraints may reflect more than the difficulties of working with women farmers; it may also be rooted in elitist attitudes toward peasants who are often pejoratively described as "illiterate" or "tradition-bound". In the case of women farmers, such anti-peasant attitudes are exacerbated by the widespread acceptance of a patriarchal ideology which categorizes women as dependents of men rather than recognizing them as enterprising farmers who have, throughout all of southern Cameroon's recorded history, managed to feed both the rural and the urban populations. (Guyer, 1987, provides considerable historical evidence women's dominant role in the feeding of Yaounde.)

This paper argues that basic food security for the entire population can most efficiently and most equitably be pursued if women farmers are the focus of state efforts to increase food production. Women are currently producing the great bulk of the nation's food supply. They are very likely to increase their output in response to any and all policies which make such increases technically and economically feasible. The following section presents evidence from a 1985 comparative village production survey which documents men's and women's responses to one such incentive--improved marketing conditions--in the food sector.

RESPONSES TO INCENTIVES IN THE TRADITIONAL FOOD SECTOR

Are women farmers willing and able to increase their output of marketed food if certain constraints on production and marketing are loosened? Will men enter the traditional food sector if returns to labor improve? Policy makers and analysts I have interviewed often seem to assume that they know the answers to these critical questions. Some analysts and administrators

have the impression that men have entered food production in significant numbers in areas where food prices have risen. I have not, however, seen much research on these vitally important issues, and the results of my own survey makes me wonder if men's entry into the food sector is as widespread as some would suggest.

Cameroon's recent upsurge in road building has linked many agricultural areas with population centers and created new opportunities for food production in villages previously isolated from urban markets. By comparing food output and sales from a village which experienced a dramatic improvement in market access to that of a village from the same area which remained market isolated, I obtained evidence on how men and women farmers whose traditional food farming systems are female-dominated responded to new incentives to grow food for the market. This evidence provides some indication of how people from areas with traditional female food farming systems are likely to respond to other incentives to increase food output and sales, although extrapolating these results to other situations would not be possible if a particular incentive favored only men while leaving women's production and marketing constraints intact.

The two Cameroonian villages surveyed have the same ethnic and ecological situations. In both the sexual division of labor is similar to that in many African forest agricultural systems: women specialize in food production, men in export crops. In an attempt to identify and evaluate as many potential economic, technological, and social constraints on food production as possible, I gathered data on all economic activities pursued by the principal male and female farmers in a sample of 19 households in one village and 21 in the other. Single visit interviews resulted in comprehensive data on the labor, output, and income effects of each farmer's food and other agricultural and non-agricultural enterprises. The data permitted estimates of the total annual labor time allocated to paid and unpaid tasks and an analysis of the levels of physical output and cash incomes associated with each person's various economic enterprises.

The research results indicate that both men and women respond to improved marketing conditions by producing more marketable food, but women's response is considerably more intense than men's. The increase in women's labor time, the range of crops women sold, and the income earned by women from food activities was far greater than that reported by men (see tables two and three). The time women allocated to producing for the market more than doubled from 254 hours a year (or 5 hours a week) under conditions of very poor market access to 560 hours (nearly 11 hours a week) with excellent market access. While men increased their labor on marketable food even more in percentage terms, the absolute increase was not impressive: from a mere 18 hours a year to 49 hours a year.

The differences between men's and women's labor responses is all the more striking when one considers that the increase in women's involvement in the marketed food sector lengthened their work week from 61.5 to 67.7 hours. This contrasts with the changes in men's total labor time in response to the same change in economic conditions: under conditions of market isolation men's total labor time averaged 36 hours a week, whereas in the village with excellent market access it averaged less than 30 hours a week. Such striking differences between men's and women's labor time and the curious decline in men's total labor time with increased incentives to grow food clearly requires further study, but even more importantly, much more analysis of the implications of these phenomena for policy.

Women's motivation for increasing food production was clearly economic. Women farmers with good market access earned, on the average, over \$600 from processed and unprocessed food sales in 1985, while women in the market isolated village earned only \$260, less than half as much. In contrast, men's earnings from food sales were less than \$20 a year in the market isolated village versus \$230 in the village on a major paved road (table three).

Men's food production was entirely specialized in plantain and bananas, low labor input crops which had only to be piled along the road to attract traders or individual buyers. It was easy to increase both production and sales of these bulky and perishable crops as long as traders had easy road access to the village.

Women rarely seemed to specialize their marketable food production. They sold a great variety of crops, mostly producing a surplus of foods normally grown for family consumption. Although the women in this study did not radically change their basic cropping patterns in order to increase output for the market, many did deliberately try to maximize sales of those fruits and vegetables which provide the highest return to labor.

Both women and men seem to have shifted some labor time from subsistence production to marketed food production tasks as market access improved. For women, however, data on quantities produced and sold shows that the quantities of food allocated to family consumption did not decrease. For men the overall amounts of plantain allocated to family use were too small and variable to provide clear indicators on this issue.

The greater intensity of women's response to improved incentives in the food sector can in large part be attributed to the patriarchal traditions which deprive most women of earning opportunities in the activities which provide men with the bulk of their income: cocoa

production, wage labor, and palm wine sales. Food sales account for only 2% to 12% of a man's income (the higher figure coming from the village with excellent access to food markets) whereas they represent 65% to 75% of a peasant woman's total income, even when her market access is exceptionally poor.

This data indicates that state policies to increase food output and marketing may be more effective if interventions are aimed at alleviating the particular constraints faced by women farmers rather than at attracting men into the food sector. Policies aimed at women are also likely to be more cost effective since men seem to require a higher return to labor than women to induce them to enter the marketed food sector. The return to labor on plantain and banana production is far higher than the return to the mix of crops women produce and sell.

Furthermore, if women throughout southern Cameroon are as highly motivated to increase marketed food production as my research indicates, they would be likely to respond positively to any number of policies aimed at loosening some of the economic constraints within which they are currently laboring. These constraints include a severe shortage of non-working time available for income generating work, problems of access to land in communities where traditional and current ideology restricts land inheritance to men, dependence on an excessively labor-intensive technology in which food is produced with little more than a hand hoe and a machete, and lack of access to credit as a means of obtaining access to improved technology in food production.

Most, if not all, of these constraints can be alleviated with appropriate policy interventions. More research, production incentives, and extension programs can make labor-saving technology available in the rural sector. Women's access to land can be improved through legal and ideological activities and with the formation of production cooperatives. Improved inputs and training in their use can be developed for women farmers, and credit can be extended directly to women farmers or to women's production cooperatives. While all these policies are technically and economically feasible, the relevant question is: are they likely to gain the political support necessary to their effective implementation? The following section of the paper addresses this question. The discussion draws heavily on Professor Ntangsi's important analysis of the political and economic factors affecting agricultural policymaking in Cameroon.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AGRICULTURAL POLICY MAKING

The introduction to this paper pointed out that the level of implicit taxes levied on export crops by means of government price controls increased dramatically during the 1960s and 1970s. As

a result, the producer price of cocoa fell as a share of the world price from 66% in 1960 to 23% in 1976 (Cameroun, 1980: 160). The previous section demonstrated that the burden of rising taxes on export crops falls not only on the male plantation owner, but also on his wives and children. When their spouses' feel the pinch of falling real incomes in the export sector, women, as unpaid family labor, may be pressured to work longer on their husbands' cocoa plantations. And when their cocoa incomes decline, men are likely to reduce their contributions to family maintenance expenses, a situation which increases the pressure on women to increase their own incomes. Thus, the state's heavy taxation of the export crop sector not only reduces men's incentives to increase their own labor on cocoa, it may also reduce the time and resources available to women farmers.

Since independence the state has significantly increased its extraction of surplus from the traditional agricultural sector (Henn, 1978; Ntangsi, 1987). In order to understand the origins of this surplus appropriation policy and its implications for the future of food production and the economic prospects of traditional food farmers, we need to investigate the factors motivating the behavior of state policymakers.

The Increasing Political Weight and Economic Burden of the "Elite".

Professor Ntangsi makes a powerful argument that the policies of Cameroon's one party state can best be understood in the context of the regime's attempt to consolidate its political hegemony by meeting the interests of the capitalist, professional, and upper level bureaucratic and military classes. In this perspective, agricultural policy in general and agricultural taxation in particular need to be analyzed in light of the regime's constant concern to insure its political survival.

The regime is highly aware of the interests of the articulate and economically powerful groups represented by the educated elite and is highly motivated to respond to them by using all the resources at its command. Since both political and administrative power have been increasingly centralized in the office of the President, the regime has been able to use the state budget to deal with the groups it perceives as most able to mount an effective challenge to its power.

Ntangsi argues that the regime has used employment in the higher salaried segments of the government and parastatal sectors (including joint enterprises with multinational corporations) as a primary means of gaining the allegiance of the educated elite. Employment at the top levels of the civil service has grown well over 20% a year from the late 1970s until very recently. Professor Ntangsi suggests that the special 1984 and 1986 recruitments of university graduates

into the civil service "even though there were no jobs for them" reflects the regime's fear of the political threat posed by unemployed university graduates (Ntangsi, 1987: 54). Overstaffing problems are also encountered in the parastatal sector. They are clearly an exacerbating factor in the chronic losses which plague many parastatal enterprises, losses which constitute a serious drain on the state budget.

The influence of the elite, both inside and outside the organs of the state, has arguably had an important biasing effect on economic policies. The results for the rural sector have been particularly problematic. As the educated elite has grown beyond the capacity of the private economy to absorb their skills at the high salaries they expect, the state has employed them either in the administration itself or in parastatal enterprises. Since independence, about 150 parastatal organizations have been created, 50 in the agricultural sector alone (Ntangsi, 1987: 50). The growing pressure on the state budget of state and parastatal salaries provides a plausible explanation for the government's general unwillingness to raise producer prices in the export crop sector, as such a measure would reduce short-term revenues. At the same time, the long-term stagnation of producer prices has reduced the potential efficacy of policies aimed at increasing output through providing the producer with economic incentives, such that parastatals in the agricultural sector have logically concentrated on attempts to control the economic behavior of the peasantry rather than on devising incentives to stimulate voluntary increases in output.

If this explanation for past policy behavior is correct, the increasing size of the educated elite and its role in influencing and administering state policy represents a clear threat to peasant welfare. While there is little doubt that the state still depends heavily on peasant generated revenues, not to mention peasant generated food supplies, the process of policy-making in the agricultural sector, even when it includes a few representatives of export crop producers, is seriously biased toward meeting the interests of the urban and governmental elite rather than the interests of the peasantry. The vast majority of smallholders have few, if any, effective means of presenting or defending their interests in governmental policy-making processes.

Since all policy decisions and even a large number of administrative decisions are made by the small general secretariat of the presidency, it is very unlikely that the people who actually make the major economic and technical decisions affecting the conditions of traditional farming are people who clearly understand, much less sympathize with, the interests of peasant farmers of either sex. I would suspect that women food farmers are virtually never included in policy discussions and that their interests are rarely, if ever, represented. This is a particularly serious impediment to effective policy making in the food sector, especially since the production

processes, needs, and potential of women farmers seem to be very poorly understood in policy-making circles.

THE SEARCH FOR A VIABLE AGRICULTURAL POLICY

A large number state interventions in the agricultural sector have been in the form of centrally managed projects where those who do the actual farming (wage laborers or peasants who formally own their plots but do not control them) do not themselves decide what or how to plant. Many of these state and parastatal projects in the rural sector have proved less than economically viable. Indeed, Ntangsi reports that an on-going study by a presidential commission has shown that over 95% of the 50 public and parastatal agricultural enterprises created since independence have consistently run losses (Ntangsi, 1987: 55).

The failure of the modern estate sector and of other centrally managed agricultural projects to improve the technical and economic efficiency of the agricultural sector is a source of some concern to the regime. The past ten years have been a period recurring policy analyses and experimentation in the agricultural sector.

About a decade ago a pro-peasant export crop pricing policy was tried. It was conceived and initiated in response to what seemed to be widespread disaffection among cocoa and coffee planters expressed in declining production. By the mid-1970s real producer prices had been falling or stagnant for some twenty years. By 1976 the spread between the world price and the producer price of cocoa and coffee was greater than it had ever been; producers were receiving only 23% of the world price. From 1974 to 1976 cocoa production fell by 30%, a drop which clearly alarmed the government (McLindon, 1983: 58).

For the 1977-78 cocoa harvest there was a significant 30% increase in real producer prices, a price increase which was encouraged by the unusually high level of world prices. Cocoa production immediately rose by 28% (*ibid.*). But the pro-peasant price policy did not survive for long. The severe global recession of the early 1980s caused a drastic and long-term decline in world market commodity prices, and the producer price incentive policy was an early victim of these external pressures. Already by 1981 real producer prices had dropped 10-25% from their 1978-79 highs, apparently because the government was unwilling to reduce the margin between the producer price and the world price (a margin which represents state revenues as well as marketing costs) to less than 35% (Ntangsi, 1987: 21). To have done so would probably have required the elimination of some highly paid government positions.

Other current agricultural policies also seem to respond more to elite than to peasant interests. The food and export crop segment of the 1986-1991 Five Year Plan, for example, highlights a program to offer credit, production subsidies and other incentives to so-called "medium scale farmers" defined as persons who own and supervise production on 50 to 100 hectares. Since the average cocoa or coffee planter in southern Cameroon owns a farm of 5-6 hectares, the "medium scale farmer" of the 6th Five Year Plan will in all probability be a member of an urban-based elite class. For the most part it is only members of the urban elite who have the financial resources (either on their own or with state help) required to buy a tract of land some 10 times larger than that of the average planter. From the significant amounts of governmental and international support which has been accorded to this program, however, it is clear that the regime intends to allocate considerable amounts of resources to developing a the "kulak" or capitalist farm sector in Cameroon. Policy makers have apparently decided to subsidize the educated elite in hopes of inducing them to establish so-called modern farms utilizing improved seeds, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and mechanized tools as well as hired labor.

The "medium scale farmer" subsidy program is an interesting attempt by the state to deal simultaneously with two pressing policy issues: (1) how to respond to the widely held assumption that traditional food producers will not be up to meeting future urban demand, and (2) how to provide productive employment at relatively high incomes for the ever-growing elite.

There are, however, serious problems with the "elite farmer" approach to dealing with the food problem. First, important questions remain about its viability. Even if state subsidies can induce members of the educated elite to invest in what will be very large farms by African standards, it is virtually certain that the elite farmer will not be able to cultivate 50 or more hectares without hiring several permanent laborers. Recent research by Peter Geschiere in eastern Cameroon (1988a; 1988b) investigated the problems of urban-based landowners who attempted to hire people from their own villages to work their farms. Considerable hostility toward the urban elite's village enterprises was expressed both overtly and through occult forms of aggression. Geschiere's findings indicate that the policy of favoring small capitalist farmers may flounder due to the unwillingness of poorer villagers to become permanent laborers for richer ones or for the urban elite.

Second, the medium scale farmer program is likely to be a very expensive policy which has the risk of becoming a net drain on the state budget. For this program to avoid heavy levels of government subsidization would require both successful improvements in yields by medium scale farmers and a level of taxation of their output which could offset the costs of implementing the policy. It is, however, unlikely that the state will attempt to offset its subsidies by taxing the

elite farmer since such a policy would reduce the economic incentives considered necessary to induce the elite to take up farming. The costs of the medium scale farmer program are therefore most likely to be funded from the standard sources of state revenue, i.e. from direct and indirect taxes levied on the "traditional" peasantry.

Finally, it is not clear at this point that economies of scale and cost effective yield increasing technologies are either available or capable of increasing output to the extent necessary to offset costs even if the state were willing to tax the output of the new medium-scale farmers once the program is well underway.

In addition my concerns about the viability and equity issues associated with the "medium scale farmer" policy, I want to argue that making the elite farmer the basis of the state's program to increase food production has profoundly worrisome implications for the future of the traditional food sector and for the economic welfare of traditional food farmers. If "medium scale farmers" benefit from state subsidies as well as from research attention to their production and marketing constraints while traditional food farmers do not, it is possible that the elite farmer will be able to out compete the peasant farmer on urban markets. Women food farmers may then gradually lose their single most important source of income, the sale of surplus food. Should this happen we are likely witness a progressive impoverishment of the peasant sector, an impoverishment women farmers will surely resist, probably by increasing their output and lowering their prices, but may not be able to escape.

If women farmers are obliged to attempt to increase output without the aid of yield increasing and labor saving technologies, they will further exhaust both the land and themselves. Rural women already work at least 60 hours a week in order to fulfill "their responsibility" for feeding their families and caring for their children. Only when these jobs are done can rural women devote time to income producing activities. It is hard to see how these beleaguered farmers can compete effectively with a government subsidized elite farmer class without suffering a drastic decline in their welfare.

Should the "modern" farms receive large amounts of governmental aid (legal and political as well as financial), they may attempt to buy up traditional farmers' land. The risk then intensifies that the smallholder peasant and his wife will become proletarianized in the name of agricultural progress. In Brazil this process has led to declining food security and increasing malnutrition among the very people who work the land. Brazilian wage laborers who farm large plantations, often growing food for export, do not have the "right" to grow food for themselves and their children, because as non-owners they have no access to land. Such a drastic scenario seems

very distant in the Cameroon of today. It is nonetheless important to recognize that current policy initiatives could lead in this direction.

CONCLUSION

The resource squeeze on the traditional food sector, particularly on the women farmers who have historically been able both to feed their own families and to provision major urban food markets, is tightening. There is clear population pressure on the land which can only partially be relieved by opening up new areas of low population density to traditional or "modern" farming. For the most part, population pressure on the land must be relieved by the introduction of inputs and farming methods which will permit the shortening and the eventual elimination of fallowing.

There is also extreme pressure on the labor of traditional food farmers. Here it is clear that an extensive solution, i.e. for women food farmers to work longer hours, cannot be the basis for increasing output. Labor saving technology must be introduced. This technology must not only be adapted to the small scale farmer's particular needs, it must also be economically accessible. (Cooperatives formed to share more expensive or larger scale technological inputs might also be envisioned.) Lastly, the infrastructural and institutional links between rural producers and urban markets must be improved in tandem with increases in food production.

These are clearly the essential features of a policy orientation which would enable the traditional food sector to continue its mutually beneficial link with the urban food markets. The question of its feasibility is less economic or technical than political. And if the resource squeeze on the political system continues to tighten, its political feasibility is cast in serious doubt.

The educated elite grows with each passing graduation. New graduates aspire to membership in the capitalist, professional and upper level state bureaucratic classes, classes whose current size already places a great strain on the ability of the government to create employment of a "suitable" level of remuneration. The problem is seriously exacerbated by significant reductions in the world prices of Cameroon's major exports: oil and export crops. Falling revenues are now seriously threatening the government's ability to expand its primary means of extending patronage--the provision of well paid employment in its own administration.

The interaction of the ecological and human resource squeeze on the traditional food sector and the revenue-expenditure squeeze on the political sector augurs ill for a progressive, pro-peasant policy orientation. The resource squeeze on state finances would seem to minimize the

probability that the state will reduce its extraction of revenue from traditional agriculture by raising producer prices or by devising a policy of incentives capable of improving both productivity and economic returns in the food sector. However, if this paper's analysis is correct, a further intensification of the current practice of extracting a heavy surplus from traditional agriculture in order to subsidize the so-called modern agricultural sector and to "feed" (both literally and politically) a growing urban elite may prove disastrous for national food security.

But there is perhaps another scenario in the future. Should the interaction of pressures from the land/labor resource squeeze on traditional farming and the intensification of governmental revenue appropriation in the smallholder sector escalate to a level the peasantry perceives as intolerable, a new source of political opposition may emerge. The administration may then find that any intensification of anti-peasant policies will result in higher levels of political tension and perhaps even in the resurgence of overt political and economic struggle. What this would mean to food security is not at all clear. What is clear is that basic food security is a highly political issue and that from the perspective of a politicized rural majority, there is more to be gained from a peasant influenced agricultural policy than from a policy developed by and for the elite.

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ACCUMULATION AND NON-ACCUMULATION IN AGRICULTURE - REGIONAL COMPARISONS

Peter Geschiere ¹

The notion of "networks of accumulation", as employed by Bayart in his studies of Cameroonian politics (1979,1985,1986), can help clarify the contours of the class formation process in Africa. It is a concept that can link economic analysis to political and historical studies. Bayart apparently prefers the term "accumulation" - "canaux/réseaux/ mécanismes d'accumulation" - since he is highly suspicious of the notion of class. In his view, this notion is hardly applicable in Cameroon, as in most African countries, since it tends to distort the fluid lines of inequality and to create a false clarity in situations where, at most, "une structure de classes à construire" is emerging (Bayart 1985:321). Authors with a less ambiguous Marxist background have recently exhibited similar reluctance to apply the class notion in the African context. Copans (1987:11) hopes to overcome the stagnation in the analysis of the African state by focussing on "réseaux sociaux" and "voies de l'accumulation". Bernstein & Campbell (1985:11) want to study "major shifts in modes of accumulation". A clear advantage of such notions as "networks" or "modes of accumulation" might be that they lead to concrete historical studies instead of general debates on classification and definition. Since most classes and class fractions figuring in the Africanist debates of the seventies persist in remaining vague and elusive, this is no doubt of great importance.

Studies of "networks of accumulation" might, moreover, help to outline regional variations in new forms of inequality. Elsewhere, in reaction to Bayart's work, I have tried to indicate the importance of such regional variations (Geschiere 1986a). In a country like Cameroon, the "hegemonical alliance" is highly heterogeneous: the emergence of new elites and their relations to pre-existing local forms of authority differ regionally depending on the exact forms of state formation, market penetration and the transformation of highly differing local institutions. It is precisely because a notion like "networks of accumulation" can only become meaningful through case-studies that it can stimulate further analysis of regional differences in the emergence of the state elite and its relations to the peasants.

In this paper, I wish to examine the opportunities and barriers to accumulation in agriculture by comparing four regions in Southern Cameroon. I shall start from my own field-work in

¹ I thank Georges Courade, Jeanne Koopman and Piet Konings for their comments. Jane Guyer, who could not attend the conference in Leiden, was kind enough to send me a few written comments. Since she raises points of particular interest, I inserted a few of her remarks in the notes.

Makaland (East), where there are still clear limits to agricultural accumulation, to the emergence of new structural inequality and a clearly outlined group of big farmers. My other examples are the Beti (Centre, notably the Lékié), the Bakossi (Southwest) and the Bamiléké (West), where problems and opportunities for agricultural accumulation seem to differ considerably. My discussion of these three examples is based on a (limited) literature survey. As was to be expected, the comparison of field-work material to data from secondary sources posed some problems. I could not find detailed information in the literature on existing inequality among farmers or on the degree to which urban elites, notably civil servants or traders, penetrate agricultural production; the latter issue seems particularly crucial to the possible emergence of new networks of accumulation in agriculture. Yet I hope this comparison might serve to elucidate some of the factors shaping divergent regional scenarios in the crystallisation of new inequality among rural producers.

The importance of this theme will be clear. In most African countries agricultural accumulation seems to be a precondition for other forms of accumulation. The rise of a class of big farmers among the African population has long been expected, by some people with impatience, by others with apprehension. In Cameroon, for instance, the official agricultural policy is explicitly aimed towards the creation of such a class (Koopman-Henn, paper for this conference). But even authors critical of official policies, like Bates, hold that for Africa in general, only the rise of a strong interest group of big farmers could bring about a real change in the present "price-setting coalitions" with their detrimental effects on the development of agriculture (Bates 1981). Other authors, like Koopman-Henn (paper for this conference), fear that the rise of such a class will not only lead to a further undermining of the domestic economy of the peasants, but equally to a drastic reduction in the national food production.

The debates on how to stimulate the rise of progressive "yeomen" among African peasants are as old as colonial rule. Right from the beginning, this was an important goal in the British policy. French efforts to stimulate peasant production were, at least before 1940, rather directed towards the development of cash-crop cultivation under strict government control. This policy was often highly profitable to the "customary chiefs" - in many regions colonial creations - who had to act as brokers. However, after 1945, broader inequalities developed among the peasants in most French areas as well.

In many parts of rural Africa, however, the long-expected emergence of a group of big farmers with structural advantages over other peasants failed to occur as yet. Of course there were several regions such as the South of Ghana and the Ivory Coast and Kenya, where a clearly delineated group of African planters succeeded in building up its own modes of accumulation,

enabling them to exert politico-economic pressure on the state. In other regions, only the vague contours of such a group emerged. In Cameroon, for instance, the much discussed Bamiléké bourgeoisie would probably approximate these independent economic elites with their own networks of accumulation, separate from the state. But the role of this Bamiléké bourgeoisie remains very vague and it is far from clear to what extent its economic position is based on accumulation in agriculture or in other economic sectors. In other regions, structural differences between richer and poorer farmers still seem to be non-existent.

In discussions about the rise of richer farmers, strong emphasis is often placed on the land issue.² The existence of absolute or "relative" land scarcity and the opportunities to gain control over land through rent or purchase are certainly important factors in the development of structural inequality among the peasants. Yet a broader approach might be necessary. In this paper, I shall try to analyse regional differences in the crystallisation of rural inequality in relation to diverging scenarios in the articulation of state formation and local patterns of organisation. The question is to what extent can the colonial state's measures to impose market-production and the concomitant articulation of local and (post-)colonial power relations explain different regional patterns of rural inequality. Elsewhere (1984a, 1986a), I have tried to show that the model of an articulation of modes of production can serve to analyse such regional comparisons. In order not to cloud the discussion, I shall leave out these theoretical embellishments here. An advantage of this perspective is that not only do economic factors like the land issue have to be taken into account, but cultural and political ones as well.

In the analysis of the case studies below, I shall therefore concentrate on the following aspects:

- *economic*: opportunities for expanding control over land and labour, and barriers preventing this.
- *cultural*: the force of levelling mechanisms against new forms of wealth within the local socio-cultural setting; and the extent to which local institutions can offer protection to the newly rich.
- *political*: the extent to which the new urban elites (civil servants, politicians, sometimes traders) have opportunities to invest their new wealth in agriculture; differences in this respect are related to variations in the articulation of existing local forms of power and the new relations of domination.

A last remark in this introduction concerns the restriction of this paper to cash-crops, notably to "produits industriels" like cocoa or coffee. This is a restriction which can even have sexist implications (Koopman-Henn 1978, Guyer 1985). In view of the division of labour in South

² Compare the debate on the role of "kulaks" in relation to *Ujamaa* policies in Tanzania: van Hekken/Thoden van Velzen 1972, Feldman 1969; or the Kenya debate in, *ROAPE*; or Peel 1986 on S.W.Nigeria.

Cameroonian societies, women can only figure as dependents in an analysis of this kind. The important role of women in agricultural production and the potential for development in their forms of production are overlooked. Nonetheless, this restriction seems unavoidable here. Until recently, the "produits industriels" provided the main or even the only opportunity for accumulation in agriculture. Only since the end of the seventies, cultivation of food-crops has offered new chances for accumulation in a few special regions. Opportunities for independent accumulation by female farmers is an important issue which, for lack of data, cannot be dealt with in this paper.

THE MAKA AND CASH-CROP CULTIVATION - BARRIERS TO ACCUMULATION

Historical Survey: "Customary" Chiefs, European Planters and Peasants

The Maka villages to the northwest of Abong-Mbang show that the rapid expansion of cash-crop cultivation does not necessarily lead to structural inequality among farmers, even if there is growing pressure on the land.

Initially, the development of cash-crop cultivation was fraught with difficulties in this isolated part of the Cameroonian forest area (Geschiere 1982, 1984b). Immediately after the colonial conquest (1904/5), the rubber boom led to a rapid expansion of trade in the region, but also to considerable disruption. On the eve of the First World War, the rubber price fell rapidly. Thereafter, it remained unclear how the "mise en valeur" of this region would ever be possible. The government tried to put pressure on the Maka in every way it could to make them produce the surpluses needed for colonial trade. Officials experimented with different crops - palm products, rice, coffee, groundnuts - none of which were a success until 1940. No wonder the official reports complained constantly that the Maka were too lazy and that it was impossible to realise any form of development in this dark area.

The "chefs coutumiers" played a key role in these early and fairly desperate efforts to propagate the cultivation of cash-crops. The position of these pseudo-traditional chiefs, newly appointed by the colonial government, was determined by the serious problems of colonial penetration in this inaccessible and sparsely populated area. The government and the *colons* struggled with a desperate shortage of labour (porters), taxes could hardly be collected and there were constant troubles with the food supply for the new government posts. The only way to make the Maka work harder seemed to be government coercion. Leaders with sufficient authority seemed to be lacking in the strongly segmented Maka society. Thus, new "chefs coutumiers" were appointed, often recruited among the porters and the cooks of the army, who at least understood

the language and the customs of the white man. These "chefs supérieurs" had to implement the entire array of coercive measures.

The position of these chiefs as colonial stooges became poignantly clear in particular due to their brutal behaviour while levying labourers. They had hardly a chance to root their new position of power in the local forms of organisation. As an old "chef supérieur" described his position to me in 1971: "Moi, je suis né entre les mains des Blancs". One of the main tasks of these new chiefs was to stimulate surplus production by the villagers in order to make the collection of taxes and the development of trade possible. This provided the chiefs with opportunities to profit from the new demand for cash-crops. They could expand their control over labour in several ways. Most of them accumulated women on a unprecedented scale (many chiefs had dozens of wives, a few had even more than a hundred). Moreover, they could retain forced labourers, recruited for the government, and make them work on their own plantations. Without exception, the first stories of larger plantations in the Maka area concerned the "chefs supérieurs" or the "chefs de canton".

In the thirties, the French began to propagate coffee cultivation by way of the system of "plantations groupées". This gave the lower chiefs ("chefs de village") opportunities to make the villagers work for them. The French wanted to prevent the villagers from cultivating coffee on their own initiative, although many peasants already showed interest in this crop in the beginning of the thirties. The official reason was that diseases could spread via the native plantations. But the firm conviction that the villagers could only work under government control doubtless played a role as well. Under the strict supervision of the village chief, the villagers were obliged to plant and maintain a fixed number of coffee shrubs in the "plantations groupées" of the village. *Gendarmes* regularly checked the progress of the work. In practice, most village chiefs administered the village plantation as their own property.

To the French, it was evident that cash-crop cultivation by the villagers had to take place under the control of the chiefs. This was illustrated by the discussions that took place around 1940 about the recruitment of labourers for the European plantations in this area. Especially after 1930, French entrepreneurs created large-scale plantations, mainly coffee, around Abong-Mbang. The civil servants were initially enthusiastic about this development - at last the entrepreneurs were showing real interest in the region - and were all too willing to help recruit the necessary labourers. But towards the end of the thirties, some officials became more sceptical. The plantations needed ever more labourers. And because of the low wages, the government had to apply ever more pressure to recruit them.

Around 1940, the the number of labourers to be recruited for each plantation was restricted by fixed quota to prevent an exodus from the villages. It was significant that the officials deemed this restriction, which was highly unpopular among the *colons*, necessary because otherwise "le commandement indigène" might be undermined. The development of large-scale plantations and wage-labour had to be restricted; instead, the Maka were to be put to work within their villages under the close supervision of the chiefs. Thus, government control over economic developments was to be guaranteed. The government's alternative to development by way of large-scale plantations and wage-labour was not production by independent peasants but, rather, cash-crop cultivation under state control with the chiefs in a key position (Geschiere 1984b).

Despite all the support of the government, the role of the "chiefs coutumiers" as planters ultimately remained fairly restricted in this area. Most of the chiefs made their wives cultivate food crops. But, because of the slow expansion of urban centers, the demand for food remained limited in the Eastern Province. It was not until the end of the thirties that some chiefs created cash-crop plantations. Yet the rapid breakdown of their control over labour after 1945 - and probably their lack of commitment to agriculture as well - made it impossible for the chiefs to consolidate their initial lead in the field of market production. I know of no example in present-day Makaland of larger cash-crop plantations directly originating from the chiefs' domains created in colonial times.

After 1945, important changes took place. The French abolished the various forms of forced labour, at least formally. The reactions of the officials in the region indicate how strong their conviction was that the "mise en valeur" was only possible under strict government control and through the chiefs. "Ici le travail est toujours forcé" as the *chef de la région* in Abong-Mbang remarked in 1946. The abolition of forced labour could only lead to complete chaos (Geschiere 1984b). Reality proved to be different. In the thirties, the villagers had already shown interest in the cultivation of coffee and cocoa for their own account. The abolition of the "plantations groupées" allowed more scope to the peasants' own initiative. At the same time, prices rose rapidly and transport to the region was facilitated by improvements of the infrastructure. In the course of the fifties, there followed a rapid expansion of coffee and cocoa plantations around the villages.³ The solution to the problems of the "mise en valeur" of Makaland turned out to be a system of peasant production - family-heads acting, at least formally, as independent

³ Compare the following data on coffee and cocoa production by African and European planters in the Haut-Nyong (the department where the Maka live): Total population of the Haut-Nyong in 1946 83,699 and in 1966/7 104,699. In the fifties the expansion of cocoa and coffee cultivation took mainly place in three Maka cantons (Ayong Yerap and the cantons on the northern and the southern banks of the Nyong) and in the region of Messamena; these areas had altogether 44,131 inhabitants in 1966.

producers and controlling only the labour from their own family (wives, children, sometimes nephews).

Limits to the rise of big farmers within the village.

In 1971, at the beginning of my field-work among the Maka, this rapid development of cash-crop cultivation had created marked differences within the villages.⁴ A few richer farmers lived in big houses "en tôle et en semi-dur", the new status symbol; most of them were polygamous (two, at most three wives); they had more children at the secondary school than the other villagers and people talked with respect about their prestige as "grands planteurs". Yet it was striking that the villagers and these "grands planteurs" themselves considered their lead to be only temporary. People stressed that their rapid progress was only due to personal and more or less accidental factors. Some had started early with the outlay of plantations, for instance, because they had learned to plant cocoa at the European plantations. The success of others was simply accounted for by the fact that they were such hard workers. In some cases, a richer farmer proved to have made a quick start by investing the money he had earned in town in the outlay of larger plantations. He had, for instance, rented a work group so that he could have a larger area deforested. Yet, significantly enough, people often added that these planters had really made their plantations too large - they could hardly find the labour to maintain them.

In the opinion of the villagers, there was still no question of "structural" inequality. Younger farmers were supposed to have every chance of overtaking their richer fellow-villagers. In 1980 and 1987, when I returned to the area, this opinion still prevailed and was indeed confirmed by my data. Younger men had risen independently to a position of "grand planteur". Some of the richer farmers of the beginning of the seventies had maintained their position. In other cases, their plantations had been transferred to one son, "grand planteur" by inheritance. But there were also cases where their wealth had been dispersed by the repartition between several heirs or had even disappeared completely because of neglect of the plantations, shortage of labour and quarrels about the inheritance. My data correspond very well to Nsangou's conclusions for the East in general: despite considerable socio-economic differentiation among the rural

⁴ The following data on a larger Maka village can indicate the kind of differences that had arisen among cash-crop farmers:

Income from the sale of coffee and cocoa in 1970/71			Farmers of the village Logbood 50 and older under 50 total	
more than	200,000	fr.CFA	-	1
100,000 -	200,000	fr.CFA	5	9
50,000 -	100,000	fr.CFA	9	21
25,000 -	50,000	fr.CFA	5	22
less than	25,000	fr.CFA	10	19
			22	
			101	

population, "l'apparition d'une catégorie de grands planteurs..." is still delayed (Nsangou 1984:103). The question in this section is which factors impede the emergence of new structural inequality in agriculture.

In the first place, a complex of economic factors should be mentioned. In practice, the richer Maka farmers have limited opportunities to re-invest their cocoa and coffee earnings in agriculture, for instance in the further expansion of their plantations. The main reason is that within the villages no regular forms of wage-labour exist and alternative opportunities to recruit extra-familial labour are limited. To explain this, the Maka themselves tend to emphasise that there is still no shortage of land around the villages. There would still be enough room for young men to create their own plantations. And who would rather work on someone else's fields than become a "grand planteur" himself? In reality, the situation has become more complex, at least in certain parts of the East Province. Nsangou is right in insisting that in a few *cantons*, an agro-demographic threshold has been reached.⁵ In the two Maka cantons concerned, the farmers were indeed conscious of the fact that the supply of land could run out in the near future. There was constant tension about villagers' attempts to "reserve" land for themselves or for their sons. However, even in the eighties, there was apparently no absolute shortage of land yet. In practice, young men still could find land to start their own plantations if they were not to inherit any from their father.

The consequence is that nearly all richer farmers are confronted with a shortage of labour. In particular, the older farmers, who become too tired to work hard, complain that the fruit rots on the trees because they cannot find labourers to pick it. Both in coffee and cocoa cultivation, the possibilities for applying mechanical, labour-saving devices are limited, at least on small-scale farms. Some farmers rent a mechanical saw for the outlay of new plantations. But even this is no real solution to the labour problem, since the weeding and the harvesting are the main bottlenecks. In practice, the richer planters have to resort to provisional ways of recruiting labour. Sometimes the new system of work groups (*badega*) provides a temporary solution. In principle, these groups work in the plantation of each member in turn. But the expenses for the "reception" of the group are fairly costly (palm-wine, food). Poorer members of the team may therefore prefer to rent their turn to a richer farmer. This can be considered a disguised form of wage-labour. Yet the consequence is that even the poorest members of the group retain their

⁵ Nsangou 1984b:45,48,64. Probably he follows here calculations of Marticou 1962 and Weber 1977, according to whom, under the condition of cocoa cultivation in the Cameroonian forest zone, pressure on the land will follow when the population density exceeds 30 inhabitants per km². This threshold has nearly been reached in two Maka cantons - Ayong-Yerap and Maka Mboans (Abong-Mbang). However, there is some confusion about the exact figures for these cantons. Nsangou mentions on the basis of figures from 1976 population densities of respectively 29.3 and 19.7. But in the ORSTOM Atlas for the Sudest of 1970, based on figures from the sixties, the corresponding figures are 30.89 and 26.52. A decrease of the population in the intervening decade is not probable.

own plantations and do not become dependent on their richer fellow-villagers. In practice, the renting of work groups is therefore no real solution for the richer farmers. The restricted opportunity to attract labour from outside the domestic circle imposes strict limits on the expansion of their farms.

The consequence is that even the richer farmers hardly can invest in their plantations. Most do spend some money on chemical products to spray their plantations. But further opportunities for a profitable investment in agriculture seem to be non-existent. In Makaland, it is still hardly possible, outside the urban centers, to rent or buy land. In 1987, the mere rumour that a childless old man wanted to pledge his plantations to a Bamiléké trader led to a fierce palaver in the village where I lived. The predictable outcome was that the patrilineage's ultimate control over the land was confirmed in no uncertain terms. The accumulation of land has, moreover, little point to it as long as it is not possible to recruit additional labour. The sharp competition of Bamiléké and Hausa traders leaves the Maka little opportunity to invest in trade. It is only in the villages, that one may find small Maka shops, mostly with a very modest turnover.

The richer Maka farmers rather invest in houses, luxury items (radios etc.), education for their children and bride-prices for additional wives. The latter "traditional" form of accumulation - most richer farmers have two or three wives - can be considered a productive investment in view of the division of work in agriculture. More wives means more labour on the cash-crop plantations and also more food with which occasional labourers - poor kin, clients - can be attracted. The other side of the coin is that polygamy often has a divisive effect. The inheritance has to be partitioned between different *ngouong boud* (children of one bed), which again impedes the emergence of new structural inequality.⁶

The absence of wage-labour in the Maka villages is not only related to economic but also to *cultural* factors. In the region as a whole, wage-labour does exist, particularly in agriculture. The expansion of the European plantations, mentioned above, may have stopped after 1945. Yet the biggest enterprise, the CFSO, has maintained its position. It still possesses more than 1000 ha near Abong-Mbang and Atok and it still employs hundreds of labourers.⁷ But since the

⁶ But compare Guyer's important observation that, under modern circumstances, informal forms of polygamy may create a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate offspring. The latter do not inherit plantations and might become potential wage-labourers. I have doubts that this interpretation will apply to Makaland (see below).

⁷ Unfortunately, I have no exact figures on the present number of wage-labourers on the CFSO plantations. The total number varies strongly throughout the year. On the plantation near Abong-Mbang, which is considerably smaller than the one near Atok, the CFSO employed a core of about 150 permanent labourers; about the same number was temporarily employed (often only for a few weeks). The other European plantations in the area were all owned by individual entrepreneurs, who either had left or died in the course of the sixties and seventies. A few of their plantations had been bought by the CFSO, others were neglected. It is significant that none of these plantations was bought by Africans. Dongmo (1981 I:282) boasts that "Les Bamiléké auraient d'ailleurs acheté les plantations abandonnées dans les autres régions (le pays bamoun et l'Est par exemple) s'ils n'avaient pas rencontré

fifties, the number of Maka among these labourers has decreased rapidly. Most permanent labourers now come from regions where cash-crop cultivation is still less developed (Kaka, Gbigbil, "Congolais"). Maka men only want to work for a few weeks on the plantations if they are in acute need of cash. The fact remains that there is a large number of farm labourers present in the region. The question is why it is apparently impossible to employ these in the villages? The following case history can illustrate some of the problems involved.

When I arrived in the village for the first time, Samson M., the *catéchiste* of the Presbyterian church, had just taken a stranger into his house. Samson was often ill. His elder sons were at school in town, his elder daughters had married and only one small boy and two girls were left in the village. Samson and his wife were hardly up to all the work in their large plantations. Samson tried to get extra labour in all sorts of ways, for example by renting work-groups or asking the old women of the church to come and work for him. Yet these were all provisional solutions. The "help" of the stranger was therefore more than welcome.

The stranger himself was also quite happy to "help," at least initially. Later, he began to complain that he worked hard but only received food in return and that he had been fobbed off with a pittance at the coffee and cocoa sales. The villagers were also unhappy with the whole arrangement. People often remarked that nobody knew where the stranger came from. Why had Samson allowed him to come and live in the village? How could he be sure the man had no evil intentions? Three months after the arrival of the stranger, there was a terrific row and the stranger was openly accused of witchcraft. The next day he disappeared and a few weeks later everybody had "forgotten" about him.

The Maka villages are still marked by a strictly patrilineal pattern of settlement. In principle, it is still impossible for a stranger - a non-kin who is not formally adopted into the kin-group - to come and live in the village. Even outsiders with official positions, like teachers or nurses, encounter all sorts of problems. Less protected strangers nearly always have to leave sooner or later. Accusations or rumours of witchcraft often play a role in this context.

Witchcraft can be considered as the strongest expression of the levelling forces which still mark day-to-day life in the Maka villages. The kinship ideology or the political style of the village palaver have a strong levelling impact as well. But witchcraft is the supreme way to express jealousy and to attack emerging inequality (Geschiere 1982). Initially, the witchcraft belief

d'importants obstacles d'origine politique". Unfortunately, he does not substantiate this remark with more detailed information. But it is in any case clear that in the East itself, no entrepreneurial group had emerged which could take over the European plantations. We shall see below that developments in the Bamiléké area and the Mungo were have been markedly different.

constituted a serious obstacle to the spread of cash-crop cultivation. In the seventies, many villagers still told me that people used to hesitate to plant cocoa or coffee. In former days, everybody "knew" that a man would die before he could reap the fruits of his new riches. This firm conviction was undermined in the course of the sixties (Geschiere 1988). But the witchcraft belief did not lose its force. Nowadays, people instead hint that the big farmers themselves must know their way around in the world of the witches. How else would they dare to defy the jealousy of the witches so openly? Moreover, witchcraft still constitutes a barrier to the introduction of foreign wage-labourers in the village. In this respect, the levelling forces characteristic for the Maka culture still block the emergence of new structural inequality.

Networks between the new elite and the villagers: new forms of accumulation?

A crucial factor in the slow development of new forms of agricultural accumulation is the new Maka elite's lack of involvement with cash-crop cultivation. The specific traits of the social networks between the new elite and the villagers are related both to the wider political context and cultural barriers within Maka village society. The emergence of a new educated elite occurred fairly late in Makaland. It was only towards the end of the fifties that younger Maka men with some schooling succeeded in attaining higher positions in government service. Since the sixties, nearly every Maka village can boast of one or more "évolués" with an important political or bureaucratic position on the regional or even the national level. It is significant that this elite still consists exclusively of "fonctionnaires" (civil servants, doctors, higher positions in education etc.). These elite persons often maintain close contact with their villages of birth. Yet especially since independence, the inequality with their former fellow-villagers became striking. In the seventies, the higher "fonctionnaires" earned ten times as much as the richer farmers in the village. This difference has hardly decreased since then. Moreover, these elite persons have political contacts which the villagers sorely lack in their dealings with the state authorities. In view of its economic and political positions, it seems quite possible that the new Maka elite will develop into some sort of a rural bourgeoisie.

In 1971 and 1973, I interviewed forty members of the new Maka elite. Some of them, especially those working in the area, were involved with cash-crop cultivation in the village. But their plantations proved to be much smaller than those of the richer village farmers. None of the Maka "évolués" I interviewed had invested on a large scale in the outlay of cash-crop plantations, neither on their own account or in cooperation with close kin (brothers or sons). As far as my more recent information goes, this continued to be the case in the eighties. The elite persons themselves gave different reasons for their limited involvement in cash-crop cultivation. A recurring remark was that "ces gens du village sont trop difficiles". Some of them explained

to me in detail how much they could have earned if they had invested part of their considerable earnings in plantations. They emphasised that the village would have benefited from this as well. But they kept repeating that it was impossible to work with "those villagers". These complaints proved to be related to various problems.

The most direct problem for the "fonctionnaires" was, again, how to get labourers. The villagers were certainly not prepared to work on the elite's plantations for nothing or for vague promises of patronage. The "fonctionnaires" had even more problems than the bigger farmers in the village with the upkeep of their plantations. In the village where I lived, a school inspector used to oblige the teachers of the village school to have the pupils execute their "Travaux pratiques" in his plantations. Another turned to the village football team, promising to buy them shirts and a football. From the start, the boys doubted he would keep his promise and their work was clearly half-hearted. The "fonctionnaire" then did indeed refuse to remunerate them and that led again to a violent row. I only heard of one attempt by a Maka "fonctionnaire" to create large-scale plantations. This concerned Mr. Gobe from Motcheboun, who had retired as Vice-Minister of Agriculture at the end of the seventies. Apparently he hoped to use Baka (Pygmy) labour for his project. This illustrated clearly how pressing the labour problem was, even for such a high-class official. His village had special links of patronage with a Baka group and they were to help to deforest a large area for plantations. According to my informants, the whole project already failed in this initial stage. The Baka are still not really settled and it seemed a fairly desperate attempt to try to employ this group for a longer period of time.

The elite's complaints about the "impossible mentality" of the villagers have other aspects as well. In practice, the Maka elite is hardly inclined to try and build up an economic base in the village. The strong cultural barriers in the village against any form of accumulation do affect the new elite persons as well. They often confess to being wary of close contact with the villagers. Again, this fear is preferably expressed in terms of witchcraft. Several "fonctionnaires" complained to me that they were afraid "of being eaten by those villagers" and that they had to keep their distance to protect themselves (Geschieri 1988b). Such fears of the levelling forces in local culture are of course, hardly conducive to concerted efforts on the part of the new elite to develop their farms in the village.

The reluctant attitude of the Maka elite towards the village has, moreover, important political reasons related to the wider national context. Most members of the elite occupy a position in the political party and aspire to a higher post. Certainly in the seventies, it was not wise to be too involved with the grassroots if one wanted to rise in party politics. Several officials explained to me that they hesitated to visit their native village too often. Hadn't the party leadership wanted that loyal members were not to try to build up a personal following? Political rivals were always

ready to make someone suspect in Yaoundé (Geschiere 1986b). The political climate also does not reinforce the involvement of the Maka elite with the village economy.⁸

N'sangou (1984b:102) advocates for the East:

d'accroître les engagements de l'Etat afin de faciliter l'apparition d'une catégorie de grands planteurs, d'hommes d'affaires, d'entrepreneurs.....

According to him, better credit facilities are especially important in this respect. Leaving aside the moot point of whether this goal is really desirable, one can wonder if state interventions and larger credit facilities would be sufficient to bring about the emergence of a category of big farmers. In a configuration as in Makaland, there are strong impediments to such a development. Even the ambitious interventions by the ZAPI - a cooperative organisation active in the area since 1968 and now nearly covering the whole East - did not create new structural inequality among the villagers as yet. The impossibility of wage-labour within the village, the levelling forces in local culture and the political-economic impediments to an involvement of the new elite with cash-crops still constitute strong barriers to new forms of agricultural accumulation in Makaland.

THE BETI (CENTRE-SUD): THE STRENGTH OF A PEASANT CONSCIOUSNESS

The general pattern of the spread of cash-crops, mainly cocoa, was about the same here as in the East. During the interbellum, government coercion led to cultivation for the market under the close control of "chiefs coutumiers", here again colonial creations. After 1945 forced labour was officially abolished leading here as well to a rapid development of individual cocoa plantations. But there are important differences too. Cultivation for the market under the control of the chiefs acquired much more spectacular forms here. Guyer (1985) describes how colonial chiefs in this area accumulated hundreds of "wives". Some transformed their harems into real agro-enterprises where the women were put to work under close supervision and according to a strict division of tasks. As a conquering nation, the Beti had grown accustomed in the 19th century to accumulating women on a much larger scale than for, instance, the Maka. They actually took many women as tribute from subdued Maka villages. The labour of all those women could be put to good use when, in colonial times, the demand for food rapidly grew because of the expansion of urban centres in the area. The Beti chiefs not only employed their wives in food production but also in the cultivation of "produits industriels". Chief Atangana, for instance, is said to have had more than 100 ha of cocoa plantations (Koopman-Henn

⁸ A question is, of course, to what extent the political changes after 1982 have altered the relations between the Maka elite and the grassroots. I have no systematic information on this subject, at most some general impressions.

1978:108). Yet these large-scale forms of production by the chiefs during the interbellum had no follow-up, even in this area. After 1945, the chiefs' plantations were apparently dispersed. Various authors (Weber 1977, Koopman-Henn 1978, Ntangsi 1979, Guyer 1985) all emphasize the definitive victory of small-scale peasant production after the Second World War.

Compared to the East Province, the expansion of peasant production started earlier here. Beti peasants began their own plantations in the thirties and the rapid expansion followed in the forties (Koopman-Henn 1978, chap.3,4; Assoumou 1977); cocoa production is now further developed than among the Maka.⁹ Nonetheless, all the authors agree that even in this region, structural differentiations among cash-crop farmers have not emerged yet. Guyer (1985) emphasizes - in accordance with Melone (1972) - that, since 1966, Cameroonian land and family legislation tried to promote the emergence of "modern farmers" by attacking the communal control of kin-groups over land and labour, which was considered to be an impediment to development. In Guyer's view, these laws already had considerable impact on developments in the Lékié. Yet she still explains the existing differences among farmers mainly by personal factors and she concludes that there is still no structural differentiation (Guyer 1985:111,135). And Weber (1977:120) concludes concisely - referring to Binet's famous studies of cocoa planters in the Centre Sud of the fifties - that relations are still determined by

...la non-apparition de la *classe* de grands planteurs que les études de la région nous promettent de longue date.

Like Guyer, he emphasizes that the spread of cocoa production has even demolished the older forms of accumulation by the rich family heads, with their large following of kin and clients. In one of his research areas, for instance, the descendant of former Maka "slaves" is now the richest farmer of the village (Weber 1977:122).

The absence of new structural differentiation in this area has the same reasons as in Makaland. All the authors observe that there is no regular practice of wage-labour in the rural areas - not even in the Lékié, despite its high population density.¹⁰ Weber (1977:121) supposes that regular wage-labour can only develop if migrants come to the area. This begs the question - indeed raised by Koopman-Henn (1978:196) - why richer farmers do not attract strangers to come and work for them. There are, after all, enough strangers available in the immediate surroundings - in the slums of Yaoundé or at Mbandjock, among the many Kirdi labourers who

⁹ Guyer (1985:102/3) says that in the Lékié - this is according to Ntangsi (1979:117) "the most traditional cocoa-growing area of Cameroon" - the average income of cocoa farmers in 1973 was 90,000 fr.CFA. The corresponding figure for the Maka villages where I worked is - for the same year and for cocoa plus coffee - about 60,000 fr.CFA.

¹⁰ According to Ntangsi (1979:51), population density in the Lékié divisions had reached 60 inhabitants per km² by 1975. According to Weber, (1977:121) population densities in this area varied from 55 to 150 inhabitants per km² already by 1972/73.

came all the way down to work for SOSUCAM. Are there still cultural barriers in the Lékié villages - just as in Makaland and despite the undermining of the communal coherence in the Lékié - which make it impossible to introduce strange labourers into the local community?

Guyer's original interpretation indicates another possible source for the widening of rural inequality. She concludes that the combined effects of the new family-laws, the disintegration of older forms of marriage and the growing pressure on the land have created a situation in which "illegitimate" offspring is marginalised and loses its access to land. But she considers this group, at most, a future source of rural wage-labour (Guyer 1985:63,80).¹¹

The further developments in the Lékié, the most densely populated part of the cocoa zone, are especially important. The various authors quoted here all emphasise that in the seventies, a harsh struggle for land had developed. There are no detailed figures about the accumulation of land by bigger planters, but the authors suggest that they have not yet taken a definitive lead. Weber (1977:120) stresses the dispersing effects of polygyny and inheritance rules. Richer planters prefer to have several wives and as many children as possible who will all share in the inheritance. Guyer (1985) remarks that the labour division between men and women impedes the crystallisation of new structural inequality. Food production has become the exclusive domain of the women. They have succeeded in developing a production system based on the groundnut field, with sufficient elasticity to guarantee self-subsistence despite the growing pressure on the land. In Guyer's view, this is an important reason "which prevents people from being forced into rural wage-labour" (Guyer 1985:115). She thinks that in general, the Beti farmers "being assured of their diet" are "less militant" (Guyer 1985:110).

Apparently, even in the Lékié, there are still important barriers within the rural setting against the emergence of a class of yeomen. All the more important is the question of the extent to which the rise of the new urban elite affects relations in agriculture - to what extent can the social networks between the new elite and the villagers in this area lead to a deepening of rural inequality? Unfortunately, the involvement of urbanites with cash-crop cultivation is not

¹¹ I observed similar processes in Makaland since 1980, although the impact of the new family-law is much smaller there and the pressure on the land is lower. Families of richer farmers became more and more "closed", since people grasped the implications of the permanent value of cash-crop plantations. Adoptions of orphans from other branches of the lineage - of old a favoured way to enlarge the group - created new problems because sons were little inclined to share the heritage with newcomers. Children from desintegrated families were thus placed in a new, marginal position. The cases which I followed, however, do not suggest that such marginalised youngsters will come available as wage-labourers for the richer villagers. They were rather expelled from the village, especially by witchcraft threats and accusations. Their survival strategy was instead to try their luck in the city. These kids often complained about the harshness of village life: "les gens sont trop durs au village; nous étions obligés de partir".

For the Lékié area, Guyer noted in 1984 signs of a possible increase in small-scale polygyny. Guyer writes in her comments on this paper: "For women this seemed to be a straightforward response to the situation I found in the mid 1970s, of informal polygyny. The idea was: better some kind of marriage than bear children 'père inconnu'".

systematically discussed in the literature quoted here. Passing remarks suggest that there are important changes in the air in this respect, especially in the Lékié. Weber (1977:137) mentions that in this area

...une accumulation de terres est effectuée par des commerçants et des grands fonctionnaires originaires de la zone et qui sont donc des propriétaires absentéistes.¹²

Similar remarks, again without further specification, are to be found in Ntangi's thesis (1979:165). Such observations suggest that a real transformation of rural relations is especially to be expected from further involvement of urban elite persons with cash-cropping. Particularly in the Lékié, such a transformation seems probable because of the high population density and the concomitant trend toward land accumulation, but also because of the proximity of the city. Yet all sorts of questions remain unanswered. The lack of detailed data in the literature suggests that, at least in the seventies, the accumulation of land by "grands fonctionnaires" was still exceptional. Apparently, there are still barriers to investments by the new elite in agriculture. In view of Weber's insistence on the absence of wage-labour, the question becomes indeed how these new "propriétaires absentéistes" can get enough labour to work the land they have accumulated. More detailed case-studies are necessary to determine to what extent levelling mechanisms in local culture still impede the elite's interference with cash-crops. The subject is important enough. Weber is doubtless right to emphasise that intervention by the urban elite will be of crucial importance to the further development of rural inequality in the Lékié.

In some parts of the Centre-Sud - notably among the Beti in the Lékié - various factors appear to further the rapid development of structural inequality and new forms of accumulation in agriculture. The Beti, with their tradition of large-scale accumulation of women, were of old more accustomed to ostentatious inequality than, for instance, the Maka. Since colonial times, the rapid growth of urban centres and the increasing pressure on the land favoured the emergence of new kinds of inequality. Yet the literature quoted here seems to indicate that even in this area, there are still strong barriers against the rise of a planter class. An important reason seems to be that here as well, the opportunities to employ extra-familial labour in the cash-crop plantations are severely limited. The chances for structural transformations from within rural society are therefore small. The most plausible scenario for the rise of new forms of rural accumulation therefore seems to be a growing involvement of "grands fonctionnaires" and other rich urbanites in agriculture. It is not clear from the literature why this involvement remains fairly limited. Is this due to levelling mechanisms within village society, here as well? Or is the

¹² In her comments on this paper, Guyer remarks that, in the seventies, civil servants did try to safeguard their rights to land in the village. However, their aim was not to accumulate land but rather to protect the land rights they would have had if they had remained in the village.

continuing orientation of the new elite toward public service the main impediment to its expansion into agriculture?

THE BAKOSSI (SOUTH-WEST): CASH-CROPS, CHIEFS AND MIGRANTS

The strongly segmented patterns of organisation among the Bakossi of Southwest Cameroon - former English territory - resembled in many respects the relations among the Maka or the Beti. But the spread of cash-crop cultivation followed a clearly different course here. The British economic policy differed strongly from the French. The British hardly put any pressure on the peasants to cultivate cash-crops (Ejedepang-Koge n.d.:89). Yet cocoa production began early here due to the concerted initiative of one of the main colonial chiefs, Ntoko Epie. After 1916 he organised the colonisation of the Tombel plain, better suited to cocoa cultivation than the higher land near the Bakossi villages. The Germans had reserved the Tombel plain for the KEG for the outlay of plantations. But chief Ntoko took advantage of the uncertain period of transition from German to British rule to divide the land among his Bakossi followers to create their own cocoa plantations.

Later on, chief Ntoko explained to the British that he had taken the land in order to facilitate the levying of taxes. Due to the rapid development of the German plantations in the Southwest, the Bakossi had been recruited early as wage-labourers. But others remained behind and it had proved to be very difficult to levy taxes in money from them. This problem had now been solved, since many villagers had created their own cash-crop plantations. A more general motive for chief Ntoko's colonisation project was undoubtedly that he hoped to assert himself as Paramount Chief, in this area again a position created by the colonial government (Ejedepang-Koge n.d.:81, Levin 1976:14,56).

Chief Ntoko's initiative had, in any case, important consequences for the way cocoa production developed in the area. The Bakossi cocoa farmers became temporary migrants. During the rainy season, they left the village for the plain to work on their cash-crop farms. Moreover, the early spread of cocoa in this area led to a curious period of under-consumption, since there were still limited opportunities to spend the cocoa money. Levin describes "those lazy days" in fairly vague terms:

Bust and boom cycles are recalled, but the period most vividly remembered is the post-war period of high cocoa prices and nothing to spend on. People recollect buying cases of smuggled Spanish gin and brandy and consuming it in long and extended drinking bouts. Shouting and singing echoed through the cocoa farms throughout the night.... No farmer

had to work. For one-third of the crop, a sharecropper would tend the farm (Levin 1980:231).

.... it was only in the 1950s and 1960s that consumption reached levels that forced maximum individual labour from the cash-crop farmers themselves (Levin 1976:55).

These quotations also indicate the most striking aspect of cash-crop cultivation among the Bakossi. From the beginning, farmers tended to rent their farms, preferably to strangers (i.e. non-Bakossi). The early emergence of various forms of land-rent in this area cannot be explained by pressure on the land; it was only after Independence that people began to fear in some areas that the land would "run out" (Ejedepang-Koge n.d.:35). According to Levin, the explanation is rather that the Bakossi tended to adopt "the plantation model of cash-crop production" following the example of the large European plantations in the area.

.....a number of elements of the European plantations which were not essential to production were also taken up. One was the tendency to hire non-baKosi as labourers to work the farms..... hired labour was used to clear the forest and workers and owners entered into share-cropping arrangements to tend and harvest cocoa (Levin 1976:79/69).

The flow of labourers between the European plantations near the coast on the one hand and the Grassfields, Iboland and the Bamiléké mountains on the other passed the Bakossi area. Probably because of this, "free" labour became soon available in this area as well. Bakossi conceptions on land rights reinforced the tendency to rent land to strangers. To the Bakossi, the investment of labour gives someone a right to the farm. Therefore, Bakossi farmers preferred to employ strangers who could not so easily claim that a farm had become theirs because they had worked on it (Levine 1976:79/80). In contrast to European plantation owners, Bakossi farmers did not have enough money to pay wage-labourers for a longer period. Instead, they recruited strangers as sharecroppers.

However this availability of extra-familial labour did not lead to the emergence of a class of yeomen among the Bakossi. Instead the opposite trend became apparent. Just as in the Mungo area, the local planters risked losing their farms to immigrants. When they were short of money or during falling cash-crop prices, Bakossi tended to pledge their farms to strangers. The latter often tried to augment the sum in order to make repayment more difficult and to acquire definitive possession of the farm. Nowadays, the Bakossi generally view the practice of pledging farms as a serious danger but it still continues (Ejedepang-Koge n.d.:130,165).

It is hard to conclude from the literature to what extent this complex development has led to new forms of accumulation in agriculture. It would be especially useful to have more detailed information on the opportunities of migrants to create large-scale agricultural enterprises.¹³ Clearly there are already considerable differences between richer and less successful farmers (Ejedepang-Koge n.d.:121). But in this area again, there still seems to be no regular practice of wage-labour on the African farms (Ejedepang-Koge n.d.:162/3). Moreover, nearly all the Bakossi families have retained access to land, although increasing population pressure has put some families in a precarious position (Levin 1976:87,1980:235). Apparently, no clear structural differentiations have arisen so far among the farmers even in this area, despite the availability of non-domestic labour.

It is equally difficult to conclude from the literature to what extent intervention by the educated elite created new networks of agricultural accumulation among the Bakossi. There are occasional references to bureaucrats who invest in plantations. But apparently this is still exceptional (Levin 1976:193/6). Levin (1976:86) instead analyses a reversed trend, whereby schooling becomes a drain on cash-crop cultivation. Youngsters at school put pressure on their family to pledge part of the plantations in order to pay their school-fees. In general, the Bakossi consider a career through education to be much more promising than development through cash-crop cultivation (Levin 1976:206). In practice, this reinforces the tendency to pledge the farms.

The Bakossi example indicates that, even without pressure on the land, various forms of land rent or sale and large-scale recruitment of non-domestic labour can develop. But even these new opportunities for accumulation of labour and land do not lead to structural differentiations in this area, at least not among autochthonous farmers.

An important issue is of course why migrants so easily gain access to land in this area and consequently play so large a role in the development of cash-crop production. This may constitute a sharp contrast to developments in Central and Southeastern Cameroon, but it is hardly exceptional in a broader context. Hill's classical study (1963) on Ghana already indicated the crucial role of migrants in the spread of cash-cropping. The same pattern is prevalent in other regions of Southwest Cameroon, as well as in neighbouring parts of the former French

¹³ Kleis (1975) has studied the Ibo cocoa farmers of Kake (in the same area). He does not provide much information on differences between richer and poorer farmers. But it is clear from his study that these farmers do not employ wage-labourers on a large scale. The further expansion of Ibo cocoa farmers may have been impeded by the fact that their political position was considerably weakened after 1960. It would be interesting to know more about the development of Bamiléké farms in this area.

territory (the Mungo).¹⁴ Various factors play a role in the strong impact of migrants in Bakossiland. On the one hand, there are the external factors, such as the pressure of more densely populated neighbouring areas (the Grassfields and the Bamiléké mountains), or the early mobilisation of labourers for the European plantations who passed through Bakossiland. On the other hand, specific traits of the Bakossi patterns of organisation must be of some consequence as well. Levin (1980:228) observes, for instance, that "the land-genealogical identity was quite loose". The stricter patrilineal forms of organisation among the Maka or the Beti seem to offer more resistance to the appropriation of land by strangers.

Developments among the Bakossi indicate another possible scenario for the eventual emergence of new forms of accumulation and structural differentiation in agriculture - namely through migration. Apparently, this did not lead to the rise of autochthonous planters by way of the exploitation of foreign workers. Instead, it seems more probable that some of the migrants will be in a position to become successful agricultural entrepreneurs. Migrants can only gain access to land by paying money to Bakossi willing to pledge their farms. It seems logical that these migrants will continue to invest their cocoa money in the further expansion of their plantations.

ACCUMULATION IN THE WEST PROVINCE: THE ELUSIVE BAMILEKE BOURGEOISIE

Developments in the Bamiléké area are of particular relevance to our subject. If new forms of accumulation are to occur anywhere in Cameroon, it should be in this region. However, the including of the Bamiléké case in our comparison poses certain problems. The modern developments in this area have been particularly complex and for nearly two decades it was difficult to study this region. The literature, although extensive, has important gaps where politically sensitive topics are concerned. It is especially difficult to get a closer view of the emergence of the Bamiléké bourgeoisie, of which there is so much talk in Cameroon.

At first view, the spread of cash-crop cultivation in the Bamiléké region appears to follow the same historical pattern as in the rest of French Cameroon, although the main cash-crop in this higher region became coffee and not cocoa. Until the end of the Second World War, the government tried to keep strict control over the spread of coffee plantations. As was the case elsewhere, this policy was to the advantage of the chiefs and the notables who became the first big planters. The Bamiléké peasants were particularly dissatisfied with the system of "diffusion

¹⁴ Henn (1978:196 note 12) wonders why, in Cameroon, no big planters emerge through the exploitation of "foreign workers". Clearly, there are important differences between various regions of Cameroon in this respect. The question is rather why migrant labour does play so important a role in cash-cropping in the Southwest (the Mungo included) and not at all in the Centre-Sud or the East.

contrôlée" which obliged them to plant a fixed number of coffee shrubs under the close supervision of the chief. Apparently this was even the reason for early nationalist agitation in the area. After 1945, direct government control was weakened and the consequent development of peasant production for the market was particularly rapid here (Dongmo 1981:128, Illy 1974:283, den Ouden 1981:178).

Upon closer examination, there were particular aspects to these developments in this region as well. An important difference with the Centre-Sud and the East was that, among the Bamiléké, the chiefs were certainly not colonial creations. Of old, they could claim various forms of surplus-labour from their followers. Moreover, the accumulation of land through trade, exchanges of prestige-goods or even money had been possible for a longer period; Den Ouden (1981:178) suggests that this occurred even before the colonial conquest. Such opportunities for accumulation again reinforced the position of the chiefs and their notables. Yet it is not clear that, by the end of the interbellum, the Bamiléké chiefs had succeeded in creating larger plantations than, for instance, their colleagues in the Centre-Sud. Dongmo (1981:137/140) quotes figures for 1940 which rather suggest the contrary.¹⁵ Yet it is significant that among Dongmo's 1940 examples of bigger planters there are not only chiefs but also more modern figures like traders, "grands fonctionnaires" and so forth. Before 1940, a fusion of traditional chiefs and modern elite persons was apparently developing already.

Another important difference between the developments here and those in the Centre-Sud was that after 1945, Bamiléké chiefs continued to play a dominant role in the expansion of cash-crops. The large plantations, created during the interbellum with the help of colonial labour coercion, were apparently not disrupted in this area by the changes in colonial policy. The chiefs' power was much more deeply rooted in local patterns of organisation. Although formal government coercion was abolished, they probably could continue to demand labour services from their followers. The chiefs, in close collaboration with modern elite persons, succeeded moreover in dominating the cooperatives which, after 1945, gained considerable force in this area and a degree of autonomy exceptional for Cameroon. After 1945, a leading role in the expansion of peasant production was played by the Kumze, a political party based explicitly on Bamiléké traditions and dominated by the chiefs. The Kumze president, chief Djoumessi, played a key role in the coffee cooperatives since 1948 (Dongmo I, 1981:128,142). After Independence, he was even nominated "Ministre résident à Dschang". According to Illy (1974:283), he administered the cooperative under his chairmanship "gleichsam ein Teil seiner

¹⁵ For instance, the largest plantation Dongmo mentions for 1940 contained 46,105 shrubs; other plantations contained 10,000 to 20,000 shrubs. If we count 1000 to 1500 shrubs for one ha, the largest plantation would still be much smaller than the 100 ha chief Atangana from the Centre-Sud is said to have planted with cocoa. An open question is, of course, whether Atangana really maintained this extensive cocoa plantation.

Chefferie". The regional elite's control over the coffee cooperatives must have constituted an important base for accumulation. In 1961, the government accorded the UCCAO, the umbrella organisation of the various local cooperatives, an absolute monopoly on the purchase of coffee in the entire Bamiléké area (Illy 1974:284).

Yet it is hard to establish to what extent really new forms of accumulation developed among the Bamiléké as a consequence of the spread of cash-crops. As was noted above, more detailed information on the rise of the Bamiléké bourgeoisie and its involvement in agriculture is not available. However, the literature does offer interesting clues as to the specific opportunities and barriers to accumulation in this area. Accumulation seems to be encouraged by the following factors:

- In the *economic* respect, all the authors emphasise the propensity of Bamiléké planters to invest their earnings from cash-crop cultivation in further economic pursuits. Compare for instance Barbier's profile of the Bamiléké migrant in the Mungo:

Cependant, chaque individu entame un processus de promotion économique qui le conduit à pratiquer plusieurs activités. De même que le salarié agricole est devenu colon, le market-boy devient planteur et réciproquement..... La plantation, une fois mise en production n'absorbe pas beaucoup de temps de travail du chef de l'exploitation. Celui-ci peu alors consacrer son temps libre à des activités commerciales (Barbier *et al.* 1984:129).

- In the *socio-cultural* respect, one might mention the strongly hierarchical tradition and the continuing force of secret societies, which seem to protect new forms of wealth against levelling mechanisms within village society (Den Ouden 1981:186). Dongmo stresses the role of the *loun* associations which can function as highly effective credit organisations, not only in the Bamiléké area itself but equally among Bamiléké in diaspora (Dongmo 1981 I:50,II:247). Another important factor is undoubtedly the impartible inheritance system preventing the plantations of a rich man from being divided among his numerous offspring. There is a sharp contrast here with relations in the Centre-Sud or the East. Since the spread of cash-crops among the Bamiléké, "principal heirs start considering themselves and behaving as 'owners' with full control over the undivided land" (Den Ouden 1981:185).

- In the *political* respect, the intertwining of the traditional and modern elites is of great importance, for instance their close collaboration within the cooperatives. Since the new inequality is grafted upon the existing relation of domination, the newly rich get the opportunity to gain control over agricultural developments and to profitably invest their urban earnings in the rural sector.

However, Den Ouden's rich and detailed case-studies (1979, 1981, 1984) suggest that even in the Bamiléké context, the crystallisation of new forms of accumulation is impeded by various barriers. The planters of the families he studied all struggle with a shortage of labour. In the Bamiléké area itself, there is as yet no regular class of wage-labourer (Den Ouden 1981:215,255,256; compare also Dongmo 1981 I:147). Moreover, the Bamiléké inheritance rules create special problems for the bigger planters in this respect. Sons who are possible successors are often sent away during their father's lifetime in order to forestall intrigues in the compound. The consequence is that many elders cannot even count on the labour of their own sons for the maintenance of their cash-crop plantations. Den Ouden (1981:255,256) draws a pathetic picture of family-heads who grow old, complaining of loneliness and of the neglect of their plantations - often they have to let the fruit rot on the trees.

In contrast to such restrictions, the main axes for accumulation in this area, seem to be the role of the cooperatives, which favoured the established regional elite, and the opportunities for migration, which created new opportunities for the commoners as well.

Migration. Certain passages in the literature suggest that the development of the Bamiléké cash-crop plantations really did start among migrants, notably in the Mungo. Already around 1930, at a time when the colonial authorities had only just begun to propagate coffee cultivation among the chiefs in the home area, Bamiléké migrant labourers started to take over the cocoa plantations from Douala planters in the Mungo who were in financial difficulties due to the Depression (Dongmo 1981 I:260). Migration apparently enabled enterprising individuals to escape from the levelling pressure of family life and the obstacles to enrichment which Den Ouden described for the Bamiléké homeland. Moreover, the above-mentioned mechanism of the investment of cocoa money in trade and vice-versa could work best in the diaspora. Dongmo (1981 I:138) observed that in 1949, several of the richest planters of the Haut-Nkam were migrants, some of whom had apparently had their first plantations in the Mungo and invested later on in their homeland.

Cooperatives. The striking autonomy of the Bamiléké cooperatives, confirmed after Independence, might be related to the political amalgamation of traditional and modern elites in this area. The power position of this regional elite is both rooted in the local patterns of organisation and reinforced by its access to the state apparatus. It is probably due to the consolidation of this regional power bloc that the cooperatives in the Bamiléké region are not, as elsewhere, dominated by the state, but seem to function in accordance with the independent interest of the regional elite. Illy (1974) insisted that the cooperatives are certainly not

administered to the advantage of the peasants. Due to the control of the regional elite over these cooperatives, indirect forms of accumulation could arise which are fairly exceptional for Cameroon.

Even in the Bamiléké case, there are apparently restrictions to the development of new structural differentiation among farmers. Yet the propensity for accumulation evident in the local forms of organisation was partly liberated by the close collaboration of the colonial state with the traditional chiefs and by the increasing opportunities for migration. The rise of the coffee cooperatives in this area and the complex relations of migrants to their home must have created new networks of accumulation. But the contours of these networks remain still fairly vague.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Of course, the present study only provides a preliminary exploration of the regional variations in the development of new modes of agricultural accumulation. The comparison is of a limited scope and restricted by the availability of literature. Important questions - for instance, to what extent is the emergence of a rural bourgeoisie favoured by the expanding activities of state-sponsored agro-industries in several parts of Cameroon (compare Konings 1986) - are not dealt with. Yet the comparative sketches above may have indicated the scope of regional variations in the forms of rural accumulation. Clearly, different scenarios are possible in the crystallisation of new inequality. To analyse the wide range of factors involved, a broader historical perspective is necessary, encompassing both the variable transformations of local institutions and the specific regional impact of market and state formation.¹⁶

Within this broader view, a key issue is the fusion of new relations of domination and local forms of power (compare Bayart 1979). The cases discussed above indicate that there are

¹⁶ In her comments on my paper Guyer dwells especially on the issue of wage-labour, relating it to broader insights of considerable interest. She wonders why a practice of rural wage-labour has not really developed in the Southern parts of Cameroon and she continues: "By comparison to the Yoruba area where I am working now, there is simply no secure institutional framework for wage labor - no way of measuring or valuing it, no accepted modes of negotiation, no rubrics for payment in which anyone has confidence, no sanctions for default, no customary understandings about food and lodging for strangers, no projections for the life cycle of either employer or employee, no allocation of responsibility for the behavior of resident strangers. I am more and more impressed with the importance of what we used to call institutions. New ones seem to me far more easily created in systems where *someone* has the authority to define a framework, institute a sanction The question which your paper poses is less why a yeomanry has not developed than how it has at all: by what *institutional* processes, as distinct from the *social forces* which create the need, the incentives and the potential amongst both the relevant categories of farmers and the workers."

In relation to this comment, it might be valuable to know more about the development of rural wage-labour in S.W. Cameroon, for instance among the Bakossi. The Bakossi patterns of organisation are highly segmentary too. One may wonder therefore to what extent and how precisely they developed institutional frameworks for wage-labour? Was this furthered by the example of the European plantations nearby? Or was the influx of migrants into this region an important factor? The comparisons in this paper suggest that migrations create a social context in which process of accumulation can take off more rapidly.

important regional contrasts in this respect, of direct consequence to the modes of agricultural accumulation. Among the Bamiléké, collaboration developed between the traditional chiefs and the new elite. In this area, a regional elite emerged which was both rooted in the local traditions and had access to the state. This reinforced the position of regional leaders in their dealings with the state. It gave the new rich, supported by the chiefs, special opportunities to invest in the rural economy, and despite modern changes, it enabled the chiefs to retain their important role in cash-crop cultivation.

Among the Beti or the Maka, this fusion of old and new leaders is less clear, if only because so many "chefs coutumiers" in this area had no traditional roots but were imposed by the colonial government. Here, the new elite, the chiefs included, originated from the process of state formation. It had no dependable allies within local society powerful enough to protect its investments in the rural economy. These regional elites, without a firm rural base, were in a weaker position vis-à-vis the state. It is no wonder therefore that the cooperatives in these areas, for instance the ZAPIs, were completely controlled by the state and did not offer opportunities for independent accumulation by the regional elites.

The contrasts between the developments among the Bamiléké and in the Southeast indicate that the issue of levelling mechanisms and new forms of accumulation is related to variations in the fusion of old and new relations of domination. In the Bamiléké context, levelling mechanisms do exist. But the new forms of accumulation appear to prolong old inequality and are therefore protected by the old hierarchical order. In the East and possibly in the Centre-Sud as well, this kind of protection is absent since the new inequalities clearly do not prolong pre-existing discrepancies. Therefore, the newly rich do, indeed, have good reason to fear too close a contact with day-to-day life in the villages.

The above comparison suggests that opportunities for migration constitute another key issue in the analysis of variations in modes of rural accumulation. In this respect, there is an intriguing contrast between the strong impact of rural migration in the West or the Southwest and its lack of importance to peasant production in the Centre-Sud or the East. The main question seems to be why, in the more densely populated parts of the Centre-Sud like the Lékié, immigration and the attraction of strangers as sharecroppers or wage-labourers are still blocked. It might be important to know more about the means and the strategies which local communities use to resist immigration and the further crystallisation of rural inequality.

These fairly hypothetical comments can indicate topics of special interest if we are to know more about regional variations in modes of rural accumulation. Important themes for further study include:

- the opportunities for the new elite, especially civil servants, to invest in agriculture; this requires a closer analysis of the regional variations in the social networks between elite and villagers.
- the variable strategies of local communities against the penetration of migrants and new inequality into the village economy.

The emergence of a class of big planters in Southern Cameroon is not only determined by economic parameters. For the time being, it seems that important barriers in the local culture and political relations still impede this type of development in many areas.

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FOOD PRICE POLICY AND FOOD PRODUCTION IN CAMEROON: SOME NOTES

Henk A. Meilink

Introduction

Price interventions and market regulations in the agricultural sector are among the policy instruments widely used by African governments.

Export commodities have long been the subject of such policies mainly in the form of state marketing arrangements and the fixing of producer price levels. On the input side, governments have sometimes pursued subsidy policies for such inputs as fertilizer, credit and improved seeds. The net result in most cases has been a transfer of resources out of agriculture into the non-agricultural sectors which were thought to serve more effectively the overall growth of the national economy.

As to food products, government intervention generally involves the setting of official producer and consumer prices in addition to (monopolistic) state procurement and resale of staple foods. In an indirect way, the widely implemented policy of 'overvalued exchange rates' has forced domestic food producers to compete with (artificially) cheap food imports.

There is now widespread believe (in particular on the part of donor organizations) that past policies have adversely affected the performance of the agricultural and food sectors in African economies. For some, these policies have been 'significant contributors to the actual food problems of a number of African countries' (World Bank; 1981).

Although it is recognized that prices are by no means the only determinant of agricultural and food production levels (improved farm technology, infrastructural provisions, efficient marketing systems, input supplies and extension services among others, are all crucial components of a successful strategy), it is equally true that pricing measures have far-reaching income generating and income distributional consequences. The role of prices is basically dualistic: for some population groups (net producers) they are a source of income whereas for others (net consumers) they represent a cost and consequently affect their standard of living (or food security).

The fact that prices fulfil contradictory functions is reflected in the often equally contradictory objectives of pricing policies: enhance agricultural production, stabilize farmer incomes, increasing government budget funds (less officially stated), enlarge foreign exchange reserves, safeguarding consumer welfare, increasing national food security etc.

This paper sets out to review food pricing policies in relation to food production in Cameroon.

Three topics in particular, will be addressed:

- a) food production and population growth;
- b) the nature of food price policies in Cameroon and
- c) the trends in actual food prices in the recent past.

I. FOOD PRODUCTION

Among African countries Cameroon takes a somewhat atypical position. Whereas Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced declining **per capita** food production in the past 15 years (USDA; 1981), Cameroon has managed to remain basically food-selfsufficient. It is estimated that food production has, so far, kept pace with population growth (Minagri; 1985, V. DeLancey; 1986).

Food production comes mainly from two sources: a) the 'traditional' smallholder sector and b) agricultural projects in the modern sector. The former is by far the most important accounting for 90% of total grain production (millet, sorghum and maize), almost 100% of starchy foods and leguminous plants and also 90% of fruits and vegetables production. Production from agricultural projects include: rice, bananas, edible oils, sugar and wheat (Min. Ec. Aff.; 1981).

Accurate data on food production levels and its yearly fluctuations are difficult to obtain, one of the complicating factors being the traditional practice of 'intercropping' farming (for example coffee and food crops). Moreover, a very large part of food production is locally consumed and never enters commercial circuits. Therefore, it is not surprising that different statistical sources such as the Cameroon Ministry of Agriculture, FAO, US Department of Agriculture and the World Bank show substantial differences in their food production data.

Nevertheless, all sources seem to agree that up to 1980 food production attained sufficient growth rates to keep up with the growing numbers of the population. But for the more recent period of 1980-1984, there are indications of declining **per capita** food production: USDA information reveals a lower per capita production index for 1983 in comparison with the 1969/1979 period's average. Likewise, FAO registers a lower per capita index in 1982 than in 1975 (DeLancey; 1986).

The deteriorating food situation is clearly shown in a report by N'Sangou Arouna who, on the basis of a number of statistical sources, made calculations for the 1978-1984 period; see table 1.

Table 1. *FOOD PRODUCTION IN CAMEROON* * (1978-1984)

	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Food Production per capita in kg.	766	727	760	697	700	691	486

Source: N'Sangou Arouna; 1986, p. 13.

* meat and fish excluded

In the 1978-1984 period, food production rose at an average rate of 1.9% but was outpaced by population increases of 2.47%. The year 1984, in particular was a very bad agricultural year causing a dramatic fall in per person domestic food supply of almost 30%.

The Ministry of Agriculture also expressed great concern and denotes that nearly all growth in food production during 1972-1984 was to attribute to **areal** expansion. In other words, land productivity, already at low levels, does not show any improvements, especially not in the smallholder sector which provides the bulk of food supplies in Cameroon (Minagr.; Direction des Etudes et Projects; 1985).

This serious problem of stagnating productivity in both the food and export sector is also acknowledged in an informative paper by V. Delancey (1986).

However, it should be emphasized that these aggregate data (national level) conceal important regional differences in per capita food supplies.

N'Sangou Arouna has analyzed provincial growth rates and concludes that during 1980-1983 decreases in food production were concentrated in 3 provinces (North-West; South-West and Extreme North). In Centre-South, East and West provinces food growth was satisfying. (see table 2).

Table 2. **FOOD PRODUCTION BY PROVINCE (1980-1983)**

	Centre-South	West	East	Littoral	North/West	South/West	Extrem N.
Percentage Change in per capita Food Prod.	+57	+23	+33	+8	-14	-8	-30

Source: N'Sangou Arouna; 1986, p. 18.

Bearing in mind the inaccuracy of food production data, it can be concluded that in Cameroon, food problems are highly geographically concentrated in the western and northern regions of the country in contrast to central, southern and eastern parts, where favorable per capita growth rates could be achieved.

II. FOOD PRICING POLICIES

Unlike with respect to export products, the Cameroon government does not directly intervene in the price formation process of food commodities. This is exceptional, since many African countries (still) have state food marketing boards regulating purchases and resales of food and also apply a system of direct price-setting of producer as well as consumer food prices.

In Cameroon, according to existing laws, the government is however authorized to regulate prices and even assess marketing margins of foods in the event of 'speculative' rises in consumer prices. In that case, the governors of the provinces are granted power to intervene in price formation in order to protect the consumers. The government institution charged with the application of this legislation is the Direction des Prix, des Poids et Mesures. But in practice this authority is rarely used and the government essentially leaves food price-formation to 'the market forces of supply and demand'.

In an indirect way, nevertheless, the government attempts to influence food pricing through two organizations: a) the Cereals Office and b) Mideviv (Mission de Développement des Cultures Vivrières, Maraîchères et Fruitères autour des centres Urbains).

The Cereals Office (1974) was given the task to stabilize cereal prices (millet, sorghum and more recently maize and rice) in the north of the country. This was to be effectuated through massive purchases of foods when prices were low and selling stocks later in the year when

diminishing supplies in the local markets tended to push up prices again. In actual fact, the 'Office' has not been able to 'cover' more than 10% of the cereal volumes marketed and therefore its grip of the food market was too weak to bring about any stabilization in rural food prices. Instead prices are largely determined by occurring seasonal fluctuations in local supplies (Essama Nssah; 1984). Moreover, it has been suggested that the Office's operations above all have favored urban dwellers as they could benefit from low purchase prices paid by the Office to food producers (DeLancey; 1986).

MIDEVIV (1973) was also created to indirectly influence food prices through its operations. Its focus is on increasing food supply for **urban** centres via food crop, market-garden products and fruit culture development (DeLancy; 1981). This was to be organized with the help of newly created cooperative farmer societies.

The attempts were unsuccessful. Its pricing policy turned out to be, once more, favorable for urban food consumers to the detriment of food producers in the cooperatives. Again mention should be made of the inherent contradiction of Mideviv's objectives, that is: low consumer prices on the one hand and incentive producer prices at the other.

Finally, there are a number of products in the category of import-substitutes which have come under government regulations. These (locally processed) commodities include: sugar, wheat flour, rice and vegetable oils for cooking. In an effort to enhance production in Cameroon and save foreign exchange, these products are subject to specific regulations with regard to their imports and exports. This trade intervention is supplemented with a system of domestic price setting. Price-decisions are taken by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Planning and concern ex-factory prices, wholesale as well as retail (consumer) prices.

In the case of rice, a special arrangement is in operation: the 'jumelage' system. Potential rice importers are allowed to import rice, only on the condition that for every amount of imported volumes the importer is prepared to purchase a fixed percentage of this volume on the domestic market simultaneously. In this way the government tried to ensure the sale of domestically produced rice (Semry project in the north) in the coastal areas. The producer price of paddy and ex-mill prices are set by the Direction du Commerce of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Planning. Unfortunately the system did not work well because importers left the local rice were it was (in the north) and in doing so, could avoid high transportation costs to the south. The cheaper import rice was subsequently sold on attractive southern (urban) markets.

To end this short review of food pricing policies in Cameroon, another type of agricultural pricing should be mentioned: subsidizing agricultural **inputs** via government funds.

The provision of inputs at subsidized prices decreases the costs of production because input-use leads to higher yields per land unit. Consequently, the profitability of those crops using (subsidized) inputs is raised in relation to non-subsidized agricultural products.

In Cameroon governmental subsidies exist for (chemical) fertilizer, insecticides and pesticides along with subsidized credit arrangements. But practically all subsidized inputs are used in the production of export crops and 'industrial' products. Through 'interplanting', food crops may benefit from fertilizer applied in coffee cultivation, but there is no official subsidized input programme geared at food crops (Essama Nssah; 1984). And according to the 1984 Agricultural Census, only 1.6% of farms producing food crops had used plant treatment products such as pesticides and insecticides. For cotton and cocoa producing farms, these percentages were 64.5% and 59.6% respectively (MinAgri.; 1986).

Summarizing, it must be concluded that, with regard to food products, there is no explicit policy in Cameroon which could influence input and/or food output prices.

III. FOOD CROP PRICE TRENDS

Data on prices, farmers actually received for their output over the years, are unfortunately not available. Probably this is due to the fact that government price intervention in the food sector is virtually absent. But apart from this, it would anyhow be difficult to collect data on producer prices because prices in local markets tend to follow (great) fluctuations in supplies during the season. Some countries where food price government intervention is substantial (Kenya for example), have organized to register weekly price variations in a number of regional markets of essential foods. Also, data on the returns to labour of food crop production in comparison with export farming would (from a viewpoint of policy-making) be of great relevance. The more so in Cameroon, because there are indications that in the 1970s prices of foods such as maize, plantains and cocoyams increased at a faster rate than the producer prices for coffee in those years. In the cocoa zone cassava prices were estimated to have risen higher than cocoa producer prices during the period 1971-1976 (Bilan Diagnostic; 1980). Both developments are believed to have induced a shift away from export crop production towards food crops. At the end of the 1970s, producer prices for the major export commodities were raised considerably (coffee, cocoa and cotton) which is assumed to have reversed the trend: as from 1977/78 export production again was on the increase.

However, statistical evidence to support these changes in production decisions is shaky because of lacking reliable food production and food **producer** price information. With the exception of

cassava, the 'Bilan Diagnostic' used **market** prices as a proxy for producer prices of the foods mentioned above. However the latter may diverge considerably from the prices actually received by farmers, because margins for marketing and transport etc. are included in the former. An adequate analysis of output changes resulting from relative price differences should use actual prices paid out to the farmer. Regrettably such prices covering a longer period are not yet available in Cameroon which make 'price-output responsiveness' (that is price elasticity of supply) studies a hazardous adventure.

Nevertheless, one such heroic attempt was made by Essama Nssah (1984) who used **market** prices for plantains, cassava, yam and paddy rice in two provincial 'headquarters', Yaoundé and Bafoussam. These prices were subsequently confronted with production data in order to arrive at the 'trend elasticity of supply'. Surprisingly enough, elasticity values for 3 out of the 4 crops under consideration (cassava, yam and paddy rice) showed (high) **negative** values. Of course one would expect positive signs, because higher prices (as had occurred) would stimulate farmers to produce more and not less. Probably a time lag production variable, introduced in the calculation would have yielded more 'realistic' values of the supply elasticity.

However, further sophistication of methodologies cannot make up for unavailability of essential data as is the case with respect of Cameroon's food sector. Essama basically shares this opinion when he concludes that: "The dense network of competitive relations (between export crops and food crops, between the various food crops and between all crops and non-agricultural jobs) coupled with the lack of reliable data on food crop producer prices and costs of agricultural production makes any detailed investigation of production pattern changes almost impossible" (Essama Nssah; 1984, p. 43).

Apart from this analysis, Essama compared food market prices of selected foods (maize, cassava, rice, plantains and yam) in Yaoundé and Bafoussam with the general consumer price index (showing the price changes of a number of consumer goods in a particular time period). Results suggest that **real** prices of cassava, plantain and yam both in Yaoundé and Bafoussam rose at an average rate of 3% per year in the 1970s. This increase in real purchasing power for food producers can probably be explained by the higher demand for these crops in relation to offered supplies.

Another source (MinsAgri.; 1985) analysed **market** prices of foods in Yaoundé and Bertoua in the period 1981-1984. Yaoundé nominal prices rose with an average of 12.5% per year and Bertoua price increases were 21.6% per year. The general price index in the period concerned stood at 15% as a yearly average. Thus in Bertoua **real** prices increased at an average rate of 7% yearly, while Yaoundé **real** prices dropped with around 2.5% per year during 1981-1984. The latter finding, when compared with Essama's results seems to indicate that food producers,

supplying the Yaoundé market, experienced a worsening of their income (in terms of real prices) as one moves from the 1970s to the early 1980s. According to these data, food producers around Bertoua were far better off in 1981-1984 because demand apparently exceeded local production.

Nevertheless, we must bear in mind that the used **market** (prix detail) prices in the analysis are poor indicators of farm income development.

CONCLUSIONS

These short notes on Cameroon's food (pricing) system have identified the following problems:

- a) although production data for food products are not accurately known, it seems that a 'duality' is growing between west/north Cameroon and the center/south regions in terms of **per capita food production**. The food balance is satisfying in the latter parts of Cameroon but precarious in the first mentioned areas.
- b) Cameroon's food price policy can best be described as **non-interventional**. Basically, food price formation is left to the 'market mechanism of demand and supply'. Whether this state of affairs represents a problem or a blessing, remains an open question because:
- c) so little is known about the 'main characteristics of rural food systems' (producer prices, production levels, locally marketed volumes, costs of production and so on).

Nevertheless, in view of the rapidly increasing population and corresponding food requirements, it may be expected that in the near future, the government is forced to take active steps in the direction of positive price support (remunerative output prices) for the numerous small food producers which account for the bulk of Cameroon's food production.

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PAYSANS ET INNOVATION:

LE CAS DES MARAICHERS DE MASKINE

Saïbou Nassourou

Meskine est un gros village de la banlieue sud de Maroua. Il compte 9622 habitants¹. On compte une majorité Peuls suivie des Guiziga puis des Mofou et enfin les Bornouans et les Haoussa².

L'élevage de gros et de petit bétail, la culture de mil constituent dans le système traditionnel les activités économiques dominantes de ce village. Elles étaient essentiellement tournées vers la subsistance. En 1951, la Compagnie Française pour le développement des fibres textiles (C.F.D.T.) y a introduit le coton comme culture commerciale.

Toutes ces activités ont de nos jours perdu de leur importance d'antan. Les anciens sont unanimes que l'élevage a considérablement reculé. "Nagge wili", "le troupeau s'est détruit" répètent-ils continuellement. Depuis 1972, il est constaté un délaissement de la culture du coton. La plupart des paysans ont abandonné la pratique de cette culture. De nombreux lieux de vente sont fermés.³

Dans le village de Meskine, les cultures maraîchères ont aujourd'hui pris le pas sur toutes les autres activités agricoles. Qui circule dans ce village s'émerveille des étendues du paysage vert qu'offrent les jardins des légumes et des vergers. Partis de l'utilisation de *Cafgal*, simple calebasse suspendue au bout d'une corde qu'on descend dans le puits pour tirer de l'eau, les paysans ont connu la technique d'arrosage au chadouf et aujourd'hui ils utilisent parfaitement la moto-pompe comme moyen d'irrigation de leurs jardins.

Le maraîchage n'est pas un fait nouveau en soi dans Meskine. Le caractère innovateur de ce phénomène se trouve dans l'importance qu'il a prise au cours de ces vingt dernières années.

¹ cf: Ministère de l'économie et du plan, Recensement général de la population et de l'habitat d'Avril 1976, Volume I, Tome 5: données sur les villes de plus de 10.000 habitants.

² cf: Récapitulation générale de la population pour ethnies de l'arrondissement de Maroua, Recensement de l'année 1974-1975, Archives de la Sous-Préfecture de Maroua.

³ cf: SAIBOU NASSOUREU, une crise paysanne dans le Nord-Cameroun. Les cas des Fulbe (Peuls), Paris; E.H.E.S.S., 1984 (thèse de doctorat de 3 cycle).

Ses superficies ont considérablement augmenté; la population des maraîchers aussi, elle ne cesse de s'agrandir et on y compte de plus en plus des éléments jeunes et même des femmes. Ses techniques s'améliorent remarquablement: La moto-pompe a quasiment remplacé la *Cafgal* et le chadouf, des variétés de semences plus performantes ont été trouvées.

Comment s'est effectué ce changement? Quels en sont les facteurs? Quel est son impact dans le mode d'existence des paysans, la perception qu'ils ont de leur statut social, de leur avenir? La présente étude tentera de trouver des éléments de réponse à ces différentes questions qui toutes soulèvent une problématique générale à savoir: qu'est ce qui a permis les paysans maraîchers de Meskine d'être acteurs de tels changements? C'est pensons - nous l'oeuvre d'une nouvelle psychologie sociale suscitée par l'usage généralisé de l'argent dans le milieu paysan, le processus ayant pris son départ avec l'introduction du coton comme culture commerciale.

Cette étude nous mène à traiter successivement des origines des cultures maraîchères dans Meskine, des principaux facteurs de leur expansion au cours de ces vingt dernières années et enfin des changements sociaux introduits pour elles.

I. LES ORIGINES ET LA DIFFUSION DU MARAICHAGE DANS MESKINE

Le jardinage n'est pas en soi un phénomène nouveau dans Meskine. Ses origines remontent à environ un siècle. Il est parti d'un quartier de Meskine: Zileng qui est un quartier des Bornouans. A Zileng, on se souvient parfaitement de certains introducteurs de ces cultures. C'est ainsi que MAL KOLOOMI dont le fils vit encore dans ce quartier est cité comme introducteur de la culture d'oignons à Zileng. Il est de l'ethnie Bournouan et est venu du Nigéria. Pendant plus d'un demi- siècle après son introduction, le maraîchage est demeuré limité dans le seul cadre de Zileng, inconnu des habitants des autres quartiers. Les maraîchers de Zileng cultivaient des légumes *Follere* et *Gubudo*⁴ et oignons. Ils entretenaient des arbres fruitiers: Citronniers notamment. Une partie de la production était consommée, une autre partie était mise en vente sur des marchés locaux et même lointain.

Les citrons de Zilent étaient vendus sur les marchés de Garoua, Kousséri Ndjaména. Les maraîchers assuraient eux-mêmes sur dos-d'ânes le transport de leurs produits.

C'est seulement dans les vingt dernières années que le maraîchage est sorti de son cadre ancien pour rentrer dans les habitudes des habitants des autres quartiers de Meskine. En 1982, lors d'une enquête sur le terrain, une grand'- mère tenait encore ce propos sur la diffusion du

⁴Noms locaux de certaines variétés des légumes utiles pour leurs feuilles.

maraîchage hors de Zileng: "Sur le bord de cette rivière t'sanaga, il n'y avait que de mil - que des tiges de mil - pas d'oignons. Quand on avait besoin de légumes, on se rendait à Zileng pour acheter des feuilles vertes au oignons. Mais ici chez nous, il n'y avait que de mil et jamais d'oignons. Mais aujourd'hui vous (les jeunes) dites que vous plantez les oignons, que puis-je en dire moi? Ici à Dougouf, ici à Dougouf, il n'y avait que de mil". La grand'-mère s'inquiète de la diffusion du maraîchage dans son propre quartier. Elle voit encore dans le jardinage un concurrent de la culture de mil.

C'est précisément vers 1967 que le maraîchage a commencé à se propager hors de Zileng. Les techniques de travail ont été empruntées aux maraîchers de Zileng. On faisait directement appel à ceux-ci pour des tâches comme la préparation de sol, la construction des carreaux des cultures, des rigoles d'irrigation, la préparation des pépinières en ce qui concerne la culture des oignons, la fabrication de *Cafgal* ou de chadouf. MOHOMMANDJODA, un des premiers maraîchers de sa localité explique en ces termes l'introduction des techniques du jardinage dans son quartier Dougouf: "C'est Mal HAMMADOU et moi qui avons commencé la culture des oignons dans ce village. Nous avons cultivé en commun un champ sur le bord de cette rivière *Purkayel*. Il y a de cela environ vingt ans. Nous avons commencé de la manière suivante: Nous voyions les habitants de Zileng faire - ils ont connu cette activité avant nous. Alors nous nous sommes rendus chez eux, nous avons acheté des pépinières et sommes revenus chez nous, avons creusé un puits et essayé la culture des oignons. Nous avons trouvé que cela réussissait. C'était quelqu'un de Zileng, nommé BAA SAALI HAMIDOU que nous avons fait venir. Il nous a tracé des carrés de cultures et des voies d'irrigation. Il nous a appris comment s'effectuent les différents niveaux des travaux du maraîchage. L'année suivante, Mal HAMMADOU et moi n'avons plus travaillé ensemble. Chacun a cultivé son champ personnel. D'autres gens nous ont imités et ainsi petit à petit ils se sont lancés dans les cultures maraîchères jusqu'à devenir nombreux comme aujourd'hui". C'est donc à partir des initiatives proprement paysannes que les cultures maraîchères ont commencé dans la petite localité de Zileng et se sont répandues dans le village de Meskine. Aujourd'hui, Meskine semble occuper le premier rang national au niveau des productions maraîchères: "Meskine, bourgade de la banlieue de Maroua et ses environs réalisent 50% de la récolte nationale d'oignons" écrit Alain BEAUVILAIN.⁵ Des facteurs multiples sont à la base de l'expansion des cultures maraîchères.

⁵BEAUVILAIN A, les cultures d'oignons de Meskine in: BEAUVILAIN A, DONGMO J.L. etc., *Atlas aérien du Cameroun Campagnes et villes*, Paris, COPEDITH, 1983, p. 46.

II. LES FACTEURS DE LA DIFFUSION DES CULTURES MARAÎCHERES.

Le premier facteur notable a été l'existence d'un point de diffusion: Zileng, quartier maraîcher depuis environ un siècle. L'essentiel du savoir-faire dans le domaine maraîché a été emprunter à Zileng.

Le deuxième facteur est la position de Meskine non loin de Maroua. Situé à la porte-Sud de Maroua, Meskine écoule sans difficulté ses produits maraîchers dans le marché urbain de la quatrième ville du Cameroun: Maroua. La population de Maroua qui de plus en plus s'agrandit et se diversifie présente des goûts alimentaires variés et explique la culture de nombreuses nouvelles légumineuses. C'est ainsi que le *Folon*, légume originaire du Sud-Cameroun est cultivé pour satisfaire la demande de la clientèle "sudiste" essentiellement urbaine; la carotte, le navet, le poireau etc... sont surtout cultivés pour satisfaire la demande de la clientèle en majorité d'origine européenne.

Le troisième facteur est l'adhésion psychologique de la population dont a bénéficiée le maraîchage. Il n'y a eu aucune résistance socio-psychologique à son introduction. Le travail est accepté pour l'ensemble de la communauté. Dès son introduction, le maraîchage a eu de son côté des personnes qui se comptent parmi les hommes les plus écoutés dans le village à savoir les marabouts. Mal KOLOOMI, l'homme qui a initié la culture des oignons dans Zileng portait le titre de marabout: *Mal*. Mal HAMMADOU et MOHAMMANDJODA, les deux premiers maraîchers de Dougouf étaient respectivement Iman et fils d'Iman de deux mosquées que compte leur petite localité.

L'action innovatrice jouée par CHALIER, un coopérant français est le quatrième facteur de la diffusion du maraîchage dans Meskine. CHALIER est venu dans la région de Maroua pour les services de la Compagnie Française pour le développement des fibres textiles (C.F.D.T.) pour la culture du coton dans les années 1960. Seulement, son action ne s'est pas limitée là. Il a joué un rôle personnalisé en matière d'innovation dans le domaine du maraîchage. Il a introduit de nouvelles variétés de légumes tels que la carotte, le navet, la salade, le poireau et initié les paysans à leur culture. Il est le premier à avoir introduit l'usage de la moto-pompe dans l'irrigation. Il avait regroupé huit paysans et mis une moto-pompe à leur disposition. Il a creusé un puits dont il a consolidé l'intérieur avec des parpaings. Il a construit des carreaux d'irrigation le long desquels il a disposé des bandes de plastique pour faciliter l'écoulement de l'eau. Il fournissait au groupe de travailleurs de l'engrais et des semences. Il les assistait

personnellement pendant les travaux.⁶ Ce fut une expérience pilote qui a aidé pes paysans à découvrir les merveilles d'une technique nouvelle et à y adhérer. Elle a aussi encouragé une partie de la bourgeoisie commerçante et administrative de Maroua à créer des vergers.

Le cinquième facteur de l'expansion des cultures maraîchères est l'action jouée pour le fonds spécial d'Action Rurale (F.S.A.R.). Le S.F.A.R. est un organisme rattaché au fonds National du Développement Rural (FONADER), mais qui a une autonomie relative. Il est créé en 1977. Ses objectifs sont: la production de riz et des cultures maraîchères, de l'embouche bovine, la création des points d'eau et la mise en place d'un crédit paysan. Son rayon d'action se limite à la province de l'Extrême - Nord et plus particulièrement aux régions de Maroua et de Mokolo. A Mesquine, le projet F.S.A.R. a démarré en 1978 par la mise à la disposition des paysans d'une soixantaine de moto-pompes. Ces moto-pompes ont été vendues à crédit aux paysans regroupés à trois ou à quatre. Le démarrage du projet F.S.A.R. a marqué un grand départ dans le changement des techniques de production. Il a amorcé une large diffusion de l'utilisation de la moto-pompe dont les performances ont été appréciées de tous. Les années suivantes, les paysans entreprenants ont cherché à acquérir des moto-pompes sur le marché libre du côté du Nigéria plus particulièrement. Les moins entreprenants cherchent à utiliser la moto-pompe en faisant appel à divers moyens: emprunt aux parents ou amis, location. Aujourd'hui, l'usage de la moto-pompe est devenue un fait si répandu à tel point que les traditionnelles techniques d'irrigation à la *Cafgal* ou au chadouf paraissent marginales.

L'habileté dans la maîtrise de la nouvelle machinerie dont on fait preuve certains paysans est le sixième facteur de l'expansion du maraîchage. Des habiles mécaniciens pouvant faire face à toutes les pannes des moto-pompes sont apparus dans la village. Ce sont des jeunes qui n'ont jamais été à l'école. Ils ont acquis leur savoir-faire sur le tas un peu dans la routine. Un de ces mécaniciens autodidactes est devenu particulièrement célèbre, connu des maisons de fabrication des moto-pompes: YAMAHA, HONDA etc... qui de Douala envoient de temps en temps leurs représentants venir le contacter afin de déterminer les pièces de rechange dont il faut alimenter leur magasins des pièces détachées installés à Maroua.

La fonction économique remplie par le maraîchage est enfin le septième facteur qui explique son expansion. Pour le paysan d'aujourd'hui, le maraîchage est une activité économique adaptée à la situation actuelle marquée par des bouleversements économiques et sociaux où la recherche du revenu monétaire devient le seul but du travail. Pour exprimer ce qu'est le maraîchage pour

⁶ Les paysans rapportent que quand CHALIER trouve quelqu'un dans son champs en train de labourer, il ne passe pas sans mettre la main à la pâte et qu'il aimait à leur dire qu'il n'est pas un encadreur comme les autres, car il est lui-même fils de paysans.

eux, les paysans le compare à la culture du coton qu'ils ont quasiment abandonnée de nos jours. Le maraîchage est une activité commerciale comme le coton. Seulement à la différence du coton, le maraîchage est pour les paysans une activité dont ils ont la maîtrise des produits. Les produits du maraîchage sont vendus quand, comme et à qui ils veulent, alors que pour le coton ils ont un seul partenaire, l'Etat qui leur inspire encore méfiance et qui seul a pouvoir de fixer le prix et la date annuelle de vente. Le revenu tiré du coton est reçu une fois dans l'année pour être aussitôt dépensé dans le paiement d'impôt, des dettes contractées en cours de l'année, le prix de la dot, l'achat des vêtements. Par contre celui du maraîchage s'échelonne sur toute l'année. Le revenu tiré de la vente des oignons, principale culture maraîchère permet de faire face au type des besoins qui viennent d'être mentionnés: impôt, dette, dot, vêtements. Les cultures maraîchères secondaires: *Follere*, *Gubudo*, *Gombo* associées à la culture des oignons sont récoltées au bout de quinze ou vingt jours après leur semence et sont immédiatement vendues sur le marché. Elles permettent ainsi aux paysans d'être en possession de l'argent de manière quasi quotidienne et de faire face des besoins aussi quotidiens comme l'achat du poisson, de la viande, du sel, d'huile de cuisine devenus indispensables pour l'alimentation journalière; l'achat du savon, de certains produits pharmaceutiques comme l'aspirine, la nivaquine. Cette propriété des cultures maraîchères a porté des conséquences considérables sur l'état de l'équilibre économique des paysans. Avec les cultures maraîchères, les paysans arrivent à sauver leurs réserves de mil destinées à la consommation puisque les revenus tirés des cultures maraîchères secondaires leur permettent de faire face aux types de besoins dits quotidiens, alors qu'avec le coton, c'est sur la réserve de mil que le paysan effectue des prélèvements qu'il vend sur le marché pour satisfaire ces besoins. Ce qui rend pour beaucoup très difficile la traversée de la saison de soudure. Très souvent, ils font appel à des usuriers qui leur prêtent du mil à des taux élevés qu'ils remboursent en monnaie au moment de la vente du coton, pratique qui met les paysans dans un cercle vicieux caractérisé par leur endettement toujours croissant. C'est pourquoi d'ailleurs ils avaient surnommé le cotonnier *nyamaale*, le grand arbre des dettes. Aujourd'hui avec le maraîchage, les paysans disent: "*mi don heba nyaama*", "j'arrive à me nourrir". Avec le maraîchage, le paysan s'autosuffit relativement. Le jardin du maraîcher est à la fois son grenier et son épargne.

Chacun de ces sept principaux facteurs a eu un impact effectif sur l'expansion du maraîchage. Seulement cet impact n'est pas sans support avec la nature du système social du moment dans lequel il s'inscrit et le permet.

III. L'IMPLANTATION DU MARAICHAGE, EXPRESSION D'UNE MUTATION SOCIALE

Le maraîchage est une activité essentiellement commerciale. Il est pratiqué pour la recherche du numéraire. Son expansion avec une telle facilité dans le milieu paysan exprime l'ouverture de celui-ci à un système de relations fondé sur l'argent. Il a fallu que l'ancien système économique et social faisant plutôt confiance aux produits immédiats du travail, la vache et le mil notamment soit discrédité pour que ce nouveau système se constitue. L'ancien système économique et social accordait une haute estime au mil et à la vache dont la valeur n'était pas seulement économique, mais aussi sociale et psychologique. En effet, la possession des vaches ou du mil était source de satisfaction totale. D'abord ils sont à la base du système alimentaire. Le mil est reconnu comme un aliment doué des qualités énergétiques incomparables.⁷ La vache dispense de la viande, mais surtout du lait. "Où demeure le lait, la faim ne demeure pas", disent les Peuls. Le mil et la vache étaient aussi à la base des relations sociales, des rapports animaux entre personnes de même entourage. Le don du lait aux voisins, le *Hataka*, prêt du mil remboursable sans intérêt étaient les éléments de fonctionnement de ces rapports sociaux. Le mil et la vache étaient des éléments inconditionnels pour la célébration des grands moments de la vie sociale comme la naissance, l'imposition de nom, le mariage, la fête de fin d'études coraniques, le *Tumbirdu*. Dès sa naissance, l'enfant recevait sur ses lèvres quelques gouttes du lait de vache avant de commencer à têter celui de sa mère; lors de la cérémonie d'imposition du nom, *indeeri* qui a lieu au septième jour après la naissance, c'est avec un peu du mil que l'oncle paternel du nouveau-né se rend chez le marabout qui va prononcer le nom du baptême. Dans le mariage, la dot appelée *dewra* ou *sadaaki* était fixée à une vache ou à un mouton plus un agneau. Lors de *Tumbirdu*, le cadeau d'honneur qu'un parent pouvait faire à son enfant était une vache.

Remplissant ces multiples fonctions dans la société, la vache et le mil étaient symbole de richesse et de prestige social dans le village. Ils se trouvent à la base et constituent des éléments inconditionnels de tous les échanges entre membres de la communauté.

Le nouveau système social n'a pas réservé une telle position aux anciens produits du travail. Désormais, c'est l'argent qui occupe cette position. L'argent s'est substitué à tout. Il est devenu l'élément inconditionnel de tout échange entre villageois. Le système de don et de prêt a disparu pour faire place aux rapports de marché calculés en termes numéraires. Toutes les cérémonies sociales placent au-devant de la scène, l'argent. Par exemple, la dot n'est plus composée d'une

⁷ Voir aussi à ce sujet le travail de Joseph DOMO, *Identité culturelle et transformation des représentations sociales: Culture du mil et culture du riz au Cameroun*, Aix-en-Provence, Université de Provence, 1984 (thèse de doctorat 3 cycle).

vache, mais versée en numéraire. De même, dans le *Tummbirdu*, les jeunes préfèrent comme cadeaux l'argent au bétail. De nos jours, un parent qui se lève le jour de *tummbirdu* pour déclarer publiquement le don à son enfant devenu marabout d'une vache, d'un mouton ou d'un cheval comme cadeaux de fin d'études est froidement accueilli, tant par le bénéficiaire que par l'assistance. L'argent est devenu la "valeur" dans le nouveau système social.

La passage de l'ancien système symbolisé par la valeur accordée au mil et à la vache au nouveau système faisant plutôt confiance à l'argent a été préparé par la culture du coton qui a permis l'introduction de l'argent dans le milieu paysan. Certes, l'argent n'est pas une nouveauté absolue dans ce milieu, c'est plutôt son usage généralisé qui est récent et relève de l'introduction du coton comme culture commerciale. "*Motollo njaanji sulevre kam*", "c'est le coton qui a répandu l'argent", reconnaissent les paysans. Toutes les inquiétudes des paysans et les différentes formes de résistance exprimées à l'égard de la culture du coton au moment de son introduction marquaient l'état d'affrontement entre l'ancien système social et le nouveau que le coton allait imposer. "*Ceede majjini*", disaient les paysans. L'avènement de l'argent était détruire l'éthique ancienne. On parlait de *suuno ceede*, avidité pour l'argent: de *soynde endam*, manque de solidarité entre paysans; de *nganyaandi yimbe*, méchanceté des hommes⁸. Si aujourd'hui, l'argent est devenu l'unique valeur dans la société, c'est que la mutation sociale a atteint son parcours. C'est ainsi que par le biais de l'argent, le coton a préparé le terrain social et facilité l'implantation du maraîchage. Tout se passe comme si les paysans ayant été entraînés malgré eux à utiliser l'argent (la culture du coton a été au départ une culture obligatoire), le recherchent aujourd'hui d'eux-mêmes. D'ailleurs, il faut faire remarquer que c'est avec le déclin de la culture du coton vers 1970 due en partie à l'aggravation de la sécheresse que la maraîchage a marqué son essor un peu comme si les paysans devaient trouver un substitut au coton.

Parti des initiatives proprement paysannes, diffusé sans l'effet de multiples facteurs, le maraîchage a introduit de changements remarquables dans la vie des ruraux.

IV LE MARAÎCHAGE ET LES CHANGEMENTS SOCIAUX.

Le maraîchage a introduit une modification de l'espace. Les jardins des légumes et des vergers disposés en parcelles derrière les habitations contrastent avec le paysage nu et desséché d'antan. La case rectangulaire à une ou à double pente tôlée, enduite de ciment et peinte à la chaux que le revenu des oignons permet de plus en plus de construire bien que mal adaptée au climat supplante petit à petit la case traditionnelle dont la toiture est faite de paille malgré sa

⁸La propriété qu'a l'argent de détruire l'organisation communautaire des sociétés a été observée par M. WEBER cf. WEBER M, *Economie et société*, Paris, Plon, 1971, p. 401 et suivantes.

bonne adaptation. En effet, la tôle chauffe beaucoup sous le soleil et résonne fort sous la pluie. Par contre la case couverte de paille amortit la pluie et garde la fraîcheur contre le soleil.

Autrefois la saison des pluies longue de quatre à cinq mois était la seule saison active. La saison sèche plus longue (sept à huit mois) était la saison d'inactivité pendant laquelle on effectuait des menues besognes seulement comme: la construction ou la refection des cases, le nettoyage des champs pour les prochaines cultures de la saison des pluies. Elle était par contre la saison d'intenses relations sociales caractérisées par des visites entre membres de même famille ou entre amis résidant séparément; des fêtes à caractère familial (mariage, circoncision, *tummbirdu*); des pratiques des jeux comme le *cipa*⁹; et surtout des fréquentations des marchés. Les marchés n'étaient seulement pas des lieux des échanges économiques, mais aussi sociaux. On s'y rendait pour rencontrer des gens des villages voisins ou lointains, s'informer et discuter ensemble. Pour les jeunes, le marché était un lieu où s'organisaient des rencontres des *kiirle*. Les *kiirle* (sing: *hiirde*) sont des veillées nocturnes qui rassemblent les jeunes gens célibataires ou mariés et les jeunes femmes libres des villages en compagnie des musiciens, les griots. Les *hiirle* étaient pour les jeunes des occasions de rencontre, de communication et de distraction. Ils constituent un type de loisir prédominant dans le village. Le maraîchage a de nos jours rompu cette manière de vivre le temps. La saison sèche, saison des relations sociales et de délassement est devenu le moment de pointe des activités maraîchères. Les paysans maraîchers sont occupés toute l'année. Le *hiirde* a quasiment disparu de leurs habitudes. Le marché est réduit à sa seule expression économique. On ne se rend au marché que pour des besoins économiques déterminés: vendre ou acheter.

Le maraîchage a en outre fait naître une poignée d'hommes entrepreneurs. Si au départ, les paysans attendaient la venue des commerçant Bamiléké pour écouler leurs récoltes des oignons, de nos jours, ils s'organisent pour transporter eux - mêmes leurs productions sur les grands lieux de vente: Yaoundé, Douala, Bafoussam, Bamenda au Cameroun ou Bangui en Centrafrique. Généralement, ce sont des membres d'une même famille qui s'associent à deux, à trois ou à quatre pour louer un camion et déléguer un de leur pour effectuer le voyage.

L'alimentation est l'autre domaine où se remarquent les changements diffusés par la maraîchage. Les paysans consomment des légumes verts: *follere*, *gubudo*, *gombo* toute l'année. Les fruits: Mangues, goyaves, citrons abondent sur les marchés. Ceci est prequ'une merveille pour les habitants de cette région aride. La fréquentation quasi quotidienne des marchés de la ville par les paysans maraîchers pour écouler leurs produits frais les amènent à

⁹Genre de jeu traditionnel qui ressemble au jeu de damier.

adopter des habitudes des hommes du ville comme par exemple acheter plus fréquemment de la viande, de l'huile de cuisine pour rendre plus complète et plus variée leur alimentation, - contrairement à l'époque ancienne où il fallait attendre la mort naturelle d'une bête ou la vente annuelle du coton pour manger de la viande.

Le maraîchage a enfin rendu plus souple un certain type de division sexuelle du travail. Tout ce qui touche le domaine de la cuisine est traditionnellement affaire de femmes. C'est ainsi qu'au départ, transporter des légumes (*Gubudo, Follere, Gombo*) au marché était réservé aux femmes. Il fallait donc aux maraîchers trouver dans le village des femmes qui acceptent de le faire. Et ce n'était pas n'importe quelle femme, car il est mal vu qu'une femme jeune et mariée se rende au marché. C'était donc des femmes âgées, des veuves pour la plupart qui pouvaient exécuter cette tâche. Cela ne fut pas facile au départ pour les maraîchers qui n'arrivaient pas toujours à trouver des femmes disponibles au moment voulu. Petit à petit les hommes ont commencé à vendre eux-mêmes leurs légumes sur les marchés. Aujourd'hui le fait ne choque plus personne, mais au départ cela scandalisait, révoltait même les gens. On raconte que le premier homme qui avait transporté des légumes au marché avait été mis en quarantaine. Cela s'était passé il y a environ quarante ans à Zileng, point de départ du maraîchage dans Mesquine. Ainsi avec le maraîchage, les paysans ont connu un véritable changement de leur psychologie, voire de leur culture.

Parti des initiatives proprement paysannes, développé grâce à leur esprit d'habileté et d'ouverture, grâce au concours de l'Etat aussi, le maraîchage à Mesquine représente une forme d'adaptation des paysans aux changements multiples qui ont affecté leur système économique et social traditionnel. A-t-il réussi à redonner aux paysans la confiance dans leur métier? A-t-il réussi à leur procurer un statut social marqué d'estime?¹⁰ Quel est l'avenir de cette activité? Certes, le maraîchage est accepté, voir apprécié par les paysans, mais il connaît des limites à ne pas sous-estimer. Son principal pilier, le revenu monétaire qu'il permet aux paysans d'obtenir est estimé minime en comparaison à ce que gagnent les tenants d'autres métiers. Les paysans disent souvent que le maraîchage permet à ceux qui le pratiquent de se nourrir, de satisfaire certains besoins aussi, mais il n'enrichit pas. Et l'on constate que la catégorie jeune des maraîchers affirme vouloir quitter le maraîchage pour l'exercice du commerce, métier socialement plus prestigieux à leurs yeux. Seuls les plus âgés disent qu'ils n'abandonneront jamais sauf décès le maraîchage. "A mon âge que ferai-je encore d'autre", disent-ils. Ainsi, le maraîchage demeure encore malgré tout une activité imposée et non choisie que l'on exécute

¹⁰ Les paysans Africains en général sont devenus moins bien enracinés dans leur milieu dévalorisé à leurs yeux. cf. LOMBARD J., Une autre "fin des paysans": Ceux d'Afrique noire, *Revue Tiers-Monde*, XXII, 85, 1981; SAIBOU NASSOUROU, op.cit.

faute de mieux soit qu'on est limité par l'âge avancé, soit qu'on manque des ressources pour débiter un commerce. Cette appréhension de l'activité maraîchère constitue la principale limite à son avenir. A celle-ci s'ajoutent d'autres comme la surexploitation de la nappe d'eau due à la multiplication des puits et à l'utilisation intensive des moto-pompes. Cette surexploitation se traduit déjà par le tarissement fréquent des puits d'irrigation. Il y a aussi la limite que tente d'imposer dans un proche avenir la classe des bourgeois locaux composée des commerçants et des fonctionnaires que de plus en plus entretiennent des vergers un peu par agrément, mais qui petit à petit dépossèdent les paysans de leur principale ressource en leur achetant leur terre.

Cette expérience particulière menée par une population rurale nous aura indiqué que les paysans sont capables d'innover, que le succès d'une entreprise dans un milieu rural est fonction du revenu, mais aussi et surtout de l'estime social qu'elle est en mesure de procurer à ses acteurs.

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DISCUSSANT'S NOTE

SESSION VIII - RURAL DEVELOPMENT: CASE STUDIES

Shirley Ardener

A discussion of:

Wouter van Beek - The flexibility of domestic production: The Kapsiki and their transformation.

Jan den Ouden - Stagnation et dynamisme: Morcellement de la terre et l'exode rural dans deux chefferies bamiléké, Cameroun.

Pierre Titi Nwel - Les populations côtières du Sud-Cameroun à la reconquête de leur environnement.

Jean Mfoulou - Agricultural education for food self-sufficiency in Cameroon.

The theme which joins the four papers under discussion in this session, despite their different orientations and ethnographies, concerns the ways peoples have responded, or need to respond to social, economic and political changes. Walter van Beek emphasizes the flexibility of the domestic mode of production among the Kapsiki, on the north-west border with Nigeria, demonstrating how this has obtained throughout changes in the political economy as the balance of orientations tilted between Nigeria (and the Fulani) on the one hand, and Bamenda and the forest areas of Cameroun on the other. While he comes to the conclusion that the phrase "domestic mode of production covers too great a variety of not only societal forms but also reactions, to warrant its continued uses as a terminology monolith" much interesting detail is exposed.

We meet a feature among the Kapsiki that arises elsewhere in this session, and at others, which indeed emerges as one of the basic themes of this Conference: the adaptability of women to changing economic circumstances and the effect this has on male/female dependency and - for one must go further - on the changing relationship of men and women to the wider national unit, the Republic itself. It will be noted that when the groundnut was introduced to the Kapsiki area in the later colonial period when conditions were sufficiently stable for its cultivation and marketing, the women were quick to "capture" this, the main cash crop, and grow richer. Women, it is implied, then became more independent, marriages more unstable. Indeed we learn that "Kapsiki culture was obsessed with the distribution of women and reproduction". The elders, however, were not very successful with the "management of women, since women, after their initial marriage moved freely from group to group. Men, striving to enhance their

reproductive control, in fact diminished it. Kapsiki villages were bound together by marriage ties which in turn exacerbated and ameliorated the often hostile relationships between them. Such disturbances, van Beek suggests also helped to keep the population level, although possibly it could be argued that low fertility, where high fertility is desired, might itself lead to tensions. The words chosen by van Beek to describe this "marriage complex" clearly express male views and we wonder, once again, whether (Kapsiki) women saw things differently. We know little of their motivations. Why did women marry so frequently? Was it because of low fertility? Or was it fear of witchcraft (which is sometimes linked to the latter)?

Despite these preoccupations, Kapsiki had time to acquire the education and skills needed to enter commerce, making use of the differential markets offered either side of the national boundary. Indeed the description of the ideal Kapsiki man (independent, apt at managing, free from debts, individualistic, privatising in tendency) would gladden Mrs. Thatcher's heart! Recently it seems there has been a partial return to traditional aspects of social life - including witchcraft beliefs - and a heightened cultural awareness partly derived from the interest of tourists and a sense of peripherality (cf. Fardon), which has accompanied a weakening of Fulanising influences.

In contrast one of the papers presented at this session dealt with the problem of conservatism, this time among the Battanga fishermen so vividly described by Titi Nwel. Again we are dealing with culture contact - not here with the marauding Fulani on their horses in the North, but the equally active and at times economically daunting Nigerian fishermen who came in their canoes from the West. It would be interesting to know whether the Nigerians form a stable or continually refilling community. The Battanga fishermen, like the Kapsiki but in contrast to the more organized Nigerian fishermen, are individualists. Working in single-manned canoes, they are proud of their skills and knowledge. Official attempts to increase their output have run into difficulties. Their traditionalism and individualism appear to inhibit entrepreneurship. Battanga fishermen, it seems, are egalitarian: all are captains and none are willing to be mere deck hands. But perhaps, like the Kapsiki and the Bakweri who both unexpectedly adapted to modern commerce when the conditions seemed right to them, the Battanga fishermen may yet surprise us. In the case of the Bakweri banana farmers cooperatives helped to do the trick. What are the prospects for fishing cooperatives?

Den Ouden also deals with historical change, this time since 1900, through the study of six families in two Bamileke chiefdoms. He argues that the dwindling population and the economic decline of the home villages are balanced by the success of the members of these families who live in towns. Similar situations are found elsewhere (e.g. the Outer Hebridian islands of

Scotland where links are maintained with prosperous emigrants who still 'count' as islanders despite many years resident abroad). In these case studies we find the women again exploiting new economic opportunities. They exercised exclusive rights of usufruct, if not ownership, of land used for food production, and negotiated with men as the introduction of coffee gave them a sellers market for their labour. Interestingly, according to den Ouden they applied part of their new wealth to land acquisition, often outside their husband's domains and authority, sometimes in their birth places. It would have been useful to know whether their titles to these lands differ from those described by other area specialists, and who is likely to take over these acquisitions after their deaths.

During the conference confirmation that Cameroun is self-sufficient in basic foodstuffs was welcomed. M. Mfoulou suggests that "it is not an overstatement" to say that women are contributing more to this self-sufficiency than men. Women's productivity in agriculture, despite their difficulties, must therefore be of interest to the State and merit support (for an excellent study of the inattention to female farmers in past development plans see Chilver). As more women move into commercial, administrative and other skilled work, those who remain in agriculture will presumably need assistance if this self-sufficiency is to be maintained. Here the thoughtful programme presented by M. Mfoulou for curriculum reform and better training in agriculture for all schoolchildren is critical. He also advocates special treatment for women in "non-formal" education. There must also be a need for women agricultural officers. Women's rights to land use as discussed by den Ouden and others, are relevant to agricultural output. Indeed, there are many interesting questions raised by these papers. If women are dependent on husbands for land use, how big a part does this consideration play in their marriage strategies? If women had legal title to land, would they divorce less often? Are male and female land rights reflected in access to capital and agricultural inputs? It was implied at the conference that gender relationships are extremely slow, if not impossible, to change. This assumption must be challenged, if only because other fundamental social changes have been accommodated (e.g. changed relationships between younger and senior men), and because, as these papers demonstrate, male/female relationships are already perceived as having changed. Gender relationships will presumably continue to adjust, in Cameroun no less than elsewhere, when conditions, and the national interest, dictate. That national food policies will anticipate the future needs of those women who remain as farmers - on whom so much, including the balance of payments, depends - is to be expected. M. Mfoulou's paper leads us towards this.

One related topic which emerged a number of times at the conference also deserves further exploration: the different savings and investment policies of men and women (see Høltedahl's and other papers). Disaggregation of data, wherever possible, is obviously desirable if material

on men and women is to become even more clearly focussed, more illuminating and more useful. Do their respective budgets for, say, the education and health of their children, or consumption, have implications of national interest? Should public policy respond to any differences, not merely to be kind or to give special privileges for either group, but for the good of all? Clearly there is still room for further research into these important issues.

THE FLEXIBILITY OF DOMESTIC PRODUCTION; THE KAPSIKI AND THEIR TRANSFORMATION

Walter E.A. van Beek

1. INTRODUCTION

In this contribution I will try to show how a variant of the domestic mode of production is and has been the basis of various social formations in the Mandara area. During the subsequent historical stages the domestic mode of production,¹ with subsistence horticulture as a constant factor, proved an adaptive and flexible instrument for food production and social reproduction. The consecutive social formations that characterize Kapsiki history did influence the system of survival, but themselves were not generated by changes in the productive system. The domestic mode of production showed a flexibility and adaptability generated by the properties of the production system itself, its internal dynamics, as well as from some contradictions within it.

The central case is that of the Kapsiki of North Cameroon, called Higi in Nigeria. Straddled on both sides of the international border, they form a sizeable group of about 150.000 people, two thirds in Nigeria and one third in Cameroon.² The main administrative village in Cameroon, Mogodé, situated just on the frontier with Nigeria, has provided the majority of the data.

The historical periodization is based on the criteria deemed most relevant for this analysis, i.e. slave raiding, pacification, opening of the area for trade, introduction of markets and the penetration of state administration. In so doing five phases can be discerned: pre-colonial, early colonial, late colonial, early independence and independence (from 1975 onwards). First the historical transformations will be sketched, then the question of the stability-in-change of the domestic mode of production will be addressed.

¹Throughout this article I shall use the term "domestic mode of production" (Sahlins 1972, Meillassoux 1975) as the most suitable alternative among the many offered to describe traditional, subsistence based, modes of production. As shall be shown, the terms lineage mode of production (Terray 1972) or 'tribal-communal' (Keesing 1981: 185) - let alone 'primitive communist' (Hindess & Hirst 1975) - mode or production are not very apt for the Kapsiki situation.

²Research on the Kapsiki has been made possible by the University of Utrecht and by grants from the Netherlands Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (WOTRO). Fieldwork has been carried out in 1971, 1972-3, 1979 and 1988.

2. TRANSFORMATIONS IN KAPSIKI SOCIAL FORMATION

2.1. *The pre-colonial refuge*

Within the perimeters of ecology, the pre-colonial situation of the Kapsiki was dominated by the following factors: the continuous threat of slave-raiding, internal war between and within villages and the dominance of iron production and religious authority.

The Mandara mountains have been a refuge against slave raiding for centuries. Well before the onset of the Fulani jihad (Njeuma 1978), the Kapsiki must have populated the steep hillsides and the top of the granite outcroppings dotting the plateau. Oral traditions relate their origins to other places in the vicinity of the mountains, as well as within the mountain area itself (van Beek 1982a). Their villages were built, the compounds closely together, on the granite outcroppings in what is now the Cameroonian side, on top of the hills in - now - Nigeria, or on the steep hillsides themselves. Defense against the mounted slave raiders, be they Mandara, Baghuirmi, Kanuri, Bornu or Fulani, was of prime importance. Access to land was feasible in the close vicinity of the mountain strongholds, either under close supervision from the outcropping, or in the relative safety of the inaccessible hillside. Water was a problem, especially on the outcroppings, but wells were found at the foot of most inhabited mountain tops. The hillsides themselves were quite fertile, as they still are today. The many stones and rocks in the course of a long history have been gradually arranged in contour terraces, in order to diminish run-off and to retain the soil.³ On the hilltops the Kapsiki lived in isolated villages. Not only were the hillsides a defense against foreign marauders, the Kapsiki/Higi also fought each other with more or less regular intervals (van Beek 1987), while they engaged in fighting within the village too. Between non-related villages more or less formal battles could be fought (Otterbein 1968), where villagers could be caught as slaves. Usually captives were ransomed free by their kinsmen; a poor lineage, however, had to let its kinsman or -woman be sold beyond Kapsiki territory, into the hostile Muslim empires of Mandara, Bornu or - later - Yola. In intra-village fighting no poison was to be used and no slaves were to be caught. In the case of casualties a blood-price could and should be paid. Feuds were avoided by the fact that blood-prices were paid to the mother's brother of the deceased, not to his patrilineal kinsmen.

³These terraces may be older than the Kapsiki occupation of the area. They surely were not the first to arrive in the mountains, despite the gist of their oral traditions. In the mountains the Kapsiki encountered the traces of a neolithic population in the form of "meules dormantes" in the bedrock and polished stone adzes. However, they consistently interpreted these remains as "rain-stones" of non-human origin, just as the present day inhabitants of the Mandara mountains believe the terraces to be a natural phenomenon.

The external threat, which did not have the sporting overtones characterizing internal fighting, was the more serious one. Muslim cavalries were on the whole a superior enemy, better organized and with the military advantage the horse gave them. Barth (1857:195) reports of 500 slaves being caught during a Bornu razzia in 1852, while Beurmann, who did not even linger in the area, in 1863 did go on a raid to the 'Marghi' (Franconie 1973:139). The clearest account of the relation between Fulani and Kirdi comes from Denham who was hosted, with a delegation of Arabs, by the sultan of Mandara:

The Arabs were all eagerness; they eyed the *Kirdy* huts, which were now visible on the sides of the mountains before us, with longing eyes, and, contrasting their ragged and almost naked state with the appearance of the sultan of Mandara's people in their silk robes, not only thought but said, 'if Boo-Khaloom (their captain) pleased, they would go no further; this would do'.....Boo-Khaloom was, as usual, very sanguine; he said that he should make the sultan handsome presents and that he was quite sure a town full of people would be given him to plunder (Denham 1826:197).

Still, in the numerous pitched battles the Kapsiki, like other so-called Kirdi (heathen) groups, put up a spirited defense and did afflict a fair number of casualties on their enemy. In the steep and narrow valleys of the Nigerian half earthen ramparts were built against the enemy cavalry, which proved quite effective. In fact, one of the major emirs of Bornu was killed during a raid in the Mandara mountains (Urvoy 1949:134). From their side, the need for captives was imperative, so whatever its risks, the raids continued unabated (Meillassoux 1975:331, van Beek 1988a). Several Mandara tribes are said to have paid a tribute in slaves to the sultanate in Mora, also called Mandara. Denham reported how a mountain tribe bought off a razzia with a gift (200 slaves from neighbouring groups), to the sultan of Mandara (Denham 1826:221). The Kapsiki/Higi, however, emphatically deny that they ever paid a tribute to anyone, be it Mandara or Fulani, neither in this pre-colonial phase, nor in the early colonial one. Their reaction unanimously was: "If one is strong enough to catch other slaves, one is strong enough to fight the *persunu* (Fulani)". Probably the groups Denham witnessed, were those groups living at the perimeter of the mountains, on foothills giving inadequate protection against cavalry.

Due to several factors population size must have been fairly stable. Even in the sixties of this century the Kapsiki were a static population (Podlewski 1966), mainly due to a very high infant mortality (van Beek 1986b). So, with the additional factors of slave raiding and fighting the Kapsiki must have had difficulties in maintaining their numbers. Oral traditions

and genealogies abound with stories of immigration, new people moving in from other villages, even beyond the mountain area. They are welcomed very cordially (in the tales). In actual history people undoubtedly were a scarce resource.

The villages, however, were linked. An intricate network of marriage alliances bound the villages together in loose relationships; in many cases the same marriages that formed ties between the villages, formed the main issue over which the communities waged war. The sheer amount of marriages and remarriages, as well as the fixed set of norms and values attached to inter-village fighting, did form a common ground between them. Less amorphous was a specific religio-political authority that is associated with the names of Gudur and Sukur. The authority of both places transcends the Kapsiki area proper, extending over a large part of the Mandara mountains.

The first, Gudur or Mcakelé, has the more strictly ideological power basis. Gudur is the place from where about half of the mountains groups trace their origin. It is situated about 50 kilometers from Mogodé, still well in the mountains. Though some traditions trace it further to the east (Mohammadou 1988), this by no means is certain. Anyway, besides its reputation as the point of origin, Gudur is famous and feared as the seat of the most important and dangerous chief of the mountain area: the chief of Gudur was (and still is) the officiator of some cults that pertain the whole area. He commanded e.g. the locusts and the panthers. If people lacked respect for the chief of Gudur, locusts would devour the crops, and panthers would follow and kill transgressors. Control over other epidemics of millet parasites added to his power. At any major plague, emissaries of the various villages tracing descent from Gudur, would present themselves in Gudur to assist in the necessary rituals.⁴

Just as interesting from the view of political economy is the case of Sukur. Its power basis is not in plagues but in iron. Sukur, together with two related villages Wula and Mabass, is situated just on the northern border of the Kapsiki area, wedged in between the Kapsiki/Higi, Marghi and Mafa (Kirk-Greene 1956). The village of Sukur proper is the largest, the oldest and the most important. Built on top of a small plateau elevated at 1200 meters, well above the surrounding mountains, it is difficultly accessible over steep slopes: a nearly impregnable mountain fortress. The fertile plateau easily sustains a fairly large population (over 5000 at the end of the colonial era), the water situation is favorable and the vegetation used to be comparatively dense. One more factor makes Sukur important. The gulleys and riverbeds of

⁴Though the traditions link the ritual position of Gudur to its "cradle function", the ritual preeminence could well be the main reason for the astonishingly homogeneous migratory tradition of about half of the Mandara tribes and also - about half of the Kapsiki villages (van Beek 1982).

this part of the mountains are rich with magnetite, making iron production possible. It is in those three villages that iron production of the Mandara mountains has been centered. Surrounding villages, such as the Kapsiki ones, bought their iron from Sukur. There, iron production was not - as often is the case - the exclusive prerogative of the blacksmiths, though they may have coordinated the activities: burning charcoal, raising furnaces, delving magnetite and finally working at the melts.

The exact position of the blacksmith at that age in Sukur is hard to establish; on the one hand the village tradition holds that the original chief lineage was a blacksmith one, the village having been founded by a blacksmith coming from Gudur (Kirk-Greene 1956). On the other hand the blacksmiths, like elsewhere in the Mandara mountains, did and still do form a lower stratum in society, endogamous, deemed dirty by their fellow-men because of their own diverging food-taboos (van Beek 1982b). The fact that the master blacksmith had a close connection with the chief of Sukur as one of his "court officials" underscores the difference between blacksmith and chief. In the Kapsiki-villages, a similar close relation between blacksmith chief and village chief can be observed (van Beek 1978). Despite their joint ritual activities, the gap between smith and non-smith cannot be bridged. So, even with the importance of iron production within Sukur, the position of the blacksmiths would have been not too different from their position in colonial times. Still, their product, iron, was important in gaining a supremacy over the neighbouring villages. Iron was "marketed" in the form of bone-shaped bars, *duburu* or *dubul*, used as a limited purpose money in the region. While these primarily formed the rough material for hoes (*duburu* means "hoe") or other agricultural implements, they served as an integral part of bride-price payments and in the remuneration of smith work. Beyond this economic function, however, iron was closely associated with chieftainship. In a village like Mogodé, any new *maze*, (village chief), had to be installed by the chief of Sukur, who presented the candidate with an iron staff, *geta meleme* (staff of the village), symbolizing the legitimacy of the village chief as well as the supremacy of the chief of the "iron kingdom", Sukur. In all this, Sukur was itself linked to Gudur, which was considered the place of origin of Sukur too. In the case of a locust plague, the blacksmiths of Sukur fabricated the large sheets of iron, nowadays compared to "doors", used by the Gudur chief in his rituals against the locusts.

It is hard to assess in what other areas the supremacy of Sukur was expressed over and above the neighbouring villages. The astonishing causeways, made of huge granite boulders arranged in perfectly regular fashion into broad alleys leading up to Sukur from the west and the east, have been interpreted as ways to mobilize a local cavalry and keep the area subdued (Kirk-Greene 1956). While this may well be so, two factors plead against it. First, the

maintenance of a substantial cavalry on a relatively small plateau such as the Sukur one is difficult to envisage. Secondly, the surrounding villages have no tradition of war with Sukur, no tales of battles against Sukur and never seem to have feared Sukur as a slave raiding enemy. Instead, Sukur is viewed in friendly terms, as a major trading partner, which through its near monopolisation of the all-important iron had political ascendancy over the villages in the vicinity. In contrast, Gudur was and still is dangerous with its threat of punishment by plague. Tales are told of emissaries from Gudur, who walked naked through the descendant villages to see whether the ways of old were being followed. People feared Gudur, its panthers, its locusts and its worms. So, the ascendancy of Sukur in the political and religious domain was almost exclusively based on iron. Vital for horticulture and war, important in ritual as a pervasive symbol, iron did form a major factor in the reproduction of social relations and the production of a particular social formation: it was, in short, a commodity patronage.

2.2. Early colonialism: the struggle for power

Early colonialism did not change the Kapsiki situation in a dramatic way. The Germans were the first to arrive at the scene. Though Major Denham saw the Mandara mountains in 1822, approaching them from the North through the sultanate of Mandara, and Barth from the West in June 1851, the first reconnaissance of the mountains themselves took place only in 1905, by the Germans from the East. The Western Higi-part was explored from 1920 onwards. The main impact of colonization was indirect, through the Fulani-'Kirdi' relations. The relative balance of war between the slave raiders and the 'Kirdi' on their mountain strongholds, such as the Kapsiki, was upset in two phases. First, the military victory of the colonial armies over the Fulani and their allies weakened the tenuous hold of the Muslim raiders over the mountain area. The demise of Yola (Njeuma 1978) and the conquest of Maroua must have brought some relief for the people in the Mandara mountains. This, however, was quickly redressed by a greater military power of the traditional oppressor, when the emirs, as the local colonial rulers, were given fire arms to strengthen their local armies. Though the colonial wars were fought partly to stop slave raiding and trading, these activities reached an unprecedented high in those years, due to the increasing availability of firearms. An English colonial commissioner lamented on the sorry state of the local Mandara population:

Slave dealing and slave trading are rampant....Chiefs of minor importance were given rifles with which they were encouraged to attack the wretched pagans (who are) hiding

like frightened monkeys on inaccessible hilltops ... of course, everyone goes fully armed: spears, shields, bows and arrows, clubs etc. (Kirk-Greene 1958:84).

So the colonial defeat meant for the Fulani 'reculer pour mieux sauter', as they came back to the mountains in double force. For the Kapsiki/Higi this had a twofold consequence. First, the power of Sukur - and possible of Gudur too, though that is not as clear - quickly waned. From Nigeria they were attacked and decimated by bands with firearms, the first to conquer Sukur, whose numbers dwindled to about 1000 people (Meek 1931:312) in 1923.⁵ The second consequence was far more important: the limited military advantage of the cavalry transformed into a nearly absolute edge in battle through the fire arms, as the access of the 'Kirdi' to these 'means of destruction' (Goody 1968) was virtually nil. So Lestrangant comments:

Les structures coloniales à l'arrivée du colonisateur allemand ne furent guère modifiées. Les rapports entre les Habé (= *Kirdi*) et les Foulbé restèrent ceux de vassaux payant tribut à leur féodaux, avec ce correctif que la puissance militaire européenne était mise au service des autorités autochtones institutées et jouait en faveur des chefs peuls. En effet, ces officiers allemands prirent appui sur les lamibés (= *Fulani chiefs*) aussi furent-ils enclins à confirmer officiellement l'autorité peule sur les groupements paiens qui avaient rejeté celle-ci, qui étaient depuis toujours hors de son obéissance (Lestrangant 1964:162).

In fact, 'guère modifié' is an optimistic evaluation. Especially in the Kapsiki/Higi region and further to the West, matters grew far worse for the local people after the installation of indirect rule. The main reason for this was the person of Haman Yaji, a ferocious warrior who scourged the mountain area from 1902 till 1927. After chasing his father Ardo Bakari, the Germans installed Haman Yaji as the District Head of Madagali (Nigeria) in 1902.⁶ For the next quarter of a century Haman Yaji would become the terror of the mountains. Between the Kapsiki villages of Mogodé and Rumsu he built his own local garrison. From there, the villages of the Kapsiki were routinely scourged for slaves, cows, goats and other valuables. A few entries of his diary:

⁵For comparison: the Sukur plateau fed 5000 people in 1953 (Kirk-Greene 1958: 68).

⁶This was, in fact the first contact with the elusive kingdom of Sukur too. Ardo Bakari fled to Sukur, to receive shelter at his friend's, the Llidi (chief) Kuratu of Sukur. Dominik, the German commander responsible for the 'pacification' of the area, climbed the Sukur hill, arrested the Llidi and shot Bakari (Kirk-Greene 1958: 74).

- 10-12-1912 I also sent soldiers to Kamalé (*the Higi-village just at the border with Cameroon, close to Mogodé*), but they did not reach the Aronado's (*chiefs*) compound and only got a female slave whose hand had been cut off and who was stupid as a goat. This made me very angry with them.
- 23-3-1913 My people came back from Sinagali (*a village on the Nigerian side*), and I heard that they had captured 7 pagans, 15 cattle and 30 sheep, and they returned safely.
- 7-5-1919 I raided Sir (*a Kapsiki village on the Eastern fringe*) with Laman Aji of Gaur and we captured 8 slaves, 144 cattle and 200 sheep.
- 24-7-1919 I sent Fadhl al Nar to raid Kamalé and he returned 34 slaves, 26 cows and 130 goats.

However, also to this threat the Kapsiki did not succumb without striking a blow:

- 12-7-1913 I sent soldiers to Sina and the Sina pagans drove them off.
- 12-7-1919 I received news that the pagans of Mugudi (*Mogodé*) had robbed a caravan of Zire Bugel and had killed one man and captured his people and two horses.

In addition to the increased Fulani pressure, the Kapsiki kept fighting each other as well:

- 29-3-1920 The pagans of Mugudi raided the Kamalé pagans and killed one man and wounded two. Then the Kamalé pagans fought them and killed two and wounded two.

Despite his raiding and his other numerous recorded atrocities (Kirk-Greene 1956:75), Haman Yaji did not operate in a political vacuum. The English colonial administrators, situated in Yola, and the German officials in Garoua must have been aware of his maraudings; they turned a blind eye on his dealings, busy as they were defining and redefining their territories. Frontiers have been re-aligned several times; the whole Nigerian Mandara region has been the subject of colonial and post-colonial realignments, a fact which highlights the political marginality of the area. Of the local emirs those of Yola in Nigeria retained still some of the old prestige from the Sokoto-days (Njeuma 1978), while Maroua - a former sub-emirate of Yola - was important in Cameroun.⁷ The relations between the

⁷This may be one of the reasons why Mogodé, a central Kapsiki village was relatively spared. Despite their maraudings on his possessions, Haman Yaji never attacked Mogodé. Though most Kapsiki informants hold that the

Kapsiki and the Fulani from Gawar (which in its turn depended on Maroua - Mohammadou 1988:221) were much better. Though slavery remained a factor, slave raiding from that side had grown rare. One exception is still remembered, both in Sir and Gawar:

A delegation from Gawar, on its way to Mogodé, was hosted the night by the chief of Sir. Half way to Mogodé the next day, they killed a boy guarding the millet. The people of Sir, used to that kind of aggression from their Kapsiki neighbours, turned out in great numbers and slew most of the Fulani party (more than 30). Only the chief (out of respect) and the (blacksmith) drummer (who ran too fast) were spared.

The Kapsiki distinguished between the *persunu garua* (the cattle Fulani) and the *persunu geduwe*, the people from Haman Yaji; throughout, the relations with the nomadic Mbororo Fulani herding their cattle on the plateau and in the valleys, were good; war was not waged with them.

The demise of the Germans, after their defeat in the first World War, eventually led to the downfall of Haman Yaji. However, the fights between the colonizers, Germans versus English and French, unsettled the not-too-stable relations in the mountain area. The Germans commanded a considerable amount of prestige in North Cameroun, so the 'Kirdi' supported them in their battles against the English and French.⁸ The 'siege of the 'Fort of Mora' is still famous in the area, as the 'Kirdi', though greatly outnumbered by the French and the British troops, fought with great determination and bravery (Crowder 1968:253). When in March 1916 the French gained the upper hand in the Eastern part and the English recovered from their initial losses on their side (Kirk-Greene 1958:72 ff), the 'Kirdi', seeing the old Fulani enemies weakened by loss of support, attacked in great numbers, stealing cattle, killing Fulani and slaughtering merchants. Of course, the Fulani retaliated as much as was in their power. It took the French in Cameroon and the English in Nigeria a decade to pacify the Mandara area, and even that took its toll in human lives (Kirk-Greene 1958:84,85). In fact, this phase of early colonial struggle ended with the disposal of Haman Yaji, who was captured and imprisoned in Maroua in 1927. By that time, considering the evidence from Sukur, the population of most Kapsiki villages (though not that of Mogodé!) must have dwindled well below the pre-colonial numbers. The following years would show a gradual,

'power of the god of Mogodé' prevented the people from Haman Yaji from raiding, the presence of a Fulani Lamido in the center of Mogodé must have counted too. Around 1910 the Lamidat of Gawar (Mohammadou 1988: 125) had installed a dependent Lamido in Mogodé. The first one, the Fulani Haman Belo, reigned for more than 20 years, to be followed later by his son, and eventually by Fulanized Kapsiki (van Beek 1978: 354). Through this office, a great number of Kapsiki warriors have been assembled to prevent the soldiers of Haman Yaji to enter and raid Mogodé. Traditions state that even people from Mabass (25 km. to the North) came to Mogodé for refuge and revenge.

⁸The Kapsiki call these fights with the onomatopoea *kwahweredléahweredléa*, an idiophone for rifle shooting.

but quite differential increase in population, leaving the Kapsiki plateau and Cubunawa plains relatively empty.

In the meantime, the western slopes of the Mandara mountains had been under French command from 1916 till July 1922, when Britain received a mandate from the League of Nations to administer the strip of territory along Nigeria's eastern frontier. The majority was allotted to France.

The temporary French administration of the districts lying along the western slopes of the Mandara mountain system was even sketchier than that of the Germans, who had confined themselves to a few tours of exploration and an occasional armed foray in support of the Fulani chiefs. Little is known of their brief rule; there was not much of it. (Kirk-Greene 1958:81)

Thus, these last years of the early colonial period were characterized by a power vacuum: the Fulani rule - like the Haman Yaji one - was gradually broken, but no government replaced it.

2.3. Late colonialism: pacification

The late colonial period saw several parallel developments. The main roads along and through the Mandara were constructed at the start of the thirties, the one leading from Mubi through Bazza and Michika to Madagali, as well as the one through the Kapsiki plateau proper. This enabled the colonial administrators to reach into the villages more directly. Markets were installed in the major villages on a weekly schedule (in pre-colonial times the Kapsiki/Higi villages knew no collective markets, but relied on personal networks of individual merchants for the exchange of commodities). The two decennia before the second World War saw the introduction of the *Arachis hypogea*, the groundnut, which was to be the major cash crop. It replaced an indigenous *Arachis* variant, which is still cultivated to a limited extent today.

A gradual pacification of the area is evident. The number of wars between the villages declined, and people began to venture out into the fields. This is the period of the opening of new agricultural resources, i.e. the plateau and the plains. Claiming new fields in the bush was at its heyday in Mogodé just before World War II. The village, up till then concentrated on the high edge of the plateau rim, 'colonized' half a dozen bush wards, which kept on growing till the seventies. This probably weakened the authority of the village chief and elders, as they no longer could reach by voice the people of the village. Laments about the

loss of respect abound in the discourse of chiefs and ritual specialists; still, also in the earlier phases of their history, Kapsiki/Higi political organization was weakly centralized, and political authority remained dependant on the religious authority (now diminished by the decline of Sukur and Gudur) and the personality of the office holder. Wars between the villages are reported mainly from the period of the second World War itself. The slackening of governmental control, as well as the inevitable levy of conscripts from the Mandara area, weakened the hold of both the village chiefs and the colonial government. Whereas in the First World War the British did not conscript in the area, in this war conscripts were called on both sides of the frontier. Still, as war itself was not brought into West-Africa, the Second World War did not change nearly as much for the Mandara area as the first one (Crowder 1968:492). Colonial rule, slackened during the crisis, was tightened afterwards, leading up to the permanent pacification in the mid-fifties.

An increasing taxation accompanied this process. When the French took over from the Germans, they upped the taxes considerably: in the Nigerian part the personal taxes were trebled (Kirk-Greene 1958:93). Corvee-labour on the roads and conscription for the colonial army became standard features for the Kapsiki. Still, they did appreciate the newly-won peace, and at first hesitantly, but later with increasing speed took up the new opportunities it offered them. The most important became commerce, though mainly after independence. The presence of markets increased their mobility; especially the women benefited from it, as commercial beer brewing flourished. The process of brewing white beer (*mpedli*), which they had learned from the Marghi at an earlier phase, provided the women with an easy and marketable brew. At the same time the women managed to appropriate the main cash crop, peanuts, as the new variety replaced an old small crop for women. In the Nigerian part the women relied on the cultivation of peppers for cash. So the women grew richer, and money increasingly flowed through their hands. This must have added to their relative independence and mobility, and as such increased the frequency with which marriages were contracted (van Beek 1987, 1986b). Probably brideprices, as a result, rose. The Kapsiki/Higi in colonial times were renowned for their high bride payments (Kirk-Greene 1958:374). On the Nigerian side, the Higi youngsters, within closer distance from the Fulani and administrative centers, in the early fifties started to go on *tafiyar dandi*, a one or two year working spree to earn money for the bride-price. This custom never caught on in the Kapsiki-part, probably because their access to labour markets was more difficult: in Cameroon the groups closer to the cities (Mofu, Mafa, Guisiga, Moundang etc.) beat them to it. However, the Kapsiki plateau, now opened up, was an excellent area to raise the sheep and goats, as well as the highly valued mountain cattle, needed for bride-prices.

It is difficult to say whether the population increased. When Podlewski studied Kapsiki demography in the 1962, the growth rate was practically zero (Podlewski 1966:143). On the other hand, during the late colonial era, the dispersing of people seems to have brought a fair number of immigrants along, to cultivate the fertile plateau and plains. In the West the Higi started to push beyond Michika, clearing fields in the formerly Marghi-dominated plains at the other side of the Yedseram river (Vaughan 1964). In this phase the core-villages were not deserted, however; so, despite the stable population in terms of birth and death rates, the impression of population growth by accretion is strong.

Missions, first from several Protestant denominations, later also Roman Catholic, came to the area at the start of the fourties. Starting in the plains and foothills they gradually penetrated the mountain area, arriving in the Kapsiki/Higi area proper well after World War I. They established both mission schools and health care. The coming of dispensaries, leproseries and hospitals did eventually have effect on the population, though relatively late. Beyond Bazza, with its rapid growing number of Catholics, the impact of Christianity on the Mandara area remained small. The various villages gradually developed a tiny group of converts, which often dwindled after an initial wave of enthusiasm or after the work of building the mission houses and chapels was done. Beer drinking (for the Protestants) and polygyny (for all missions) were the main obstacles, beyond the pragmatism of Kapsiki/Higi culture, in which religion does not play an overarching role.

Late colonialism, with its first penetration of the state into the Mandara heartlands, witnessed and stimulated a different type of conversion, to Islam. The Fulani, as former enemy, throughout the history had been viewed as the representative of a superior culture. This attitude emanated clearly from the Fulani themselves. In the words of an English administrator of that time:

The vast majority of them [Fulani] still looked upon the pagan communities in their emirate with extreme contempt. In their eyes, all pagans were uncauth and noisy and incapable of speaking with one voice. And the tiny mission-educated minority was the worst of the lot. [The pagans] were beyond redemption. (Smith 1969:244).

The same 'pagans', however, were no longer the hunted hill-men of the past, 'scrambling toward the shelter of their rock-strewn hilltops at the first sign of a raiding band of Fulani horsemen. They were now lusty farmers growing wealthier every year.' (ibid.). With the *pax colonialis* firmly established, the increasing interaction with the dominant Muslim-Fulani culture brought about a peaceful, often opportunistic Islamization, in which not only Islam

was adopted but a whole set of Fulani customs as well: language, dress, marriage customs and husband-wife relations. This process of '*fulbélisation*' was closely interrelated with the start of commerce on the one hand, and on the other hand with the consolidation of colonial power. After all, the colonial powers still were very much in liege with the dominant Fulani. Some administrators deemed Islam much better suited for a 'civilized Africa' than Christianity (let alone 'paganism'). With its possibility for gradual and group conversion, its tolerance for polygyny and 'magic', and - above all - its support for leadership *in situ*, Islam could more easily function as an 'African religion' than import Christianity (Crowder 1968:358). So gradually their military dominance transformed into a political-economic one. The urban Fulani, descendants of the jihad flag bearers, became administrators and started to dominate the growing commerce. In Kapsiki area groundnut commerce as well as the trade in externally produced commodities fell into their hands. Politically, the main fulbelizing influence came through the 'lamidar' in Mogodé, where around the chef de canton, a fulbelized Kapsiki, a core of islamised courtiers, officials and merchants formed. In Nigerian Michika the same happened, though there Fulfuldé never had been as important as a *lingua franca* as in the Cameroons. Within the village this implied the formation of a strictly Muslim ward, a form of segregation alien to the traditional pattern of Kapsiki residence.

2.4. Early independence: enter the nation (1960-1975)

The last days of colonial rule and the first decade of independence did not bring many changes to the Mandara mountains. The processes, started in the earlier period abetted. For the people of the Mandara mountains, the change from European rule to Cameroonian, was not perceived as a change for the better. Though well aware of the corvee-hardships mentioned above, the Kapsiki realized that the Europeans also had brought peace to the area. The last wars between the villages occurred between 1953 and 1955 (van Beek 1987), and though people relished the game of war (and still love to tell and retell the stories of courageous exploits), they prized the liberty to roam from village to village. The only relevant difference in political relations within the Mandara area, was an accentuation of the different status of Fulani versus non-Fulani. This distinction between Muslim and pagan, implying 'modern' versus 'backwards', generated resentment, as may be illustrated by a field experience in 1972.

A group of old men, way back in the mountains and far from the 'civilizing' influence of the all season road, arranged themselves on the huge boulders of the rocky mountain slope. The oldest man, looking deep into my eyes, asked: "Why did your people leave? Why did you betray us? You should have stayed. Things were better when the white

man was here. Why did your people deliver us to the brown people (the Fulani)? It was better when your people were here, because we Africans were equal then. Now you betrayed us to the *persunu*.

For the inhabitants of the Mandara mountains the 'Fulani' simply replaced the colonizer, but the shared subordination of the all Cameroonians was gone.

One important aspect of colonial rule, the dominance of western law, was retained. For most issues in daily life this did not imply too much for the Kapsiki/Higi, but some became quite pervasive. Colonial law did not accept accusations of witchcraft and sorcery as legally valid, nor did the administration tolerate the kind of self rule that dominated Kapsiki interaction. While witchcraft had never been very prominent in Kapsiki life (van Beek 1978:376), accusations of sorcery did occur within the smallest agnatic segments and were of considerable social importance (van Beek 1988b). Of greater impact still was the proscription of *sekwa*, the traditional means to settle debts, e.g. in bride-prices, loans and fights. Interpreted as a means to kill the opponent (*sekwa* aims at killing people who refuse to pay their debt), the regional and local administration tended to punish people threatening with its use. As a result, a great number of debt litigations, which up till now never found their way to any formal or informal courts, were judged by the lowest official administrative level, the *chef de canton*, in the person of the Lamido of Mogodé (or the district chief of Chubunawa district, on the Nigerian side). Consequently, the Lamido of Mogodé saw his power greatly enhanced, gaining access to a steady stream of cases. Considering the huge frequency of remarriage in Kapsiki/Higi culture, the numerous claims for bride-price repayments alone kept him and his court busy and alive. Thus, Hamajoda, the office holder during most of this period, was able to develop his own police force, his own prison and to amass a considerable wealth.

The missions gained their first real foothold in the Kapsiki/Higi area from 1953 onwards, and slowly started to grow in the more remote villages. As before, one important impact has been health, though the aid-sponsored battle against epidemics has had its results too. Converts tended to form wards of their own, a segregatory process that was less influential than in the case of the Fulanized Kapsiki. Despite the political and economic dominance of Islam, the missions gradually managed to carve out a niche for christian converts in the larger towns and cities, like Michika, Mokolo and Mubi.

The development of schooling is characteristic for this period. On the whole the Kapsiki were late to enter the race for education and government positions. On the Cameroonian side

a school was built in Mogodé in the late fifties, which took 15 years to develop into a full CEP course. The mission schools in Sir and later Rumsu were just as important as the state ones. Later in the period schools in other villages were established. Some of those, like the one in Ldiri, were abandoned after a few years because the Kapsiki did not like to send their children to school, especially not their girls. For a full CEP (basic schooling) people had to move to Mokolo; of the few youngsters who persevered that far, a relatively small number entered into the professions the schooling aimed at. Some returned to their fields, others went into trade. Entering the 'lycée' was rare indeed.⁹

In this period the frontier between the two states became a structural feature of the Kapsiki/Higi situation. After the skirmishes and the realignments of the early colonial period, the division between the *hèdi feranse* and the *hèdi inglès* (french soil, english soil) became fixed.¹⁰ Soon after both countries became independent the Biafra war put a severe strain on border relations. After the change from pound to Naira the discrepancy between the prices for food and commodities differed at both sides of the border grew. With the construction of the roads in the Higi area, especially the one leading to Kamalé, commerce between the two parts became profitable. At first, the commerce remained restricted to the domestic needs of the local population; people simply shopped in Michika and sold their wares in Mogodé for local consumption (van Beek 1978:42). In this period Nigeria, changing from a war-torn country to an oil-rich one, profiled itself as the main production center of household commodities.

Some mission and government programs in this period aimed at advancing horticulture. Agricultural extension offices, in Mogodé for Cameroon and in Michika for the Higi part, tried to stimulate the Kapsiki/Higi to turn to plough cultivation, deemed feasible on the plateau as well as in the plains. In Nigeria this new way of cultivation has taken off on a very limited scale. In Cameroon not at all; there people who bought a plough and oxen with government aid, soon wearied of it, cast away the plough, feasted their neighbours on the oxen and returned to hoe cultivation. The incentives were abandoned in Cameroon at the end of this period. The reasons for the failure of plough horticulture are diverse, and shall be taken up in the next section. A try at mouskwari cultivation on the plateau met with the same results.

⁹In 1972 only one boy from Mogodé had entered secondary education, he later became an extension officer.

¹⁰Still, up till the seventies Cameroonian government officials voiced an expectation for the return of the former mandated territories to Cameroon. The mere six years of French (non-)occupation still are cognitively present.

Tourism has gradually made its way into the Mandara mountains these years. Attracted by the beautiful scenery and the "traditional peoples" (a German travel agency advertised with: "Ins Land der Nackten: wo Afrika noch richtig Afrika ist"),¹¹ European and other tourists discovered the Mandara area. From late colonial period a hotel had been built in Rumsiki, which became an obligatory stop in the North-Cameroon tour. The Waza park and some 'traditional dances' in the Podokwo area featured on the program too. The Kapsiki country became a top attraction with its scenery: the volcanic outcroppings on the plateau and the splendid views into the valleys of the Nigerian side. The contact with the population remained limited to the immediate surroundings of the "route touristique", mainly in the village of Rumsiki itself (Knol & Jansonius 1985). Still, the interest of outsiders in their country and gradually their culture, did have an impact on Kapsiki society and values: a process of 'cultural proletarianization' or commoditization of culture (van Beek 1986a). On the economic level, tourism did form a market, albeit restricted and focused. For the hotel vegetables could be cultivated, providing income for a few - mainly Christian - people. The youngsters from Rumsiki jumped into the guide-business, and some blacksmiths catered to the tourist trade, by making bronze objects or performing divination.

2.5. Independence: wealth and ethnicity (1975-present)

From about 1975 some of the developments sketched above, went into full gear, both in North Cameroon (Roupsard 1987) and in the Kapsiki/Higi region. On the macro-level Cameroon experienced a 'boom', growing relatively rich by oil revenues, high prices for food and other primary products. In North Cameroon this process was stimulated by the general interest in the region, triggered by the personal ties of president Ahidjo with the North. For the Kapsiki/Higi area all this had huge implications.

Throughout this period prices for food were high, though the level fluctuated. Horticulture became profitable. The drought period of 1973-1976 had not hit the Mandara region too hard; the mountains are a relatively favored ecozone, as they have been for a long time (van Beek 1978:34). Millet, sorghum, sweet potatoes, which formerly were strictly staple food, became a source of cash income. Though the reluctance to sell grains still operated and operates, the Kapsiki/Higi did sell off a fair amount of their staple at high prices. Peanut cultivation, too, was profitable, though that market knew less fluctuations. Potatoes, a crop restricted to the Kapsiki plateau since the earlier period, guaranteed a stable cash return.

¹¹In the country of the naked: where Africa is still the real Africa', Quelle travels, Brochure 1970:24).

The frontier became more important in this period too. Nigeria experienced a steep economic decline. The high official rates for the naira and the perseverant shortage of food in the country, made it an ideal market for Cameroonian produce. Both local production and other Cameroonian products were transferred over the frontier in great quantities.

The Cameroonian beer, '33', in the years '80-85, has been the source of many an individual wealth. The trucks coming with their loads of beercrates from Garoua, were met in Mogodé by fleets of donkeys. Troops of 40 - 60 donkeys, each carrying 60 bottles of beer, were led by the Kapsiki down the hills, into Kamalé, where truck transport was available, or all the way to Michika, the first point of sale. The profit on the total enterprise was about 150% of the price in Cameroon. Local consumption of bottled beer rose with the coming of cash money, and in all villages small bars arose.

When after 1984 the naira devaluated, Nigeria became less important as a food market. Instead, Nigerian enamel ware, cloths, shoes, soap, blankets and beds, which had already found their way into the Kapsiki consumer market (van Beek 1978: 42 ff), became important merchandise. Thus, the Kapsiki/Higi became the middlemen in that trade. Recently gasoline was added to the list, with Nigerian gasoline priced at about one third of the Cameroonian.¹²

This tendency of the Kapsiki/Higi to become traders has been quite general. Nowadays, many Kapsiki are established as 'commerçants' in the larger cities of Cameroon, from Kousséri to Douala, though they are still concentrated mainly in the North. Petty trade was a feature of village life in the former period, large scale trade tends to become a favorite future. From their privileged base on the border, the Kapsiki rapidly are becoming known as traders of the region. The value system of the Kapsiki/Higi, after all, is well geared towards this. Their view of an 'ideal man' (van Beek 1982b:185ff) can be read as a description of a trader: independent, apt at managing relations with fellow men, eager to stay out of debt but quick to put others in his debt, using his kinsmen as a resource while staying aloof from claims from their side. The importance of privacy combined with the ideology of unity of the agnatic group (van Beek 1987:34), gives a perfect ideological legitimization of the pursuit of wealth by trade.

Wealth, in the Kapsiki/Higi area, is invested mainly in cattle. In precolonial times, as described above, the Kapsiki relied on their own brand of strait-backed, short-horned cattle (*tla psekè*), which they herded themselves. In late colonial times and early independence,

¹²In January 1988 a liter of gasoline was 60 CFA in Michika, Nigeria, and 180 CFA in Maroua.

they gradually acquired more cattle, often of the hump backed Fulani type (*tila garua*). In both these periods, they tended to rely on the Mbororo Fulani to herd their beasts for them, considering herding an unproductive and unattractive chore the Fulani had to be paid for. For the Kapsiki/Higi, cattle are capital stock, not a source of food (milk is rarely drunk). In this latter period, however, their herds increased almost threefold. The relations with the Fulani herdsmen became strained, when the "herding losses" became too evident. So, the Kapsiki turned towards herding their own cattle, like they did in pre-colonial times, though with larger flocks of mixed cattle.

Another way of spending money is house building. A wealthy man builds 'une maison en dur', a high wall (a traditional feature of Kapsiki/Higi architecture) surrounding a huge enclosure. Even if this kind of house does not occur too often, the use of corrugated iron for the roofs has become very widespread. Due to the more extensive farming and the amount of cattle, grass for thatching huts is rare. Thatching a roof - if commissioned - will cost more than roofing with corrugated iron. Thus, the view of the Kapsiki/Higi villages has changed dramatically: from the close cluster of thatched huts within a stone enclosure towards tin-roofed rectangular huts inside a large enclosed square. Besides, in several villages people moved from the mountain side to the road or the valley, leaving behind the *kwufi*, remains of their old abodes. This sometimes resulted in a new village center: in the case of Mogodé the ward of Fulanized Kapsiki expanded into the major section of the village, at the same time losing its strict Muslim character.

Both accruing wealth and the individual ways in which the Kapsiki/Higi invest it, accumulate tensions within the social system. Whereas Kapsiki society never was characterized by sharing or communality, the tendencies towards individual autonomy and privacy are strengthened in the last period. This results in growing tensions within the village community. The patrilineal clans, which have been important as corporate groups at the smallest level of segmentation (van Beek 1978:122 ff), do not command sufficient resources to handle 'privatizing' individuals. Rich members cannot be induced towards a greater amount of sharing and distribution within the lineage, though an insistence on a more general and limited generosity might be heeded. On the other hand, the smallest agnatic unit comprises the would-be inheritors of the rich clanbrother. Consequently, accusations of sorcery have become much more frequent and only the death of the very old do not lead towards accusations or avenging magic.

This reaction on the growing differences within the village is facilitated by some changes in the judicial system of Cameroon. Increasingly, sorcery tends to be considered a legal

offense; accusations are accepted in court. As a parallel development, the use of *sekwa* is not prohibited any longer. Thus, the many cases on debt settlement, which filled the court of the former Lamido, reverse to the traditional form: the creditor threatens with a magical means that aims at killing the debtor and his family, thus collecting his claim. As a result the present Lamido has very few cases left to judge. Moreover, the regional government, situated in Mokolo, has recently installed a police post near the Lamido's residency, thus limiting his use of power even more. An individual police force, like in former times, is out of the question. Thus, the office of the Lamido, or 'chef de canton', has lost much of its political clout as well as its remunerations. Though the model of a Fulani chief's court is still followed, the resemblance with the *Ardo* of old has become shallow.

This partial re-traditionalization is echoed in residence patterns and festivals. As in several villages people move towards the center of the village, near the road or near the best wells, the fields are gradually deserted, returning to their pre-colonial uninhabitedness. The bush becomes empty again with the main difference that the village now is situated in the most accessible spot. Another development is the strengthening of several traditional festivals. Especially the great year-rites, the festivals in which the village celebrates its new members (van Beek 1978:344 ff), have gathered momentum. More than in the early independence people give full attention to the details and procedures of these large feasts. It is, beyond the religious significance, a time for showing off, one of the few occasions to vaunt legally and lawfully one's riches and wealth. In line with this growth of the core-festivals, the ethnic identification as Kapsiki has hardened: more than in former times people define themselves as Kapsiki. The processes of marginalization and proletarianization (van Beek 1986a), in combination with the greater wealth of the people, have resulted in a growing ethnic well-being. Thus, the communal festivals serve as a means to sustain and generate a collective identity that never was, while at the same time the intermediate levels of identity (clan and lineage) are broken down (van Beek 1988c).

Fulanization seems to halt somewhat, after a period of rapid increase in Muslim numbers up till the demise of Ahidjo. The last years have shown a slight decrease in fulanization. Two reasons can be found. First, a certain saturation of the slots in the socio-political structure. Where fulanization, as in Mogodé, followed the lines of political clientship, the total number of positions to be filled with Islamized clients is restricted. Secondly, the new president favours neither the North nor Islam, and Fulani culture has lost its monopoly as the one and only road into Cameroon. Characteristically, Fulanizing Kapsiki tend to call themselves

Kapsiki, instead of Fulani as was the case formerly.¹³ People who left Islam in Mogodé mostly returned to the traditional religion, holding public beer parties to signal their return to the ancestral fold.

3. TRANSFORMATION AND THE MODE OF PRODUCTION

This overview of Kapsiki history brings about the question what the role has been of the domestic mode of production in this society, during the transformations sketched. First of all, the question of the domestic mode of production itself has to be addressed: how 'domestic' was or is the mode of production that characterized Kapsiki society. Following Sahlins (1972), Hindess and Hirst (1975) and especially Meillassoux (1981), we shall explore how well Kapsiki society did and does fit in with the model of domestic mode of production. The main features of the domestic mode of production are (Sahlins 1972, Hindess & Hirst 1975):

- sexual division of labour, based on the minimal family
- individual manipulation of tools
- production geared to satisfy basic needs
- rights over things exercised through rights over people
- 'introverted' circulation of domestic products, predominance of use value.

Meillassoux in his analysis of the domestic mode of production stresses the primacy of reproduction, of the distribution of people and of the management of relations of production, and further mentions underproduction, underpopulation and ecological constraints (Meillassoux 1981:6)

Sahlins' characteristics of the domestic mode of production are easily met by the Kapsiki. Their subsistence oriented production of sorghum, millet, maize and some small crops, was done by the minimal family, based upon internally produced and individually manipulated iron tools, aiming at satisfying the needs of the minimal family. Sahlins' before-last item on the list, rights over things exerted through rights over people, forms the mainstay of Meillassoux's argument, and is more interesting in the case of the Kapsiki. In their historical phases as described above, the Kapsiki do fit Meillassoux's pattern very well. If anything, reproduction is a dominant issue in their communities. Their system of circulation of women over the agnatic lineages in fact is an almost perfect example of a 'gyneco-mobile society' (Meillassoux 1981:33ff). Kapsiki culture was obsessed with the distribution of women and reproduction, an obsession for which the term "marriage complex" has been used (van Beek

¹³The same holds for the Mafa, where the tendency to switch ethnic allegiance has been less noted (van Santen, personal communication).

1978). The localized patrilineages of the villages were the fixed points over which the women, as the mobile part of the society, circulated with an astonishing rapidity (van Beek 1987, 1986b). The fragility of the individual marriage relations contrasted with the importance of marriage and reproduction themselves. For this contradiction the concomitant brideprice transactions, with their near equation of brideprice with children, formed the main solution. As a consequence, Kapsiki social life was for a large part dominated by the quest for wives and children, conflicts over women and their offspring permeating social relations within the village and between villages. This 'marriage complex' showed itself in the ideological sphere too, where the major communal rites centered around the yearly additions to the village community (van Beek 1982b, 1987). Individual rites, personal divination and the bulk of magic aimed at keeping alive and healthy and procuring progeny.

The management of fertile females, one of the pillars for political power according to Meillassoux, was important in Kapsiki society, even if they (the elders) were not very successful at it. The contradiction, mentioned above, of a central institution with a fleeting populace, deprived the lineage elders of their means of control over the movement of women. So - following Meillassoux - the Kapsiki polity never centralized. 'Management of marriage' was performed by processes of competition and conflict. Men competed for pubescent girls within the community, and vied for each others wives between communities, and women, after their initial marriage freely moved from group to group. War was an essential feature of this system. The communities were in a continual state of (suspended) armed conflict with each other, while within the villages a graded system of violence prevailed too (Otterbein 1968). Re-marriages by women not only triggered most conflicts, the tensions between the agnatic groups and communities aggravated the mobility of the women in question. Not only did women move easily from one enemy to another, the actual or potential hostilities between the groups of men in fact facilitated female mobility. Thus, another contradiction surfaces, in that the the men, striving to enhance their reproductive control, in fact diminished it.

The last factor that shaped the specific Kapsiki formation of the domestic mode of production, is external war, i.e. slavery, slave raiding and trading. Though Meillassoux stresses the fact that communities characterized by a domestic mode of production are part of a web of similar communities (Meillassoux 1981:64), the equality between these communities as well as the specific form of their social formation, resulted for a large measure from the external threat by a superior enemy. Meillassoux in fact does mention this possibility (p. 84) but as an additional factor. At least in the case of the Mandara area, it is much more than that: this specific form of the domestic mode of production was generated by

slave raiding. Through slave raiding the surplus of the 'real production' - people - was siphoned off; any tribute, as Meillassoux rightly argues (1981:86) not only reduces the resources for the population, but restricts the population itself too, even when only agricultural produce would be taken away. In the case of the Kapsiki the raids took people and cattle, two related valuables. So, in this mode of production the position of being dominated is a constituent factor.

It is on this domestic mode of production that the various transformations of the Kapsiki social formations were based. Above we have seen how Kapsiki/Higi society went through various phases in social formation: a commodity clientship of a cluster of villages fighting to keep the enemy out in pre-colonial times, a fragmented society scourged by a superior armed enemy during early colonialism, a number of villages reluctantly opening themselves in the late colonial era, a marginal society during early independence and an emergent tribe of traders in recent times. Throughout these transformations, as we shall see, the productive and reproductive basis remained quite unchanged. The question then rises how the domestic mode of production can remain stable with a changing social formation, and - if so - how wide the latitude is for diverging societal types upon a single material basis. Let us first look at the new elements in the sector of primary or immediate production (if only a part of the domestic mode of production (O'Laughlin 1975:361), it is an important one at least), and then try to assess the reasons for the stability and flexibility of the domestic mode of production.

Kapsiki/Higi subsistence is based upon hoe-horticulture, supplemented by some animal husbandry: sheep, goats and some cattle. Owing to the relative fertile soil of this old volcanic area, the Kapsiki can cultivate their lands continuously with limited fallowing periods, as long as they use *Arachis* as an alternate crop or cultivate millet and peanuts interspersed. Few crops have been introduced in the course of time, peanuts being the single important one. Sweet potatoes have been introduced much longer ago, potatoes are recent additions, but neither has changed significantly the total specter of subsistence. The staple crops, sorghum and millet, supplemented by the quick ripening maize and fonio for the "soudure", still form the basis of subsistence, and have been cultivated the same way throughout history.

Despite the many new items brought into the area, the technology of production did not change. Hoe-cultivation today is carried out with practically the same implements as in pre-colonial times: hoes, adzes, digging irons, sickles and knives have not changed since the coming of the iron age. Iron did become more easily available, and the position of the smiths has changed - a topic on which we shall return later. However, even in the days of the iron

patronage of Sukur, the iron producers never formed an economic interest or pressure group, no "high-tech" kartel. The smiths were linked to the various clans and lineages, without any kinship organization of their own (van Beek 1978:181ff). They were clients at best, never patrons. So their virtual monopoly on technology never developed into a power base.

Access to fields has changed, of course. The opening up of resources at pacification has affected production. However, when people moved to the outfields, neither their techniques of production nor their relations changed. Hoe-horticulture as well as the segmentary system which forms its social base, are inherently expansive; thus, the possibility of filling new ecological niches, though it did change relations between villages and heavily affected the general way of life, did not transform the mode of production. Rights of fields continued to be derived from relations between kin. Within the village, no discrepancies in access to fields arose. The main cash crop, peanuts, does not need privileged spots, nor does the staple crop. So, given the moderate population density ($40/\text{km}^2$), fields are still not scarce and can be obtained quite easily by loan or inheritance. They are owned in principle individually, though the smallest agnatic group, the people who inherit from each other, do have their claims.

Labour input has remained stable too. Though some traditions about the slave raiding era give the impression that a larger share of the work in the outlying fields was done by work parties, the individual compound has always produced the main work supply. For some tasks, like clearing new fields, labour parties were (and are) organized, both for the man's and the woman's crops. Still, most of the work was and still is done by the members of one individual household.

In the division of labour it is gender that forms the main parameter for the relations of production. The division per gender is quite strict in Kapsiki society: the men 'command' millet and sorghum as well as tobacco and onions, while peanuts, groundnuts, couch, sorrel and beans are womens produce. Sesamum, sweet potatoes and sometimes peppers are joint crops. In millet/sorghum cultivation this gender division is systematized in separate activities: men sow and harvest, women weed, thrash and winnow. This cultural and partly symbolic system of labour division did affect the reaction on the introduction of new crops. Thus, peanut cultivation routinely was appropriated by the women, as it filled the slot of an earlier womens crop. The perseverance of the traditional division of labour between the sexes therefore has generated some changes in the relations between the sexes. As far as can be gleaned from oral traditions, wives have grown richer in relation to their husbands. The organization of local markets enhanced their control over cash flow and increased their mobility. Consequently, their economic independence grew. Though women have no direct

claims on land, cultural rules as well as basic interest dictate that any husband supply his wives with as much fields as they can manage. With the increasing importance of her small crops, women gained a considerable part of the total income of the household members, and managed their own monetary transactions. The separation between the cash flows of husband and wife probably developed parallel, though this is hard to establish. One result of this monetary autonomy of the women, is an increase in marriage frequency, i.e. in marital mobility of the Kapsiki/Higi women. Both this autonomy and the high infant mortality of the region adduce to the exceptional instability of Kapsiki marriages (van Beek 1987, 1986b). Though this, of course, has influenced the relations between men and women, the system of production remained the same; the labour input of the women does not depend on the duration and stability of their marriages. Above all, the obsession with reproduction remained. So, a primary production, performed by small parties of closely related people with a limited technology, seems to both inevitable and flexible. On this basis a fair number of transformations and social formations have been superimposed. Why is this basis of the domestic mode of production so persistent, and, secondly, where does the adaptability and the flexibility of the Kapsiki/Higi variant of the domestic mode of production spring from? Several reasons may make this kind of production inevitable. First of all, ecological ones. The area inhabited by the Kapsiki/Higi is volcanic and relatively fertile, on the one hand, and on the other hand replete with stones, rendering hoe-horticulture a productive option and making alternatives hard to find. Still, the lack of success of plough cultivation is striking. Plateau and valley fields, where stones are scarcer, in fact are suited for more extensive food production. Yet the practice did not really survive. Reasons for this are twofold. First, plough-cultivation does not fit well into the gender division of labour. The oxen-drawn plough - by whatever reason - is considered a man's instrument, whereas in hoe-horticulture a large chunk of the workload is shouldered by the women. Ploughs shift the work from the women to the men. Secondly, the - quite large - ploughs put at the disposal of the Kapsiki/Higi disrupt the soil more than the fragile vegetation allows for, so the results of ploughing have been less than spectacular. Furthermore, the ploughs were being introduced at a time when the rains were failing, just before a series of drought years. Whereas even in well-rained years the moisture in the soil just barely tolerates inversion, in the dry years of the early seventies ploughing simply was a bad idea. Especially in those difficult years, the rocky mountain sides, where the plough cannot be used, prove to be more reliable, with limited though secure returns, than the plains. Similar conditions have limited the acceptance of mouskwari cultivation, introduced on the plateau in recent times. Potentially this could be a very significant intercrop of highly valued sorghum, but rain conditions have to be optimal. And if rain conditions are optimal, the normal harvest is more than sufficient.

Under different conditions, with less imposition of inter-gender rules and in the absence of the more fertile mountain slopes, the Kapsiki/Higi are quick to adopt new techniques of cultivation. For example, in the plains west of the Yedseram river, they do use plough cultivation. Descending from the foothills of the Mandara mountains, the Nigerian Higi push into the plains lying West of them, inhabited by the Marghi mainly. There, they prove themselves able and aggressive farmers, using all kinds of techniques to maximize their harvests, growing millet and sorghum as a full blown cash-crop.

Why, then did the domestic mode of production not change more in this area? The first part of the answer, of course, is that some factors remained quite constant. The focus on reproduction remained an ecological necessity. The demographic situation did not change drastically for the Kapsiki. Where formerly slave-raiding heightened the need for reproduction as the major issue of society - ever present in any domestic mode of production, as Meillassoux argues - the demise of slavery did not bring about a baby boom: Kapsiki society still is largely static in numbers. So, the ecological constraints of the domestic mode of production remained stable. This holds not only for the physical environment, it holds for the social environment as well, as the question of dominance remains. The Kapsiki variant of the domestic mode of production was begotten in a situation of violent domination by a superior force. This domination waxed and waned, but eventually was replaced by different dominations, colonial and national. The Mandara area remained marginal, in fact was progressively marginalized (van Beek 1986a) in the course of state penetration. So, after all, some things do not change so much.¹⁴

Still, the flexibility of this variant of a domestic mode of production is an important aspect. One reason for its adaptability resides in the small scale of the Kapsiki production unit. This too has remained quite stable over the years. The relative fragmentation of Kapsiki society, with its absence of large corporate groups and strong intra-group sanctions and social control, gave rise to fragmented and - for Africa - individualized forces of production. That same individualized production, however, proved to be well suited for the transformations to come: the opening up of the resources and colonization of new territories, the option of individual socio-political mobility through Fulanization as well as the transition towards trade. So, for at least a part of it, the adaptability of domestic production resided in the fact

¹⁴Meillassoux argues that the domestic community may persist even when the domestic mode of production has been eliminated (Meillassoux 1981:87). This, however, is begging the question. The analytical difference between both has never been defined clearly. Secondly, and more important, if this distinction should be made, then the notion of articulation of the modes of production becomes void: at the time the 'domestic community' interacts with - say - the capitalist mode of production, there would be no domestic mode of production any longer to speak of, and consequently no articulation.

that the forces of production in Kapsiki/Higi social formation, were geared to the exigencies of the articulation between domestic and encroaching capitalist mode of production.

Here, one of the contradictions of this mode of production surfaces: the discrepancy between the economic relations between kin, and the norms ruling their interaction. The ideology of kinship, specifically descent, is and was at variance with the individualist basis of production. Clansmen, members of the lineage and the sublineage are considered 'brothers'. Kapsiki terminology makes a clear distinction between brothers of the same father (*wuzeyitiyeōa*) and those of the same mother (*wuzamiyeōa*). The first ones, the agnatic kinsmen, should form one coherent, undivided body of friends with parallel interests. The matrilineal kinsmen are allowed variation in their mutual relationship. This ideological of lineage unity is quite at variance with actual relations. Possibly, in pre-colonial times, these *kayita* were more coherent and had more corporate characteristics, but the difference cannot be dramatic. The folk tales, e.g., abound with exactly the same clashes between brothers as can be witnessed in recent times. So, even in the times of shared scarcity and danger, the lineage lacked the coherence and the authority to control its individual members. In actual practice, lineage members often are at odds with each other. Closely related brothers, members of the same sublineage, are the first to be suspected - and secretly accused - of sorcery. Rumors about close brothers vying for each others life, circulate the village. Characteristically, witchcraft, which follows matriline, is not considered a great danger (for adults).

One main reason for this contradiction between norm and reality resides in the tension between individual ownership and lineage inheritance. Though children inherit when they are old enough, brothers do have their stakes. Especially when the children are under age, the brothers will inherit; not as a trust for the children but as full custodians and owners of the estate. One common stratagem is to hide one's riches from the brothers, trying to keep one's number of cattle a secret. Having the Fulani herd one's cattle, made this easier. With the increase in wealth, and the break-down of Kapsiki-Mbororo cattle trusts, the tensions between the have's and the have-not's within the lineage increased. The ideology, nowadays, seems in a process of 'hardening': the norm of sibling unity is expressed often and emphatically in all kind of public gatherings, without contrasting it with the growing tensions, while suspicions and accusations of evil-doing are voiced in a very general and circumspect way.

One other, quite specific, reason for the seeming stability of the system is the position of the group of specialists within Kapsiki/Higi society, the blacksmiths (*rerhè*). Comprising about

5-10 % of the population, the blacksmiths form an endogamous lower stratum in the village community. Not all of them actually forge or cast brass, as many of them are engaged as bards, musicians or diviners. As a group they are despised because of their association with death (they bury the dead) and their food (they eat several animals deemed inedible by the non-smith majority - van Beek 1982c), but their specializations, not in the least their expertise in magic and medicine, give them an economic advantage. This caste-like group serves as what might be called 'general specialists', as they specialize in almost any work calling for some professionalization in this society. As such they have an important role in the mode of production. It is the blacksmiths niche in society that seems to change during transformations, where the subsistence patterns as a whole remain unchanged.

Here, another contradiction in this domestic mode of production surfaces, the one between the techno-economic and ritual importance of the blacksmith, and their status in the social formation: the greater their importance, the lower their status seems to have been. The position of the blacksmith has been equalized in the course of history. In pre-colonial times, informants insist, they were 'like slaves', having neither voice nor opinion of their own, dependent on the village for food and shelter. Still, in that same era, they were the ones closest associated with the 'corridors of power', i.e. Sukur. Though even in Sukur, as we saw above, blacksmiths were below the status of the chief, their link with the chief was strong and direct. They were the ones directing, if not controlling, the flow of iron into society; any village chief in the region depended for his chieftaincy on Sukur, founded by blacksmiths. Other village traditions, too, tell of blacksmiths founders; surely they were later eclipsed by *melimu* (non-blacksmiths) arriving on the scene later, but old roots do count. At that time, traditions converge, the ritual status of the blacksmiths was at its strongest. So in pre-colonial times we see a clear-cut contradiction in the smith status: associated with the supernatural world and power, but denied individuality and sociability. When in the commodity clientship iron was at the basis of the social formation, the status of the iron workers was at its ebb.¹⁵

With the eclipse of Sukur and the coming of the gun, the blacksmiths lost their privileged position over links to power and over the means of destruction. They became artisans pure and simple, suppliers of village-based commodities, albeit with a firm foothold in local religious matters. They seem to become less peripathetic, settling down in the villages more often than before (though this is hard to infer from oral traditions). During most of the late

¹⁵One example of their low status is their potential use as a sacrificial victim: in the sacrifice to appease locust plagues, according to informants, blacksmiths were used. Later, they were replaced by cattle. Whether this tradition reflects actual history or not (van Beek 1988d), the ease with which the smith is described as a victim is relevant.

colonial and early independent phases this has been their position: a kind of clients of the local non-smith clans, with their somewhat lower status balanced by an economic privileged position. The smaller power base is balanced by a more calibrated social position.

In the last decennia, however, their position has continued to change. Iron production was taken out of their hands, as locally melted iron could no longer compete with the residu of old cars. Not only was iron melting on its way out, agricultural and household implements were being imported into the area in ever greater bulk. Especially during the times of the low naira in Nigeria, iron products from Nigeria were cheaper than the products of the local blacksmiths. Medicine remained of importance, but the smiths' virtual monopoly was broken by the coming of western medication. On the whole, fulanization and christianization eroded the traditional basis of blacksmith economics and status. The same blacksmith stratum, however, true to their position as 'general specialists', quickly took advantage of the new opportunities offered by the encroaching market and the penetration by external organizations. They filled the benches of the mission churches - even to the initial exclusion of all others -, had themselves trained for new jobs such as carpenters or masons, and made some (limited) headway into administration. In several instances they renounced their *rerhé* food habits, trying to emulate the non-smiths in their way of life. Endogamy remained, however. Still privileged in economics, if slightly less so than in the preceding eras, they gradually came on a par socially with the *melimu*, as a selfconscious minority, well fed (with a higher growth rate - van Beek 1986b) and well educated. In as far as they still follow the traditional occupations, they benefit from the general level of monetary well-being: their medicines have not grown cheaper, and their praise singing has become quite expensive.

So, in a way, the changes wrought upon Kapsiki/Higi society through the pacification and the penetration of the capitalist mode of production, have changed the blacksmith population most of all. As a group, they have served as a buffer between the influences from abroad: the iron clientship with Sukur, the weapon production in defense of slave raiding, the production of implements for horticulture, the medicine in defense of ecological hardships and nowadays the new craftmanships. They were the intermediaries between the truly domestic mode of production and the appropriation and distribution of surplus on a wider, regional scale. As links between the 'immediate production' and the economics of distribution they buffered the transformations in social formation from the productive basis. In this buffering process they reproduced the hierarchic social relations within Kapsiki society, harmonizing with their shifting status the transformations in their economic importance. Through this reproduction of social relations in a changing context, their position as well as their evaluation changed too. In the last phase they emerged as an almost equal group, at a time

when they no longer could effectively buffer outside impact. So, with the emergence of a trader class, the role of the blacksmiths as economic and ritual intermediaries - and as buffers for subsequent transformations - has dwindled.

In conclusion, the Kapsiki variant of the domestic mode of production proved itself adaptable and flexible through several processes. The general situation of ecology remained more or less the same first of all. Secondly, changes that came towards the mountain area were cushioned by the traditional fragmentation of the society, by its inherent contradictions (norm versus reality in kinship relations, striving versus performance in marriage management e.g.), by its adaptation to a situation of dominance and by the existence of a class of traditional specialists. This combination of factors may or may not be unique for the Mandara region, it does suggest at least the need for refinement of the historical materialist terminology. The broad term 'domestic mode of production' covers too great a variety of not only societal forms but also reactions to change, to warrant its continued use as a terminological monolith.

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STAGNATION ET DYNAMISME

Morcellement de la terre et l'exode rurale dans deux chefferies bamiléké, Cameroun.

Jan H.B. den Ouden

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 La problématique

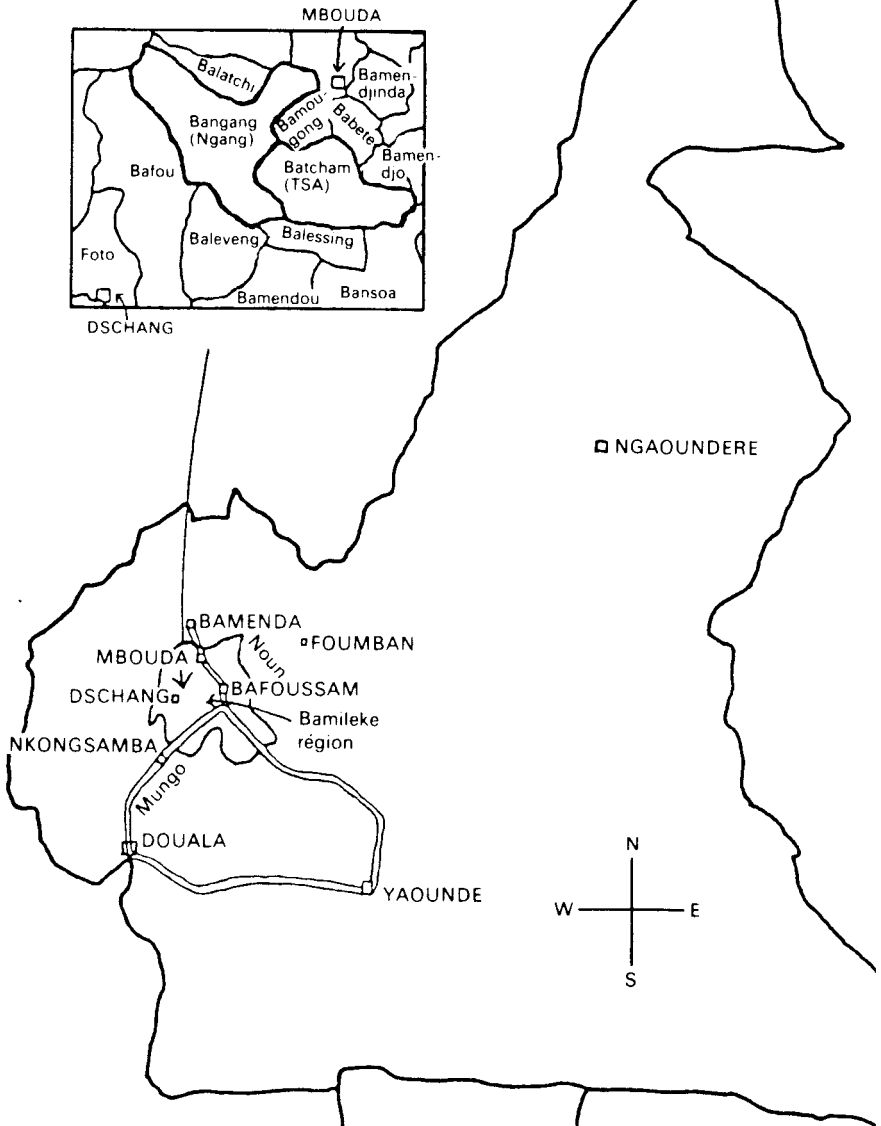
En 1977-1978 j'ai fait pendant neuf mois des recherches en pays Bamiléké, dans les chefferies ou groupements de Tsa en Ngang. En 1980 j'ai continué les investigations pendant quelques semaines et, finalement, en 1987 les familles avec qui j'avais travaillé avant étaient revisitées pendant un mois. Pendant cette période d'à peu près dix ans, six étudiantes de l'université agronomique de Wageningen, Pays Bas, ont aussi fait des recherches dans la région de Tsa.¹ Après avoir écrit quelques articles basés sur les données de toutes ces investigations, je veux essayer au moyen du présent essai d'analyser les changements socio-économiques dans six familles patrilinéaires à Tsa et Ngang depuis environ 1900. Par cette étude je veux démontrer qu'il est de moins en moins possible de comprendre la situation de ces familles si on se restreint à étudier ceux qui restent dans les concessions des vieilles chefferies. Si la situation dans les concessions dans les années soixante dix et quatre vingt est assez stagnante en ce qui concerne les droits de contrôle des hommes sur la terre, la parcellisation des terrains et, en général, le système agricole, le total peut être très dynamique si on inclut les événements migratoires. Sans doute la forte pression démographique (à Tsa en 1986 ± 500 personnes par km², à Ngang ± 400) a son influence sur la nécessité pour beaucoup d'hommes surtout, de tenter leur fortune ailleurs mais, comme j'ai argumenté dans une autre publication (Ouden, 1987: 20-21, 24) un déficit de terres ne peut jamais expliquer parfaitement les événements spécifiques chez les Bamiléké, dans leurs chefferies et au dehors.

1.2 Le monde changeant à Tsa et Ngang

Les facteurs qui influencent les développements dans le système socio-économique des Bamiléké sont les suivants:

¹Etudiantes de l'Université Agronomique, Wageningen, Pays-Bas, qui ont fait des recherches à Tsa après 1978: M. Derckx et J. Mooij, N. Dieckmann et R. Joldersma, J. Leesberg et C. Witte. En plus C. van Bruggen et J. van Eijnatten ont fait des recherches chez, surtout, des émigrants de Tsa dans un village pionnier du projet Sodenkam (Moungo). Voir la bibliographie.

Cameroun



- La paix. Même les territoires en dehors des sites habités, bien clôturés et guardés, devenaient sans danger et utilisables pour l'agriculture.
- La croissance des villes qui demandaient de plus en plus de produits vivriers.
- La libéralisation de la culture du café Arabica en ±1950.
- La croissance de la population par la communication et les possibilités de transport améliorées et, plus récemment, l'amélioration de la situation médicale.

Un facteur "interne" indispensable pour comprendre les changements est que les hommes ne font presque rien dans la culture des produits vivriers. Avant, les femmes possédaient un domaine assez autonome dans la production, le stockage, la distribution et la consommation des produits vivriers et cette autonomie est renforcée. Si les hommes travaillent un peu dans leurs champs, c'est seulement pour le café et les plantains dont ils récoltent le vin de palme. Plusieurs tâches des hommes ont disparu : l'élevage de chèvres et de moutons, le clôturage des champs, le défrichement après une jachère de longue durée, la construction des cases et certainement pas en dernier lieu, les tâches défensives et offensives. Même les réunions des organisations coutumières des chefferies et les palabres (surtout pour les hommes un peu importants) qui tous prenaient beaucoup de temps, ne sont plus comme avant, ou bien ont presque disparu.

Du temps datant d'avant le café et d'avant la commercialisation des cultures vivrières, en dehors des zones guardés où se trouvaient les cases, les champs des femmes et les enclos de nuit pour le bétail, la terre n'était pas une ressource rare. Des gens, des droits sur les gens, le nombre des gens qu'un chef ou l'héritier d'une famille pouvait mobiliser et manipuler était la ressource la plus importante. Si on contrôlait des gens, on pouvait se défendre, mettre des terrains en culture, et la production des plantes alimentaires et du bétail (chèvres, moutons, cochons, poules) pouvait être étendue. Les facteurs "extérieurs" que j'ai mentionnés, causaient dans le contexte spécifique des Bamiléké que la terre devenait très importante et était occupée complètement en quelques années. Après ±1950 les hommes voulaient des terrains pour cultiver du café. Les femmes avaient déjà agrandi la superficie cultivée et par la suite elles ont continué à ce faire. Les héritiers principaux, gardiens de la propriété familiale, comprirent vite la valeur nouvelle de la terre et devinrent de plus en plus réservés pour donner des grandes portions aux membres de leurs familles agnatiques (fils, frères et fils des frères du père) et aux étrangers; ils maximalisèrent leurs propres plantations de café (Ouden, 1980: 60). Planter le café devint important en plus parce que cela consolidait les droits sur la terre dans le nouveau système de droit. Pendant les disputes au sujet des terrains, le juge d'un tribunal de l'état demande premièrement qui est le propriétaire du café et des bananiers dans le champ en discussion. Si nous constatons qu'avant 1950 les non-successeurs un peu faibles se contentaient de portions de terrain très petites, après ils essayaient d'obtenir le maximum de leurs "pères", les héritiers principaux. Et, dans les concessions avec des héritiers

faibles, quelques hommes réussissaient à occuper des champs où leurs mères cultivaient (par exemple dans les concessions des pères ou frères des mères).

La terre devint de plus en plus négociable, mais aussi dans la période 1920-1950 on trouve des cas où des terrains étaient vendus, ou, peut-être plus correct, étaient mis en gage. Dans cet ancien temps, pour payer les quelques francs de taxe certains hommes vendaient/mettaient en gage (si on ne rembourse pas, la terre reste en possession du bailleur de fonds). Même maintenant une question qui peut donner beaucoup de conflits est: est-ce que c'est vendu ou pas. On trouve de plus en plus de bailleurs de fonds qui osent refuser un remboursement et qui ne sont pas émus des malédictions que cela entraîne.

Le standard de vie désiré, les maladies dans la culture du café, temps en temps des réductions des prix d'achat par l'état, l'endommagement du café par les femmes dans la culture associée (oui ou non intentionnel), font que normalement la quantité de terre et le nombre des caféiers, arbres fruitiers et bananiers (plantains) ne suffisent plus à tous les besoins des hommes. Des activités hors de l'agriculture gardent un nombre des hommes dans la région, mais une multitude d'hommes, et aussi de plus en plus de femmes, s'en vont vers les villes, les régions avec des plantations commerciales, ou vers les régions de colonisation. L'émigration est stimulée en plus par une haute orientation vers le succès.

En 1987 l'opinion d'un nombre d'informateurs dans la région de Tsa et Ngang était qu'un jeune homme, pour rester dans la chefferie, avait besoin de CFA 20.000,- en espèces et par mois, sans compter que sa femme ou sa mère lui donnait une partie de sa nourriture. Sinon, le jeune homme essayait de trouver le succès ailleurs. Si, en octobre 1987 on veut gagner CFA 20.000,- par mois avec seulement la culture du café, cela demande 4000 pieds de café, cela veut dire à peu près 4 ha. 4000 pieds de café donnent ± 10 à 12 sacs de café qui sont achetés par la coopérative UCCAO pour CFA 250.000,- (par an). Aussi les salariés sans expérience qui commençaient dans le secteur formel de l'état ou des compagnies semi-étatiques (la plantation de thé de CDC à Bangang par exemple) gagnaient CFA 21.000 à 25.000 par mois en 1987. Il va sans dire que le nombre des caféiers peut être plus bas si les hommes ont d'autres revenus en faisant, par exemple, un peu d'artisanat ou de commerce. J'ai parlé ici d'un minimum. Si un homme veut avoir une radio simple et une motocyclette, il aurait besoin de CFA 30.000,- à 35.000,- par mois en espèces au minimum. Il est évident que pour beaucoup d'hommes les montants d'argent nécessaires ne pourront jamais être gagnés en agriculture, avec des cultures pluri-annuelles. Les terrains contrôlés par les hommes moyen ne suffisent pas.

Il va sans dire qu'ici je présente une situation générale. Aussi l'analyse de six familles agnatiques à Tsa en Ngang ne pourra pas la corriger suffisamment. La chefferie de Tsa était déjà importante par ces commerçants et transporteurs depuis ±1965 et j'ai pu constater un grand essor entre 1977 et 1987. Les commerçants de bière n'attendent plus les camions des Brasseries Camerounaises: ils vont chercher le nécessaire avec leurs propres camions directement dans le dépôt de la capitale de la province, Bafoussam. Un nombre de produits industriels sont meilleur marché à Tsa qu'à Mbouda ou Bafoussam. Mais oui, c'est Tsa: on a continué d'être des guerriers, mais maintenant du commerce et du transport. Exemple d'un grand commerçant résidant près du marché de Tsa:

En 1977, âgé de ±35, l'homme s'était tout juste libéré de son père et frère aîné. En 1987 il possédait une boutique au marché de Tsa, faisait le transport et le commerce avec sa Toyota à bâche et était en train d'acheter une Mercedes de 12 tonnes. Il achetait 7 ha de terre à Tsa et 18 ha dans la vallée du Noun. Il possédait un terrain à Douala, 2 maisons à Mbouda et 4 lots à Batcham "ville" où il avait déjà construit quelques appartements. En 1987 il participait à deux groupes de cotisation à Tsa, un de 18 et un de 23 personnes, avec respectivement une mise de CFA 100.000,- et CFA 150.000,- par mois. C'est moins qu'à Mbouda où, en 1987, je trouvais un maximum de CFA 500.000,- par mois, mais quand même. Et on peut dire que ce développement s'est déroulé en dix ans. Il m'avait complété que 2 classes de l'école primaire.

La vieille chefferie voisine de Ngang donne une réalité différente. On dit, "les hommes de Ngang aiment mieux l'école et travaillent mieux dans l'agriculture".

On peut se demander si la différence d'intérêt pour l'éducation existait encore en 1987. En ce qui concerne la différence dans l'accent sur le commerce et le transport, les ±38.000 habitants de Tsa ont encore une avance sur les ±39.000 personnes de Ngang. Si, par exemple des gens de Tsa possédaient ±70 grands et petits camions en 1987, le nombre à Ngang n'en dépassait pas la moitié. Si, à Tsa, les commerçants achètent des produits agricoles chez eux directement pour les vendre dans les grandes villes, à Ngang les commerçants locaux achètent surtout dans la région pour vendre les produits aux autres commerçants qui se chargent du transport et de la vente en ville.

La structure de la chefferie de Ngang est aussi plus traditionnelle que celle de Tsa. A Tsa le chef supérieur refuse d'être approché dans le style traditionnel et humble et lui, de même que son père (il était député au parlement national), déteste les organisations coutumières de la chefferie: "Est-

ce que les gens ne connaissent pas de moyens pour d'utiliser leur temps avec un peu plus de productivité?" Ca veut dire qu'à Tsa les organisation de la chefferie de facto ne fonctionnent plus depuis 1962, tandis qu'à Ngang elles sont toujours relativement importantes.

Si à la chefferie et au niveau des familles agnatiques dans les deux groupements les réunions traditionnelles ne marchent plus comme avant, il faut bien se réaliser qu'en dehors des chefferies on rencontre des associations substituant. Au niveau des chefferies on rencontre des organisations dans toutes les régions où on trouve des concentrations d'émigrants au Cameroun (en 1985 pour Tsa 47 avec des chefs nommés par le chef supérieur de Tsa; Ngie Può Patsòòn, 1985: 66) qui ont des fonctions pour des cotisations, fonds de calamité, et pour trouver des possibilités économiques. Aussi on ne peut pas oublier les organisations des étudiants des chefferies dans les grandes villes. De même que les chefs supérieurs ont des contacts directes avec leurs "familles" "à l'étranger", les grandes familles agnatiques de Tsa ou Ngang interviennent elles aussi s'il y a des difficultés sérieuses chez des membres de leurs sections résidant ailleurs.

En 1978 quand on rencontrait des difficultés chez les membres de la famille dans la région de colonisation et des plantations commerciales Moungo, le chef de la famille Toula envoyait son troisième fils pour "restaurer la paix". Le pacificateur principal de la famille à Letsi était et est le frère cadet de l'héritier principal, un haut fonctionnaire à Douala. Si dans cette famille de Letsi après 1983 on organise des réunions à Tsa chaque année en août, à Douala un nombre considérable d'hommes de cette famille se réunit chaque mois et bien plus fréquemment si c'est nécessaire.

Aussi en ce qui concerne ces associations, qui, assez souvent renforcent la position socio-économique, le dynamisme se déroule en dehors de la chefferie.

1.3 L'analyse de six familles agnatiques à Tsa et Ngang

Pendant la première période de mes recherches j'ai choisi trois familles à Tsa et trois à Ngang, qui me semblaient à première vue assez riches, médiocres et assez pauvres, pour des études plus approfondies. Ceci basé seulement sur quelques informations concernant quelques membres de ces familles. Pour mieux comprendre les sections des familles qui habitaient à Tsa et Ngang, il était nécessaire de remonter dans les généalogies jusqu'au grand-père paternel du chef de famille vivant. Pour comprendre et incorporer encore plus les voisins il serait inévitable de remonter encore plus loin dans les généalogies. Ça je ne l'ai pas fait parce que le lignage effectif dans cette région est considéré comme comprenant les descendants masculins, en plus les sœurs et filles du

grandpère paternel du chef de famille vivant (Ouden, 1981: 185). J'ai exagéré le principe d'étudier cinq générations dans les cas de Latchuet à Tsa et de Menguéa et Tomégo à Ngang, parce que là "les chefs de famille" sont des jeunes. Les résultats variaient: à Latchuet j'ai réussi un peu, mais à Menguéa et Tomégo ce n'était pas possible de rattraper des sections lointaines de la famille, dans le sens généalogique et géographique. Aussi dans trois autres familles, quelques fois je n'ai pas réussi à prévenir l'indication "i", "inconnu" (voir les généalogies). Faire des études dans toutes les sections qui ont émigrées depuis longtemps et avec qui il n'y a plus de contacts familiaux n'était pas possible pour moi.

Si j'ai fait un effort pour étudier les droits de contrôle sur la terre des membres des six familles, j'ai seulement réussi jusqu'à un certain point.

- Dans mes publications de 1980 et 1981 j'ai discuté les droits de culture des femmes dans quelques terrains. En 1987 je n'avais pas la possibilité de continuer mes recherches dans le domaine des droits des femmes.
- Je n'ai pas pu contrôler les terrains que les membres des familles ont acquis récemment ailleurs, en dehors de la concession familiale.
- Aussi il y a des anciennes émigrations vers des chefferies voisines, surtout à Toula: A II (autre quartier de Tsa); Latchuet: A I (Bafounda); Menguéa: B et Tomégo: A (tous les deux à Balatchi, avant ±1960 une sous-chefferie de Ngang). Je n'ai pas d'information sur la situation de la terre dans ces autres chefferies.
- Dans le cas de Biété toute la famille est originaire d'un autre quartier de Ngang. Ils sont arrivés sur le territoire vide de Biété peut-être il y a cinquante ou soixante ans. Un nombre des frères de l'héritier principal de la famille ont obtenu leurs concessions complètement à part (C II, III, IV, V, VI). C'était impossible pour moi de connaître la situation de leurs concessions.

2. L'HISTOIRE DE SIX FAMILLES AGNATIQUES A TSA ET NGANG

2.1 Introduction

En discutant les événements des six familles je distingue trois périodes: la période avant les troubles dans cette région (±1957-1962), les développements entre 1957 et 1977 et la période entre 1977 et 1987. Les années 1977 et 1987 aient importantes pour mes recherches dans les deux chefferies. J'analyserai successivement le contrôle sur la terre et l'utilisation de la terre, la différenciation des métiers, l'émigration et, en général, la mobilité verticale et la différenciation socio-économique.

2.2 La situation avant 1957

Entre les six familles agnatiques choisies il y a des différences considérables en ce qui concerne la situation d'origine, mais, quand-même on trouve aussi une grande conformité dans le système agricole, y compris les relations de production.

A Tsa la famille du chef de Toula habitait son territoire depuis longtemps. Leurs maisons et les terrains des femmes se trouvaient à l'est et en bas de la grande piste (voir la carte). A l'ouest et au nord se trouvait un grand territoire vide, tswa, la frontière avec Ngang. Le côté est et sud, la frontière avec le quartier Tsa, Pepa, était peuplé au début de ce siècle. Maintenant on trouve là bas beaucoup de gens de la catégorie père-père-père-frère-fils etc. (pas sur la carte) de l'héritier principal présent El 8 (voir la généalogie). Avant 1955 les jeunes hommes de la famille gardaient les troupeaux de chèvres, moutons et chevaux sur les territoires vides; pendant la nuit le bétail restait dans des enclos à peu près où se trouvent maintenant les maisons du chef de la famille et du quartier.

L'histoire de la famille à Letsi commence avec X qui, avec quelques dépendants (Y et Z), fuyait la chefferie de Leving dans la seconde partie du 19^{ème} siècle et offrait ses services (X était un fameux forgeron) au chef supérieur de Tsa (Ouden, 1981: 196). Le chef de Tsa installait cette famille sur un territoire qu'il avait conquis sur Bansoa. Ici aussi les maisons se situaient en bas dans la vallée, dans le nord de la concession, où se trouve maintenant la maison des crânes. Les terrains des femmes étaient là, en bas. En haut des portions de terre appartenant aux fils de X, C et F, entre le petit et grand yia (entrée, endroit où on danse), se trouvaient les enclos de nuit pour le bétail.² Dans cet endroit aussi des patates douces étaient cultivées par les femmes. C'était seulement le fils aîné A qui, comme garde, habitait un peu plus loin (maintenant un endroit à côté de la piste), vers le sommet de la colline (maintenant la maison de D V) où se trouvait aussi un poste d'observation des jeunes guerriers du chef de Tsa qui gardaient la frontière de Bansoa. En dehors du grand yia, les terrains, avec des limites vagues, étaient utilisés pour le pâturage du bétail, de nouveau avec seulement quelques bovidés, mais aussi avec des chevaux.

²*Chop.* Site des maisons des ancêtres. Dans l'endroit où "le père entretenait son feu" on prend de la terre pour la manger afin d'arrêter des maladies ou d'autres échecs.

Kuifo. Case ou maison interdite où on garde les instruments de musique sacrés, utilisés pendant les rites. On trouve un kuifo dans les chefferies importantes et vieilles.

Yia. Entrée d'une concession. Endroit où on danse pendant les cérémonies. On y trouve normalement quelques petits sanctuaires, surtout l'Arbre des Enfants (de la fertilité)

La troisième famille que j'ai choisie à Tsa appartient à un ordre très différent. La famille demeure déjà depuis longtemps à Tsa. Il s'agit des descendants des esclaves? (Ouden, 1981: 233). Il est probable que cette famille à Latchuet a commencé avec seulement un territoire restreint et qu'elle a profité de l'agrandissement de la chefferie dans l'est à la fin du 19^{ème} siècle avec quelques 13 ha de tswa, territoire en dehors des endroits habités. Il est clair que les terrains des femmes se trouvaient à Latchuet et que le tswa était utilisé pour le bétail. La famille dit que le chef supérieur de Tsa avait un troupeau de bovidés sur ces terrains. Je me demande si la famille elle-même avait vraiment beaucoup de chèvres et de moutons. C'est déjà bien avant les troubles que des membres de la famille ont quitté Tsa pour s'installer dans les territoires vides de la chefferie Bafounda; la famille BI est toujours là.

Dans le quartier Biété de Ngang c'était seulement XC, le père du chef de la famille et du quartier présent qui s'est installé dans le territoire vide, conquis sur la chefferie de Bafou. Cette région était utilisée autrefois par les Bororo, des pasteurs nomades. L'héritier principal XC I a vendu la concession originaire en 1960 (8 ha). Comme d'habitude les maisons de XC se trouvaient en bas, dans la vallée, où se trouve encore le chop³. Là se situaient aussi les champs clôturés des femmes. De nouveau, le tswa était utilisé pour le pâturage du bétail, y compris des chevaux. Il va sans dire que dans ce nouveau quartier une abondance de terre existait. Quelques frères de l'héritier principal présent ont obtenu dans le quartier des concessions considérables, loin de la concession en discussion. Je ne connais pas leurs superficies.

A Menguéa les frères A et B étaient probablement des frères cadets du chef de Ngang au début de ce siècle. Ils avaient été installés par le chef supérieur dans une territoire vide, non-occupé. Des terrains à l'est étaient utilisés pour attirer des étrangers, des nouveaux dépendants. A voulait vraiment fonder son propre quartier. Après la mort de son frère aîné, le chef supérieur de Ngang, A était représentant de son fils-successeur mineur pendant neuf ans. A a changé le site de ses maisons plusieurs fois, peut-être à la suite de la mort des enfants; les autres sites étaient plutôt un peu plus à l'est du chop indiqué dans le champ de AII 2. La situation du système agricole était comparable avec les cas déjà mentionnés. Les champs clôturés des femmes se trouvaient surtout loin de l'entrée de la concession, au nord et nord-est du chop indiqué, tandis que les enclos du bétail étaient au sud de l'ancien site des maisons. Il est bien possible que la famille a utilisé le tsa au sud de la concession pour le pâturage; dans le temps moderne la famille n'a pas obtenu des droits dans cette région. Ce que nous pouvons retracer comme possessions de terre de la famille n'était pas tout. A côté

³ Les problèmes structurelles des femmes à Tsa, y compris la nécessité de trouver du travail payé pour un nombre des femmes, sont aussi discutés par Dieckmann et Joldersma, 1982: 30-4, 41-2, 154-5. Voir également Leesberg et Witte, 1981: 40, 51, 54, 56.

de la chefferie de Ngang, près du marché (à King Place, le quartier du chef supérieur) A contrôlait des terrains. Je connais cette ancienne concession seulement parce qu'une fille de A possède encore une petite parcelle dans cet endroit, tandis que quelques autres filles ont vendu leurs terrains là-bas. Aussi A IV vendait des terrains à King Place en 1960, pendant les troubles, après la mort de l'héritier principal A II. Je n'ai aucune idée de la superficie de cette ancienne concession.

Dans la concession à Tomégo, X avait obtenu du chef supérieur de Ngang le droit de s'y domicilier. Les maisons se trouvaient dans le terrain de l'héritier principal présent BI 4, un peu plus bas dans la vallée. Au sud-est des maisons se trouvaient les enclos de nuit des moutons et des chèvres ainsi que la porcherie. Les champs clôturés des femmes se trouvaient au nord-ouest des maisons, et en bas, au sud-ouest. Le pâturage du bétail était effectué au nord-est et au nord-ouest, avec des limites très vagues. Des membres de la famille disent qu'en dehors de la concession principale, après à peu près 1930 on a commencé à prétendre avoir des droits de contrôle sur les terrains où des femmes de la famille avaient commencées à cultiver de temps en temps.

La généalogie de la famille à Tomégo indique déjà des conflits familiaux: l'héritier A qui émigrerait. La lutte se passait entre BI et A, perdu par A (Ouden, 1987: 11, 12). Ce dernier se trouvait tellement menacé qu'il fuit à la chefferie de Latchi où la famille réside jusqu'à présent. Ils n'ont plus de terrains à Tomégo, mais dans un champ de BI 2, à côté de BI 4, on trouve des kolatiers qui leur appartiennent. BI avait également bien des conflits avec le chef supérieur de Ngang qui, on peut dire, au présent sont continués par BI 3 et 4. BI, ennemi du chef supérieur, mourait en prison en 1965, accusé d'avoir donné de l'aide au maquis; BI 1, un maquisard, était tué en 1964.

En ce qui concerne la différenciation des métiers, l'émigration, la mobilité verticale et la différenciation socio-économique on constate, bien sûr pour la période jusqu'au troubles, des différences entre les six familles mais, également, une certaine homogénéité. Le modèle normal peut être résumé comme suit. Partout les hommes ont joué un rôle important dans l'élevage de , surtout, le petit bétail et dans le clôturage des champs des femmes, le défrichement et la construction des cases en paille. En plus, dans les six concessions beaucoup d'hommes ont eu une certaine spécialité. On trouve des menuisiers (tabourets, mortiers, etc.), des forgerons, tisseurs de sacs et paniers, des guérisseurs/ sorciers, des chefs de quartier et d'autres notables, des commerçants: noix de kola, du sel, vêtements de dance (venant du Nord du Cameroun), paille (pour les toits), vin de palme. Rare sont les quelques métiers "modernes" comme: travailleur forcé pour le régime colonial dans le Sud-Ouest, cuisinier d'un blanc, colon au nord de Douala, ouvrier dans une plantation commerciale dans la région Moungo, évangéliste. En ce qui concerne la

migration, pour la période discutée cela restait surtout "traditionnel": quelques non-héritiers et même héritiers (voir Tomégo) qui décidaient volontairement ou étaient forcés de quitter la concession pour s'installer dans un autre quartier ou même dans une autre chefferie. L'émigration favorisée par les processus d'incorporation dans l'état et le marché national et international était encore très rare pour la catégorie du "niveau" AI etc. Cela ne veut pas dire qu'après ±1910, on ne se déplaçât pas de plus en plus librement dans des régions de plus en plus étendues.

Avant 1957 l'ancienne hiérarchie socio-économique et politique n'était pas encore trop attaquée par l'ordre moderne. L'héritier principal, le seul successeur du père décédé, était le plus riche et le plus puissant, représentant de la famille envers les autorités de la chefferie et, plus rare, de l'état, les autres membres de la famille restant "des jeunes", qui seraient des dépendants pour très longtemps ou même pour toujours. Comme nous avons déjà constaté, cette hiérarchie n'était jamais complètement stable et harmonieuse. On connaissait des frères aînés avec des difficultés pour accepter la succession et qui quittaient, ainsi que des héritiers principaux étant menacés par des frères ou d'autres membres de la famille avec des résultats variés (Ouden, 1987: 11, 12). La coutume par laquelle un homme nomme son héritier au chef et/ou à des membres de sa société coutumière qui relèvent ce secret pendant le deuil, donnait et donne beaucoup d'incertitudes et d'envie. De temps en temps on trouve qu'un garçon très jeune est nommé héritier, assez souvent donnant à la famille une période de grands problèmes (par exemple la nomination de B VI en B VI 2 à Latchuet, et celle de D III dans une section de la famille à Toula). La coutume de succession donne à certaines personnes la possibilité d'essayer de profiter de l'occasion. Dans les deux familles sans notabilité, à Latchuet et Tomégo, on constate que des sections ont émigré et que leurs nouveaux chefs ont obtenu une position socio-économique qui, presque dès le début, n'est pas plus basse que celle de l'héritier principal dans la concession originaires. Aussi la section A I de Menguéa va très bien, et à Toula l'émigration de A IV vers un autre quartier de Tsa s'est bien passée avec l'aide du chef supérieur de Tsa.

2.3 Les changements entre 1957 et 1977

Des changements fondamentaux dans le système de production agricole commençaient déjà avant 1957. De plus en plus les territoires en dehors des sites d'habitation étaient devenues moins dangereux et on constate que les femmes commencent à cultiver hors des champs clôturés, qui sont assez souvent engraisés avec le fumier des chèvres, moutons et cochons, à côté des maisons et cachés bas dans les vallées. La commercialisation de l'agriculture a commencé avec les cultures vivrières, destinées aux centres urbains. La période après 1957 est caractérisée par la disparition de beaucoup de travail fait par les hommes et par la libéralisation de la culture du café Arabica. C'est la fin de l'élevage avec des troupeaux dans les tswa, du clôturage des champs et la

fin des tâches défensives et offensives (±1964). Pour mieux comprendre les développements il faut constater qu'il y a au moins trois facteurs qui sont d'une immense importance pour les changements:

- La monétarisation rapide des biens et des services.
- Une érosion progressive des relations d'autorité dans les familles agnatiques, avec, à cet égard, bien des différences importantes entre les familles. Cette érosion produisait une situation dans laquelle le vieux pouvaient de moins en moins mobiliser et manipuler le travail des jeunes hommes.
- L'augmentation du standard de vie qu'on poursuit. Pour obtenir le standard de vie désiré les hommes pouvaient se concentrer seulement sur la culture du café, complété avec quelques revenus des arbres fruitiers, de ce qui restait de l'élevage des chèvres, moutons et cochons et, en plus, l'artisanat et le commerce.

Si on étudie les cartes des partages des terrains des six familles, il est évident que beaucoup d'hommes auraient des difficultés s'ils dépendaient seulement de la partie de la production agricole masculine. Ici il faut accentuer que les possibilités des hommes dans l'agriculture sont limitées. Ce sont les femmes qui ont le droit de culture sur chaque mètre carré des terrains d'un homme: dans l'agriculture les hommes n'ont pas de champs où ils peuvent faire ce qu'ils veulent. Bien sûr les hommes possèdent les produits des arbres et des arbustes (le café y compris), mais cette culture se déroule dans une culture associée dans laquelle les femmes font la plus grande part du travail, assez souvent aussi l'entretien du café.

Il est important de prendre note des remarques faites ça et là, et surtout dans la famille à Letsi, qu'avant les troubles les hommes demandaient une partie de la récolte des produits vivriers et qu'ils étaient obligés de fournir ou d'aider en donnant des graines à semer en cas de difficultés sérieuses. Ces informateurs indiquent qu'avec l'introduction du café dans "leurs" terrains, les femmes devenaient complètement indépendantes en ce qui concerne la culture des produits vivriers, en échange de leur nouvelle tâche dans la culture du café. Après ±1950 les femmes sont devenues plus indépendantes, plus autonomes.

Comme j'ai discuté dans une autre publication (Ouden, 1980: 60, 61), un groupe de jeunes hommes dans un quartier très peuplé de Tsa, essayait en ±1975 de commencer à cultiver des légumes. Ils négociaient avec les femmes qui cultivaient dans leurs concessions (mères, soeurs, etc.) pour obtenir le contrôle complet dans quelques champs. Il était nécessaire de compenser les femmes avec d'autres terrains à louer dans d'autres concessions. Quelques femmes donnèrent des champs très épuisés sans compensation en espérant que les hommes amélioreraient la fertilité du sol, de sorte que les terrains seraient en meilleure condition

quand ils seraient rendus aux femmes. Les difficultés des jeunes hommes étaient telles qu'après quelques efforts ils abandonnèrent leur projet. Deux commencèrent l'élevage des poules, une activité qui ne demande pas trop d'espace. De ces deux, un a très bien réussi, comme j'ai pu constater en 1987.

Dans nos six familles je connais seulement deux exemples dans lesquels les hommes ont forcé une limitation des droits de culture des femmes: à Toula la petite concession de D III, et la grande concession de C I à Biété. Ils approuvent seulement la culture par leurs propres femmes et les veuves de leurs pères. Si les filles veulent assister leurs mères, ou si les femmes font de l'agriculture dans un système de métayage avec d'autres femmes (Biété) les hommes sont d'accord, mais ils refusent d'accorder des droits de culture indépendants. Dans une partie de sa concession très large C I à Biété pratique un système qui est assez normal dans les régions avec une population relativement basse, mais qui est presque inconnu dans les chefferies de Tsa et Ngang: il exige que ses femmes cultivent pour lui des produits vivriers dans les deux portions indiquées par X et Y, qui sont commercialisées pour son propre compte.

Aussi dans la période 1957-1977 on trouve progressivement qu'un nombre des femmes de Tsa et Ngang travaillent dans la région du fleuve Noun. Ici un système de métayage avec le "propriétaire" ou avec des femmes de la famille du "propriétaire" est très normal. Souvent les femmes cultivent du maïs pour le "propriétaire", mais ont droit de cultiver des tubercules et d'autres produits dans les mêmes champs pour elles-mêmes.

L'émigration vers d'autres régions du Cameroun (rarement à l'étranger) n'était pas seulement une question de "poussée", par la situation dans les chefferies qui empêchait que les hommes gagnent l'argent qu'ils voulaient obtenir, c'était aussi l'attraction des villes, des grandes plantations commerciales et des régions de colonisation qui causaient l'émigration. Le cas de Letsi montre que beaucoup d'hommes quittaient la concession malgré une réserve de terre considérable. Ils préféraient l'émigration au lieu de devenir planteur à Tsa. Il faut ajouter qu'à Letsi, pour beaucoup de jeunes, c'était aussi l'envie qui empêchait un partage en faveur de quelques jeunes: sans aucun doute le total, comme partout, même à Biété, ne suffisait pas pour tout le monde. Dans l'émigration un facteur important est aussi que pour les hommes (à Tsa plus qu'à Ngang?) l'agriculture ne constituait et ne constitue pas une priorité primaire. Même s'ils restent à Tsa ou Ngang ils essaient de gagner de l'argent dans d'autres métiers, en laissant la plus grande partie du travail dans le café aux femmes de la famille.

En discutant cette aversion des hommes contre l'agriculture avec le chef supérieur de Tsa en 1987, je lui demandais pourquoi dans les zones de colonisation souvent ils travaillent fort et

bien dans l'agriculture. Immédiatement le chef me corrigeait en disant que, quoique les colons commencent leur travail "traditionnel" avec beaucoup d'allant (défrichage, commencer les cultures d'arbustes comme le café ou le cacao), si l'agriculture devient stable, ils trouvent qu'ils ont achevé leurs tâches. Alors ils laissent la continuation du travail dans les champs aux femmes et cherchent d'autres moyens pour gagner de l'argent dans le commerce ou le transport.

Si j'ai pris comme entrée d'analyse une sorte de lignage patrilinéaire, cela ne voulait et ne veut pas dire qu'il s'agit d'une groupe homogène où les membres résident tous dans le même territoire, avec des stratégies pour survivre bien claires et coordonnées. Sans doute, après 1957 ces lignages devenaient encore plus hétérogènes avec des "pères", des héritiers principaux, qui ne pouvaient plus et ne voulaient plus destiner et contrôler leurs gens ou garantir leurs bien-être. Ici il faut distinguer entre trois familles où on constate une continuation des héritiers principaux assez forts et trois familles qui de facto sont sans héritier principal.

A Toulou et Letsi on ne trouve pas de rupture dans l'autorité des chefs de famille: les deux héritiers très estimés sont décédés très vieux au commencement des années quatre vingts. A Biété le chef mourait en 1957, au début des troubles, et était succédé sans problèmes par un fils assez fort. Au contraire, dans les trois autres familles la période en discussion a donnée le désordre qui n'a jamais fini. A Latchuet l'influence de l'héritier B VI n'était jamais grande et pendant les troubles son pouvoir était sérieusement contesté par B IV qui s'associait plus avec le chef supérieur de Tsa (le seul pilier du gouvernement dans la région). Sur la carte du tswa, qui est assez éloigné de la concession à Latchuet, on peut constater que bien des terrains de B VI étaient pris par B IV et en grande partie vendus. Après la mort de B VI en 1967, son successeur B VI 2, qui en ce temps- là était encore un petit garçon, n'a jamais pu influencer les affaires de la famille.

A Menguéa l'héritier A II était tué en 1955 par les maquisards parce qu'il était ami du chef supérieur de Ngang et avait trop de contacts avec "les blancs" (le gouvernement colonial). Son successeur A II 2 n'exerce aucune influence sur les affaires de la famille. Son "pouvoir" était et est aussi rongé par une partie de la famille qui dit que l'héritier légitime de A (mort en 1944) n'était pas A II, mais A III.

A Tomégo la succession de B I était problématique (voir 2.2). Celui-ci mourait en prison en 1965, laissant comme héritier son fils B I 4, un petit garçon. Ce dernier n'a aucune influence. Dans cette famille la lutte est surtout entre B I 2 et B I 3 (frères, autres mères).

Laissant les grandes différences internes, je constate que les graines de progrès socio-économique étaient un peu mieux cultivées dans les familles avec la continuation d'un chef que dans les familles en désordre. Les cartes des concessions montrent qu'à Latchuet, Menguéa et Tomégo des portions de terre considérables sont vendues après ±1955 aux étrangers (pas membres de la famille). Dans ces trois familles on parle même de pertes de terre avant 1955. A Menguéa il est frappant que les femmes de la famille ont vendu des terrains, à Menguéa et dans l'ancienne concession à King Place, sans que les hommes puissent les arrêter. A Toula et Letsi les pertes de terrains par vente (je ne parle pas des pertes par l'intervention de l'état) sont négligeables. La famille à Letsi a connu des menaces d'étrangers et dans l'extrême nord et sud ils ont perdu un petit terrain. Ici, dans la famille éloignée de Y, de nouveau avec un grand désordre les ventes par quelques membres de cette famille étaient épidémiques. La situation à Toula, en dehors de la région tswa, restait assez stable après 1957: si quelques champs sont contrôlés par des femmes, ou même par des descendants des femmes, c'est et c'était avec l'approbation de la famille agnatique.

Bien sûr la famille à Biété connaissait une perte considérable de terre, mais les conséquences n'étaient pas graves. Après que le chef supérieur de Ngang eut essayé de prendre l'ancienne concession dans le quartier de Lekouet en 1960, C I vendait les 8 ha là bas à un étranger, en retenant l'argent pour lui-même (en 1960 CFA 140.000,-; la valeur serait en 1987 quelques millions FCFA).

Surtout à Toula, Letsi et Biété, où la succession restait normale, on trouve après 1957 certains développements qui étaient d'une grande importance pour l'éducation des enfants et leurs possibilités dans l'émigration. A Toula D I 3 était un pionnier important. Aidé par un membre de la famille maternelle il devenait instituteur et, enfin, directeur du collège. Lui-même a stimulé et aidé beaucoup d'autres garçons de la famille qui, eux-mêmes (par exemple D III 1) étaient de nouveau importants pour des autres. Il ne faut pas sous-estimer le rôle de ces "intermediaires" qui, en partie, produisent des cas de mobilité verticale incroyable et qui, pour la période en discussion, freinent la naissance des classes socio-économiques.

Quand-même on trouve aussi des jeunes qui eux-mêmes font des efforts formidables pour réussir. Dans l'histoire de E I 1 et 2 à Toula (en 1987 respectivement haut fonctionnaire de douane à Douala et étudiant- finaliste à l'université de Yaoundé), des fils d'un homme très pauvre, les hommes de la famille D ont probablement donné des renseignements, mais les deux garçons ont eux-mêmes réussi, avec une assistance minimale de leur mère, (Ouden, 1987: 17). La distance sociale entre les familles E et D est déjà considérable.

Table I Les hommes des six familles agnatiques de Tsa et Ngang, résidents et émigrants, en 1978 et 1987. Chiffres absolus

	Toula	Letsi	Latchuet	Biété	Menguea	Tomégo	Total
	1978(1987)	1978(1987)	1978(1987)	1978(1987)	1978(1987)	1978(1987)	1978(1987)
1. "Travailleurs" à Tsa/Ngang ¹⁾	22 (16)	4 (3)	4 (3)	6 (6)	1 (2)	2 (2)	39 (32)
2. Garçons à Tsa/Ngang ²⁾	62 (60)	9 (2)	1 (4)	22 (16)	14 (6)	4 (6)	112 (94)
3. "Travailleurs" en dehors de Tsa/Ngang ³⁾	37 (56)	12 (17)	6 (9)	8 (17)	7 (11)	1 (2)	71 (112)
4. Garçons-écoliers en dehors de Tsa/Ngang ⁴⁾	28 (69)	20 (36)	9 (17)	8 (18)	1 (9)	0 (0)	66 (149)
5. Total émigrants masculins ⁵⁾	73 (148)	37 (68)	19 (31)	19 (39)	8 (22)	1 (2)	157 (310)
6. Émigrants avec maison(s) dans la concession à Tsa et Ngang	3 (18)	2 (11)	0 (1)	0 (6)	2 (2)	1 (2)	8 (40)
7. Émigrants avec des terrains et maisons en propriété en dehors de Tsa/Ngang	10 (19)	3 (9)	4 (5)	0 (6)	3 (5)	0 (2)	20 (46)
8. Hommes à Tsa/Ngang avec des terrains ailleurs	3 (4)	1 (1)	0 (1)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (7)
9. Total de personnes masculines	157(224)	50 (73)	24 (38)	47 (61)	23 (30)	7 (10)	308 (436)

¹⁾ Y compris des vieux qui ne travaillent plus, ainsi que des troublés.

²⁾ Écoliers ou pas encore.

³⁾ Y compris des chômeurs et prisonniers.

⁴⁾ Écoliers au sens le plus large, y compris des étudiants à l'université. Pas seulement des fils des émigrants, aussi des garçons de Tsa/Ngang qui font leurs études ailleurs, assez souvent habitant chez un membre de la famille cognatique.

⁵⁾ Y compris les petits garçons, en tant que je les connais, qui ne vont pas encore à l'école.

A Letsi c'était D III, un évêquiste, qui était une sorte de tuteur pour son frère (autre mère) D V. Ce dernier, après l'indépendance, obtenait de faire une partie de sa formation en France et était nommé à une haute poste des chemins de fer du Cameroun. A son tour il a stimulé et aidé plusieurs jeunes de la famille Letsi. A Biété le successeur C I est instituteur lui-même et il n'est pas surprenant qu'il ait stimulé quelques fils à arriver à un niveau d'éducation élevé. Dans les familles de Latchuet, Menguéa et Tomégo les quelques uns qui entraient à l'enseignement secondaire en étaient réduits à leurs seuls moyens (Ouden, 1987: 16, 17).

A la fin de la période 1957-1977 on peut déjà constater que dans les concessions des six familles à Tsa et Ngang on ne trouve plus de changements considérables. Presque plus de ventes ou d'achats et la parcellisation des terrains entre les hommes reste assez stable. Si on trouve que les pères accordent des petits champs à quelques uns de leur fils ou d'autres membres de la famille, c'est seulement pour leur donner la possibilité de construire une maison, pas pour faire vraiment de l'agriculture. Cela ne veut pas dire que rien ne se passe dans ces petits champs: dans tous les terrains des émigrants ce sont les mères, soeurs, femmes et filles qui y cultivent et, peut-être, continuent la culture du café. A Tomégo on peut constater quelques changements dans le contrôle sur la terre à la fin de cette période: B I 3 chassa avec force quelques femmes de la famille de leurs champs et étendit sa "propriété" à l'est et au sud-est du territoire.

A la fin de la période la concession de C I à Biété constitue la seule situation dynamique dans l'agriculture. Ici on trouve que C I lui-même ordonnait le parcellement des champs des femmes et veuves de son père, et ceci en coopération étroite avec le chef de poste agricole (autrefois son frère C IV était moniteur agricole à Batcham organisait les cultures du café, du maïs et des haricots).

La Table II donne un résumé des métiers des hommes travaillant à Tsa et Ngang, la Table III réunit les données des émigrants "adultes". L'Annex 1 donne comme exemple une spécification des métiers pour les fils de E I (Toula) et de C (Biété).

Les processus d'incorporation dans l'état et le marché national et international devenaient très visible après 1957 et donnaient une différenciation socio-économique considérable dans toutes les familles. Cette différenciation ne concerne pas seulement la diversité des métiers, mais aussi les différences entre riche et pauvre, important et petit "nouveau style". Toutes les grandes familles - dans notre sélection celles de Toula, Letsi et Biété - connurent de plus en plus leurs haut fonctionnaires et leurs chômeurs (encore plus frappant en 1987). Ce n'était pas seulement des différences qui se formèrent entre des sections d'une famille agnatique, mais aussi la différenciation entre les fils d'un même père est souvent importante (voir Annexe 1). J'ai

l'impression que la situation et l'attitude des mères sont d'une importance éminente pour l'avenir socio-économique de ses enfants.

Bien que mes renseignements sur les mères des enfants soient insuffisants, j'ai des indications qu'une homogénéité dans la situation des fils existe plutôt chez les enfants "même mère", que chez les enfants "même père". Ici il faut remarquer que dans les situations polygynes l'attention des pères pour leurs fils a diminué après ± 1957 ; les pères n'avaient pas beaucoup à instruire maintenant qu'un grand nombre des tâches des hommes étaient supprimées. Les ménages matricentés étaient déjà importants et assez autonomes autrefois et ils sont devenues encore plus indépendants (Ouden, 1981: 245). Une faute importante que j'ai faite pendant mes recherches à Tsa et Ngang en 1977-1978 était de ne pas noter d'une façon systématique les femmes et leurs enfants; en 1987 c'était trop tard. J'ai seulement corrigé cette erreur pendant mes recherches au Bénin (Ouden, 1986: passim).

L'intégration progressive dans l'état du Cameroun ne se trouve pas seulement dans le grand nombre d'émigrants, mais ce qui est très important pour la migration future, dans le grand nombre de fils qui faisaient et font leurs études aux collèges et même aux écoles primaires en dehors des chefferies. Le concept "confédérations des ménages", comme interprété par Alderson-Smith (1984: passim), était et est bien utilisable pour nos six familles où les relations entre les membres à Tsa en Ngang et les émigrants restent le plus souvent intensives. J'indique ici cinq points.

1. Normalement les émigrants aident les pères, veuves, etc. pour leurs devoirs financiers (scolarité pour les petits enfants etc.)
2. Les émigrants acceptent souvent des jeunes qui veulent continuer leurs études. Ces jeunes normalement ont le devoir d'aider dans le ménage.
3. Il y a une relation intensive entre les émigrants et les femmes qui cultivent leurs terrains dans la chefferie (s'ils possèdent de la terre là-bas) et qui, éventuellement, habitent dans leurs maisons à Tsa/Ngang.

Table II Métiers principaux des hommes habitant dans les concessions des six familles agnatiques à Tsa et Ngang. Chiffres absolus.

	1978	1987
1. Des vieillards qui ne travaillent presque plus	5	5
2. Chômeurs (souvent troublés)	2	0
3. Ouvriers agricoles, petits employés	4	5
4. Petits commerçants et artisans	11	6
5. Cultivateurs	12	9
6. Chauffeurs	0	1
7. Employés inférieurs de l'état, et d'organisations sémi-étatiques	2	2
8. Employés moyens de l'état et d'organisations- semi-étatiques	1	2
9. Employés supérieurs de l'état	1	0
10. Commerçants et transporteurs moyens	1	2
Total	39	32

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Table III Métiers des émigrants des six familles agnatiques de Tsa et Ngang. Chiffres absolus.

	1978	1987
1. Chômeurs	5	14
2. Ouvriers agricoles, petits employés ¹⁾	11	10
3. Petits commerçants et artisans ²⁾	11	13
4. Colons-planteurs	18	29
5. Chauffeurs	3	2
6. Employés inférieurs de l'état, organisations sémiétatiques, compagnies privées ³⁾	10	11
7. Employés inférieurs de l'armée, police, douane ⁴⁾	2	4
8. Employés moyens de l'état, organisations sémiétatiques et privées ⁵⁾	7	18
9. Employés supérieurs de l'état, organisations sémiétatiques et privées ⁶⁾	3	8
10. Commerçants et transporteurs moyens	1	3
Total	71	112

1) Chez les émigrants les ouvriers agricoles travaillent souvent dans des plantations commerciales. A Tsa et Ngang ce sont des jeunes qui aident dans les plantations de leurs pères ou frères. Les petits employés sont, par exemple, commis dans une boutique ou aide-chauffeur.

2) Fabricants de lits de bambou, constructeurs, forgerons, etc. Petite commerce de bétail etc., n'ayant pas de boutique permanente.

3) Ouvriers à la commune, la coopérative du café, aide instituteur, etc.

4) Il paraît que policiers, douaniers etc. ont des revenus plus importants que leurs salaires indiquent.

5) Instituteurs permanents, cadre moyen de la coopérative, etc.

6) Directeurs de l'école, haut fonctionnaire des chemins de fer, adjoint au préfet, etc.

4. Les émigrants importants donnent de l'aide en cas de conflits "chez eux" avec, par exemple des fonctionnaires de l'état ou des voisins (voir par exemple, le rôle d'intermédiaire et de conseil de D I 3 et de D III 1 à Toula, et celui de D V à Letsi). En même temps on trouvait et trouve des cas où la famille à Tsa et Ngang fait des efforts pour calmer et régler des conflits chez les émigrants. Pendant mes recherches en 1977-1978 le chef de la famille à Toula envoyait de temps en temps E I 3 dans la région Moungo pour "restaurer la paix" dans quelques familles là-bas.
5. Les membres de la famille dans les concessions à Tsa et Ngang restaient et restent très importants pour l'enterrement des morts des les familles émigrées, pour régler les funérailles, pour arranger le traitement indigène des malades des les familles émigrés, et même pour arranger ou faire des propositions pour des mariages (la chefferie, les émigrants y compris, reste grandement endogame). En général on peut dire que les maladies, deuils, funérailles et mariages renforcent les liens entre les émigrants et ceux qui habitent dans la chefferie.

2.4 La période 1977-1987

La période d'à peu près dix ans entre le commencement de mes recherches et la continuation pour cinq semaines en 1987 était en général prospère pour les chefferies de Tsa et Ngang et pour tout le Cameroun. Ce dynamisme, déjà indiqué dans l'Introduction (1.2), est due à une incorporation progressive des sociétés régionales dans le marché économique et l'état. D'une façon simple, sans se demander le pourquoi plus fondamental, on peut dire que le commerce, le transport et les possibilités de vente des produits agricoles étaient favorisés pour Tsa et Ngang par la nouvelle route excellente entre Bafoussam et la capitale Yaoundé (la grande route Bamenda-Bafoussam-Douala existait déjà avant 1977), la croissance spectaculaire des villes de Bafoussam et Bamenda, et l'accroissement d'emploi à Mbouda et même à Tsa et Ngang (par exemple la plantation de thé de CDC à Ngang avec, souvent, 700 employés). Pourtant, au niveau des familles spécifiques, comme celles choisies par moi, on trouve souvent une stagnation, avec même une rétrogradation de la population masculine (et, probablement aussi, des femmes) (voir le Table I).

L'accroissement de la population de Tsa et Ngang se concentre plutôt à Batcham ville, les régions des marchés de Tsa et Ngang et le long des grandes pistes. Là on trouve, à côté des gens originaires des vieilles concessions, aussi beaucoup d'étrangers, Bamiléké et autres, attirés par des métiers divers du temps moderne.

Comme cela a été confirmé par quelques fonctionnaires (chef supérieur de Tsa, chef de poste agricole), dans beaucoup des concessions il existe une stagnation dans le sens économique: la production du café et des produits vivriers n'augmente plus et la production est réalisée par moins

d'hommes et par de plus en plus la catégorie "des mères et soeurs" et moins par des filles et des femmes des hommes émigrés. Comme moi, ces fonctionnaires croient pouvoir constater que le nombre des jeunes filles dans l'agriculture diminue par la migration et l'enseignement. Il devient de plus en plus normal qu'un jeune émigrant se laisse accompagner presque immédiatement par sa nouvelle femme de la chefferie. Comme je l'ai argumenté plus loin, le dynamisme de beaucoup de familles agnatiques est plutôt dirigé d'ailleurs, en dehors des vieilles concessions.

Quoiqu'après la stabilisation de la culture du café on ne trouve plus de changements révolutionnaires dans le système agricole et la division des terrains, pendant la période 1977-1987 on peut également constater des changements par des événements spécifiques. A Toula on trouve un développement spécial qui m'a surpris: après la mort du chef E I, son successeur E I 8, qui était restaurateur à Ngaoudéré, est revenu à Tsa et a beaucoup activé l'agriculture de ses terrains. Si avant 1983 pas plus d'un quart des terrains de E I était planté de café, maintenant le café et les bananiers (plantains) sont maximalisés dans tous les champs de E I 8. Comme un nombre d'autres hommes à Tsa et Ngang, E I 8 a acheté un terrain dans la vallée du Noun (2 ha) pour ainsi compenser ses femmes et membres de sa famille E: ils ont également obtenu des champs dans l'autre terrain où il ne se trouve pas trop de café. Ici, dans quelques terrains de Toula, c'est le seul exemple d'une intensification de l'agriculture des hommes dans les vieilles concessions des six familles. On trouve un exemple de régression dans la famille de Letsi. L'héritier principal D I n'indiquait pas de successeur et la famille choisissait comme héritier le fils avec un métier peu stable, qui pouvait retourner à Tsa le plus facilement: D I 6. Celui-ci ne voulait pas retourner de Douala, parce que la famille refusait de lui donner une aide financière spéciale (comme un informateur de la famille me disait: "Chacun pour soi et Dieu pour nous tous"). Il récoltait quand-même le café dans la concession principale à côté de la palmeraie de raphia (dans le nord). La famille était très fâchée parce que ces arbustes de café étaient entretenus par les veuves de son père. Ces vieilles veuves, en difficultés dans le désordre de la famille après la mort de D I, obtenaient le droit de récolter le café dans les champs de D I (pendant la réunion annuelle de toute la famille à Tsa en août 1985). Ça ne veut pas dire que ces droits sont bien protégés: dans le désordre, sans chef qui pourrait renforcer les règles, c'est surtout D I 7 qui récolte de temps en temps pour avoir un peu d'argent. Aussi dans les champs du vieux D III la situation devient pire: excepté un petit, tous ses fils sont émigrés.

Pour les autres familles on peut constater qu'à Biété le chef de la famille, C I, se sent de plus en plus vieux. Il se concentre plus sur l'élevage des poules et lapins près de ses maisons, aidé par une de ses femmes (qui obtient une partie des bêtes comme paiement) et un jeune fils. Il a donné une portion de terre en location (quatre récoltes et renouvelable) après que le café ait été détruit intentionnellement dans ce champ (encore interdit par le gouvernement). Les femmes de C I ne

travaillent plus sur ce terrain. Aussi dans ses propres champs C I diminue la quantité des arbustes de café en faveur des produits vivriers. Je ne peux pas le prouver, mais je pense que C I, d'une manière quelconque, a réussi à obtenir une partie des revenus des produits vivriers des femmes, aussi en dehors des portions X et Y.

Dans la famille à Tomégo, enfin, on constate que B I 3, en 1978 un planteur de café fanatique, contrôle beaucoup moins ce qui se passe dans ses champs maintenant qu'il est policier à Yaoundé.

On trouve des changements dans les vieilles concessions à Toula et Letsi en ce qui concerne les petits dons de terrain pour la construction des maisons (indiqués sur les cartes: Toula à l'extrême ouest, mais aussi dans d'autres endroits, par exemple la famille D III; Letsi: au sud-est de la grande piste). Aussi, dans d'autres concessions la stratégie continue de donner aux jeunes seulement des petits lots pour construire (à Biété, par exemple, C I 1 dans l'extrême ouest). Les changements qui se déroulent en dehors des vieilles concessions sont difficiles à déterminer, aussi bien la possession des terrains que la différenciation socio-économique. Un développement très remarquable est l'acquisition des terrains dans les vallées du Noun et Mifi (Galim, Bati, Bamendjing, les environs de Foubot, etc). Dans nos six familles j'ai retracé dix hommes qui avaient acheté des terrains dans cette région:

Toula: D I 3 et 4, D III 1, E I 8, E II 2 et E IV 2; Letsi: C I et D V; Latchuet: B IV 3; Menguéa: A V.

Le total peut être de 25 ha, avec un minimum de 1 ha et un maximum de 4 ha. Ces terrains ont pour but surtout la production de produits vivriers, mais on y trouve aussi du café. L'achat de ces terrains en dehors de la chefferie ne peut pas seulement s'expliquer par le prix et la qualité de la terre à Tsa et Ngang, ni par la nécessité de chercher de la terre dans des autres régions. C'est aussi un moyen d'éviter le contrôle de la famille et ses conséquences financières. Les idées d'un émigrant de la famille de Letsi, D III 4, un fonctionnaire d'un bureau provincial à Bafoussam, sont caractéristiques.

"J'habite maintenant à Bafoussam et c'est encore trop proche de Tsa. Tout le temps des membres de la famille viennent me chercher ici pour demander de l'argent. En plus j'ai le devoir de rembourser les frais de voyage. Je veux acheter un terrain dans la région du Noun, vers Foubot. Là je pourrait déterminer moi-même le système agricole et quelles femmes vont y cultiver. Je refuse d'avoir un grand champ dans la concession à Tsa: il y a trop de litiges dans la famille, je ne peux pas être mon propre maître là-bas. En plus, la

qualité de la terre n'est pas bonne dans les terrains non-partagés. J'ai déjà un petit lot dans la vieille concession pour construire une maison et ça me suffit."

On estime qu'un quart des femmes à Tsa et Ngang cultive aussi dans la région du Noun et Mifi. Pas nécessairement dans les champs de leurs maris, mais, également, dans ceux de leurs frères, des maris de leurs filles, etc.

On trouve bien des familles où les terrains dans la zone du Noun sont surtout travaillés par des ouvriers, souvent des "Anglophones" du côté de Bamenda.

B IV 3 de la famille à Latchuet me disait que ses deux jeunes femmes (avec petits enfants) ne travaillent pas beaucoup sur son terrain d'un hectare vers Foumbot qu'il a acheté en 1983 pour CFA 420.000,-. Aux ouvriers "Anglophones" il paie CFA 50.000,- par an pour le débroussage et le sarclage, et CFA 30.000,- pour la récolte du café, plantains, macabo et maïs. Le transport des produits à Tsa lui coûte CFA 20.000,- faisant un total de CFA 100.000,- par an. "C'est meilleur marché qu'acheter ces produits au marché. Ici, à Tsa, je n'ai pas suffisamment de terre pour nos besoins".

Comme j'ai déjà dit il y a un nombre de possibilités pour les hommes de profiter de leurs terrains dans les régions moins peuplées comme celles du Noun-Mifi. Il est bien possible que l'homme demande la récolte du café et une bonne partie du maïs, laissant les arachides, taros, haricots, etc. aux femmes. On trouve, par exemple, qu'un tiers de la récolte des produits vivriers doit revenir au propriétaire. Ces activités des femmes dans des régions éloignées augmentent leur indépendance. Un informateur de la famille à Tomégo le formulait comme suit.

"Nous, les hommes, ne savons pas ce qui se passe là-bas. Les femmes partent à chaque moment, disant qu'elles cherchent de la nourriture. Elles ont leurs champs là-bas où elles restent plusieurs jours ou même quelques semaines. Le secret des femmes n'a certainement pas diminué. Nous ne savons pas combien elles vendent de leurs produits. Il y a bien des femmes qui sont plus riches que leurs maris".

Si on parle ici du "secret des femmes", on réfère surtout à la situation dans les chefferies où les femmes ne cultivent pas seulement dans les champs de leurs maris, mais aussi dans les concessions de leurs pères et frères et, souvent encore dans d'autres concessions, sans que leurs maris connaissent les profits. Il ne faut certainement pas surestimer la situation économique des femmes. Leur travail est dur et prend beaucoup de temps, vu les grandes distances entre les champs qu'elles cultivent. Aussi l'expression de plusieurs informateurs est significative: "Si les hommes n'ont pas d'argent, ce sont les femmes qui se débrouillent". Et beaucoup d'hommes

n'ont pas d'argent pour l'éducation des enfants, frais de l'hôpital, de l'huile, viande, pétrole, etc., en partie par suite du standard de vie qu'ils désirent et réalisent pour eux-mêmes.

Il est difficile de le prouver, mais en 1987 j'avais l'impression que plus d'ouvrières étaient employées à Tsa et Ngang, par des hommes et des femmes. Si dans la région Noun-Mifi on rencontre des ouvriers, des émigrants temporaires, dans les chefferies le nombre des femmes qui cherchent du travail payé est plus important. Ce sont seulement quelques grands comme, à Tsa, le chef supérieur (avec une plantation de guava considérable et ses propres camions pour le transport) ou des commerçants qui ont acheté des grandes terrains, ou un éleveur de poules important, qui emploient dans les chefferies un nombre d'ouvriers. En 1987 je trouvais à Tsa des endroits où le matin une dizaine ou plus de femmes étaient rassemblées qui attendaient un employeur ou employeuse qui aurait besoin d'ouvrières. Dans l'est de Tsa, une région moins peuplée, dans ces groupes on trouvait aussi des femmes de Bamendjo, Bansoa et Balessing. La seule chose qu'on peut dire est que ce sont des femmes qui ont besoin d'argent et qui ne sont pas ou ne peuvent pas être aidées par leurs maris. Elles ont des dépenses urgentes à faire et sont alors obligées de chercher du travail payé, même si dans d'autres périodes elles ont des revenus suffisants. Quand-même je pense que ce sont les femmes qui rencontrent des difficultés structurelles. La demande de main-d'oeuvre se trouve chez ceux qui ne peuvent pas/plus mobiliser suffisamment de travailleurs dans leurs familles. Il y a une relation directe entre la demande de main-d'oeuvre, et l'érosion des relations d'autorité et l'émigration des hommes et probablement aussi, de plus en plus, des femmes. En analysant les vieilles concessions des six familles agnatiques, ce sont surtout celles à Letsi et Biété où les gens âgés, hommes et femmes, et les hommes et femmes émigrés emploient de temps en temps des ouvrières pour la culture du café et des produits vivriers (et pour fabriquer des briques pour la construction des maisons). Bien que les gens aiment à dire que les filles qui fréquentent les écoles aident leurs mères dans l'agriculture, en général on peut dire qu'en 1987 l'agriculture à Tsa et Ngang est surtout pratiquée par la catégorie de mères, épouses et sœurs et beaucoup moins par les filles. Ceci a pour conséquence que la production n'est pas optimale dans plusieurs champs. Probablement vaut-il mieux dire qu'un nombre de champs d'une femme âgée ou émigrée développe une jachère involontaire et que quelques champs d'une femme, situés loin du domicile, ne sont pas cultivés ou sont négligés. Les femmes âgées peuvent être bien en difficulté comme indiqué dans l'exemple qui suit:

En septembre 1987 je constatais une dispute à Latchuet entre B VI 4, un apprenti menuisier à Yaoundé, et sa mère. La vieille mère quittait l'hôpital mais ne pouvait pas commencer le travail en agriculture. Elle demandât à B VI 4 de défricher quelques champs de sorte que les haricots puissent être semés. Celui-ci voulait retourner à Yaoundé et c'était seulement par beaucoup de pression qu'il remettait son départ. Maintenant que ses deux fils n'habitent plus à Tsa (le défrichage au fond est un travail d'hommes), deux des trois filles sont aussi

parties et toutes les amies deviennent également vieilles, cette veuve a des grandes difficultés à continuer l'agriculture et elle laisse plusieurs champs presque en jachère.

La Table IV donne quelque information concernant 110 femmes appartenant aux six familles à Tsa et Ngang. Cette sélection de femmes donne une impression de la migration, de l'occupation et de l'éducation. On obtient l'impression que la migration des femmes reste en arrière sur les chiffres qu'on trouve pour les hommes. Ici il faut avertir d'une erreur: comme entrée j'ai choisi les soeurs et filles de quelques hommes qui habitaient ou habitent à Tsa et Ngang. Si on compte aussi les soeurs et filles des hommes émigrés, comme je l'ai fait chez les hommes, l'émigration des femmes devient plus grande. Il est plus correct de constater qu'un grand nombre des filles des hommes qui habitaient (quelques pères sont morts) ou habitent à Tsa et Ngang ne restent pas à la chefferie où elles sont nées.

Dans les tables II et III, ainsi que dans l'Annexe 1, on trouve les données des métiers principaux des hommes en 1978 et 1987. Si on se demande si la situation socio-économique des membres des six grandes familles s'améliorait, on trouve que les catégories utilisées sont trop larges. Pour ceux qui habitaient/habitent à Tsa ou Ngang on constate entre 1978 et 1987 une forte diminution des nombres des petits commerçants/artisans et cultivateurs, c'est à dire les occupations traditionnelles. Chez les émigrants, à part l'augmentation du nombre des chômeurs, on voit que les colons avancent, pas seulement dans la région de Moungo, mais aussi dans les projets de colonisation vers Bangangté. L'augmentation considérable du nombre d'employés de l'état, des coopératives et d'autres entreprises sémi-étatiques et des compagnies privées est le résultat positif des efforts dans le domaine d'éducation d'un nombre des sections des familles discutées. Sans qu'il soit possible de le rendre visible dans une statistique qui précise les particularités, j'ai essayé d'estimer les changements dans la situation des hommes entre 1978 et 1987 sur base des développements individuels. Dans la Table V je donne les résultats, sous réserve, en pourcentages pour "mieux", "pareil" et "plus mauvais".

Table IV Renseignements sur 110 femmes (7 sont décédées) appartenant aux six familles agnatiques à Tsa et Ngang^{x xx}.
Renseignements de 1987. Chiffres absolus.

A Tsa ou	Emigrées	Travaillent dans	Pas de, ou autre métier	A l'école ou pas encore	Total
Ngang	Mariées ou indépendantes	Parties pour l'agriculture continuer			
		éducation			
60	40	10	59	18	33
					110

x Les renseignements concernent les filles de : D III, E I (Toula); B I, D I, D III, F I (Letsi); B IV, B VI (Latchuet); C I (Biété); A, A III (Menguéa); B I (Tomégo).

xx Des 110 femmes, âgées d'à peu près 50 jusqu'à 1 an, 70 ont obtenu plus ou moins d'éducation formelle. 56 ont eu quelques années d'éducation primaire ou possèdent le certificat d'école primaire. 13 ont quelques années de collège et une préparait son doctorat en chimie à l'université de Yaoundé. Les femmes qui n'ont pas fréquenté une école du tout sont presque toujours les plus vieilles qui avaient l'âge scolaire avant ou pendant les troubles ($\pm$ 1960).

Table V. Comparaison de la situation socio-économique des hommes, entre 1978 et 1987, appartenant aux six familles agnatiques choisies à Tsa et Ngang, au prorata. Le total est 145 hommes adultes en 1987^x.

Familles	+%	0%	-%	Total absolu	(%)
Toula	29	70	1	73	(100)
Letsi	50	45	5	20	(100)
Latchuet	50	50	0	12	(100)
Biété	56	35	9	23	(100)
Menguéa	23	69	8	13	(100)
Tomégo	75	25	0	4	(100)
Total %	39	58	3	145	(100)

+ la situation s'est amélioré

0 la situation reste stable

- la situation s'est détérioré

x Il doit être clair que je ne dispose pas de renseignements sur tout le monde; cela diminue le nombre absolu des hommes comptés. En plus, un nombre d'hommes était encore écolier en 1977/78: dans ces cas le plus souvent je n'ai pas donné un jugement d'amélioration-détérioration.

A mon avis, même si à peu près 58% des hommes avait un statut socio- économique plus ou moins stable en comparant leur situation de 1987 avec celle de 1977-1978, si 39% des hommes ont une situation améliorée et seulement 3% se trouve dans une situation détériorée, je crois pouvoir dire que la situation globale s'est améliorée.

Malgré les différences dans les situations domestiques entre 1978 et 1987 (il est clair que je pense ici aux théories de Chayanov), l'amélioration de la situation est souvent assez claire. Cela ne veut pas dire qu'en 1987 on serait satisfait de la nouvelle époque: sans aucun doute le standard de vie désiré augmente plus vite que l'amélioration du niveau de vie réalisé. Le développement donne "la pauvreté", de la pauvreté subjective, des sentiments de privation relative.

De nouveau, comme en 1978, j'ai des doutes en ce qui concerne la situation des femmes. Maintenant qu'elles cultivent de plus en plus dans la région du Noun, la situation est meilleure que je pensais. L'augmentation du niveau éducatif et l'émigration vers les villes donnent une décroissance des femmes qui travaillent dans l'agriculture (voir Table IV). L'incorporation dans les systèmes de l'état et du marché n'a pas encore produit une diversification des métiers comme chez les hommes. Hors des cultivatrices - qui, comme autrefois, font souvent quelques chose dans la transformation des produits agricoles (faire des gâteaux par exemple) et dans le petit commerce - on trouve quelques institutrices, couturières et quelques femmes qui ont une petite

boutique. Le temps moderne fait que, surtout dans les villes, quelques femmes aident leurs maris (par exemple dans l'exploitation d'un petit restaurant) ou font seulement du travail domestique à la maison.

3. RETROSPECTION

Je veux toucher seulement quelques points concernant les changements énormes depuis 1900 et je me concentre sur les développements récents. Les Bamiléké, comme partout dans l'Afrique subsaharienne, ont évolué d'une situation tribale spécifique. Les systèmes et la culture originaires ont influencé, ensemble avec des facteurs extérieurs, la nouvelle situation qui en résulte. La scène tribale avec ses chefferies, quartiers, familles agnatiques, avec les devoirs à remplir, sa différenciation de métiers, sa division du travail entre hommes et femmes, était interrompue profondément après 1950 et surtout pendant et après les troubles de 1957 à 1962. Si j'ai pris comme entrée pour mes études une sorte de lignage effectif, me donnant la possibilité d'analyser des dizaines de gens dans et en dehors des vieilles chefferies, j'ai choisi un groupe qui n'est plus tellement important pour la vie politique, économique et sociale des individus. Il serait bien possible d'argumenter que dans le temps moderne, et même avant, c'était intéressant et mieux d'étudier des familles cognatiques. Ces dernières sont d'une importance très sérieuse dans tout le système de migration et de mobilité socio-économique. En même temps, si on est arrivé à une position économique un peu élevée, on craint la famille et on fait des efforts pour minimiser les contacts qui pourraient écrêter le surplus. Si nous constatons une situation assez stagnante dans les vieilles concessions des six familles agnatiques à Tsa et Ngang et un dynamisme économique en dehors des chefferies, ce n'est pas seulement parce que dans la région les hommes ne peuvent plus faire grand chose. On part aussi pour s'enfuir de la famille, pour obtenir plus de possibilités de s'enrichir sans être gêné par la famille. C'est bien si la famille peut aider un peu, mais on ne veut pas que la famille intervienne dans les activités économiques.

Je demandais à un éleveur de poules à Tsa en 1987 si sa famille était et est importante pour la fourniture du capital nécessaire à son entreprise. Il me regardait étonné: "Naturellement pas. On ne peut pas avoir des relations d'affaires avec les membres de la famille. Ça donne toujours des misères et des conflits. Avec les prêts il faut des accords clairs et objectifs, le remboursement et l'intérêt étant bien définis". Quand-même, cet homme emploie quelques jeunes de sa famille cognatique dans l'ancien style, comme tuteur: ils habitent chez lui, il s'occupe de leur scolarité et il donne seulement un peu de monnaie de poche. La main-d'œuvre non - ou presque pas salarié dans le système tuteur - dépendant est plus sûr et bon-marché.

Une stagnation de la vie économique au niveau des vieilles concessions est difficile à éviter, étant donné que dans le système agricole présent et avec la pression démographique la plupart des hommes n'ont pas suffisamment de terrains pour cultiver du café et des plantains. Mais, ce n'est pas seulement cela: la plupart des hommes mettent l'agriculture en priorité très basse et ils sont heureux de laisser le travail réel aux femmes. Dans la culture Bamiléké "être un mendiant" est un stigmate très redouté. L'émigration et les efforts pour faire une carrière ailleurs cause aussi un dynamisme en dehors des métiers traditionnels, laissant les vieilles concessions dans une situation où quelques vieillards et, à côté des épouses des hommes résidants, de plus en plus la catégorie des mères et soeurs essaient de tenir bon. Pour le dire différemment: dans les vieilles concessions on ne trouve pas beaucoup d'entrepreneurs⁴), d'innovateurs parce que là il n'y a pas beaucoup de possibilités pour une politique d'expansion économique. Les entrepreneurs potentiels quittent et réalisent leur créativité ailleurs. Nous avons vu que nous ne pouvons pas généraliser pour tout Tsa et Ngang: il y a des grands commerçants et transporteurs qui habitent dans les chefferies. Mais, malgré tout sur le total ils ne représentent pas l'atmosphère normale. Naturellement on trouve des exceptions dans nos six familles: des hommes qui organisent bien leurs concessions et font des efforts pour maximaliser les profits de l'agriculture et d'autres entreprises. On trouve même des développements auxquels je ne m'attendais pas.

En 1978 je craignais que l'héritier principal à Toula, E I, ne puisse pas trouver de successeur dynamique qui serait prêt à retourner à Tsa. J'étais bien étonné de constater que le fils le plus entreprenant, E I 8, avait vraiment pris la position de son père et retournait de Ngaoundere. Naturellement il me disait qu'il revenait pour prendre ses devoirs obligatoires. Je reste méfiant. C'est seulement après les funérailles de son père qu'on peut mieux comprendre ses intentions. Vers ce temps, en 1988, il a aussi fini son grand travail de la réorganisation de l'agriculture dans ses champs et peut se sentir plus libre de faire autre chose, oui ou non avec Tsa comme base d'activité.

Aussi les développements autour de B IV 2 et 3 de la famille à Latchuet et habitants à Tsa sont prometteuses: surtout B IV 3, on peut le considérer comme "entrepreneur". Hélas, j'avais raison être pessimiste pour la famille à Letsi. En 1981 j'écrivais (Ouden, 1981: 223) que je craignais pour l'unité de la concession et de la famille lignagère après la mort de D I. En 1987 la famille à Tsa était sans chef "local" et en désordre. Le centre de pouvoir de la famille était complètement transféré à Douala où les onze hommes de la famille qui y demeurent se réunissent régulièrement sous la direction de D V, en laissant l'héritier principal choisi par la famille, D I 6, tout à fait de côté.

⁴Je réfère ici à N. Long (1970: 142) qui définit "entrepreneur" comme suit: "...someone who innovates in the use of resources (material and human) with a view to pursuing a policy of economic expansion".

Maintenant, en 1987-1988, je crains pour l'avenir de la grande concession à Biété. Je ne vois pas qui pourrait devenir l'héritier de C I, maintenant que dix des quinze fils (trois sont encore très petits) ne sont plus à Ngang et travaillent fort à leur avenir hors de la chefferie, probablement comme hauts fonctionnaires, et que seulement deux fils assez faibles restent encore chez leur père. C I veut laisser seulement la concession principal à son successeur: commençant à la piste, les champs qui sont en bas, au nord-est, où se trouvent les maisons du chef et (en bas) le chop. C I veut donner tous les autres terrains aux fils non-héritier. Je crains qu'après la mort de C I, la force de cette concession importante sera cassée elle aussi.

Les présentations noir-blanc ne marchent jamais dans nos disciplines sociales; mais sans aucune doute il existe aussi un terrain gris. En 1978 je comprenais que travailler de temps en temps et pour quelques jours dans la région du Noun était important pour un nombre des femmes, surtout celles de Tsa. Je n'avais pas prévu qu'un nombre d'hommes des six familles, et des maris des femmes de ces familles, achèteraient des terrains considérables dans cette région. En 1987 seulement quatre hommes de ces familles, résidants à Tsa ou Ngang, profiteraient aussi eux-mêmes de ces achats (les autres six acheteurs de nos familles sont des émigrants), mais le nombre des femmes résidant dans les vieilles concessions, sans mentionner les femmes de ces familles qui habitaient ailleurs et qui en profitaient d'une manière quelconque, seront au nombre des dizaines. Voilà un développement et un dynamisme orientés en dehors des chefferies et qui influencent d'une façon importante la vie de quelques hommes et de beaucoup plus de femmes dans les vieilles concessions.

Dans l'expansion de l'agriculture de la région du Noun-Mifi ce sont surtout des chefs supérieurs, fonctionnaires, commerçants et transporteurs qui sont importants, en dehors des quelques projets de "jeunes planteurs" et d'autres flots de petits colons. Si on analyse les dix hommes de nos six familles qui ont des terrains là-bas, chez les résidants à Tsa et Ngang ce sont: un ex-restaurateur à Ngaoundere, main tenant planteur et chef de quartier à Tsa; un commerçant/planteur; un commerçant avec une boutique considérable au marché de Tsa; et un fonctionnaire à la coopérative du café. Les six émigrants avec des terrains dans cette région sont tous des fonctionnaires: un directeur de collège; deux directeurs d'école primaire; un instituteur permanent; un haut fonctionnaire des chemins de fer; et un gendarme. Le total de 25 ha que les dix hommes des six familles possèdent ne semble pas beaucoup - c'est moins que les 30 ha que les chefs supérieurs de Tsa et Ngang y possèdent chacun, et c'est à peu près la même chose que les achats d'un commerçant à Tsa en dix ans (voir 1.2) - mais je n'ai aucune raison de croire que les six familles en question sont exceptionnelles et alors le total de l'accumulation de la terre en dehors des vieilles chefferies

devient très considérable. Bien que j'ai mentionné un commerçant/transporteur à Tsa qui a acheté récemment 7 ha à Tsa (voir 1.2), on peut estimer qu'une telle accumulation sera rare et pourra se passer seulement dans les quelques endroits moins peuplés qui restent dans les vieilles chefferies.

Si Geschiere (1988: passim) analyse les variations régionales dans le développement des modes d'accumulation en agriculture au Cameroun, en ce qui concerne les Bamiléké il faut bien comprendre que leur force se base en partie sur la diversification des activités économiques des individus, laquelle diversification continue également si les auteurs sont des fonctionnaires. Cette diversification est stimulée par la division du travail entre hommes et femmes dans les activités productives. Sur la base de mes études chez le six familles agnatiques et d'autres informations, je conclus qu'une accumulation en agriculture a lieu seulement si on a accumulé de l'argent par d'autres activités. Le niveau de "richesse" étant suffisamment élevé on commence à investir dans la terre (et, par exemple, dans l'achat des lots en ville et la construction des maisons et d'autres bâtiments pour les louer). Une autre possibilité d'accumulation en agriculture est à peine imaginable, parce que les revenus des planteurs "normaux" (sans d'autres sources importantes de revenus) des vieilles chefferies ne sont pas suffisants pour une accumulation de terre. Si le niveau des moyens est considérable, il devient intéressant d'investir en agriculture. Supposons qu'après l'achat des terrains presque vierges (normalement "illégal") on dispose de capital pour commencer l'agriculture dans les terrains fertiles des vallées vides (défrichement, des sarclages intensifs, questions de transport, etc.), la production des produits vivriers et même du café est profitable, aussi s'il est nécessaire d'employer de la main-d'oeuvre salariée. En plus, de cette manière on crée des possibilités de faire l'agriculture pour les femmes de la famille cognatique et alliée (ce qui donne une haute estimation du côté des femmes), on est assuré de nourriture relativement bon marché et la terre donne une sorte de sûreté (pas à négliger par les fonctionnaires) et une ressource estimée très recherchée qu'on peut vendre à un bon prix (surtout si la mise en culture a déjà commencé).

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ANNEXE 1. Deux exemples des changements de la situation socio-économique des fils.

Situation socio-économique des premiers 22 fils des 24 fils de E I, Toula (8 femmes) en 1978 et (1987).

EI	1	Planteur et chasseur de perdrix, Toula; pauvre	(Idem)
	2	Chauffeur, Moungo. pauvre	(Planteur, Moungo; moyen)
	3	Planteur, Toula. pauvre	(Idem)
	4	Planteur, Moungo; moyen	(Idem)
	5	Planteur, Toula et Mbo; pauvre	(Idem)
	6	Planteur, Moungo; moyen	(Idem)
	7	Charpentier, Moungo; pauvre	(Planteur, Moungo, moyen)
	8	Restaurateur, Ngaoundere; moyen	(Planteur, chef de famille et quartier; moyen)
	9	Ouvrier industrie du contre-plaqué, Douala; moyen	(Idem)
	10	Elève collège, Bafoussam	(Chef de service sociale, Moungo; moyen)
	11	Chômeur, Garoua; pauvre	(Chômeur, pauvre)
	12	Chômeur, Douala; pauvre	(Chômeur, bandit, Douala; pauvre)
	13	Elève collège, Buea	(Aide boulanger, Douala; pauvre)
	14	Elève collège, Edea	(Electricien industriel, Douala; moyen)
	15	Ecole primaire, Ngaoundere	(Elève collège, Batcham)
	16	Elève école primaire, Moungo	(Ouvrier travaux publiques; Ngaoundere; pauvre)
	17	Ecole primaire, Tsa	(Elève collège, Batcham)
	18	Ecole primaire, Tsa	(Elève collège, Batcham)
	19	Ecole primaire, Tsa	(Sans métier, Ngaoundere; pauvre)
	20	Ecole primaire, Tsa	(Sans métier, Moungo; pauvre)
	21	Ecole primaire, Tsa	(Aide restaurateur, Bertoua; pauvre)
	22	Ecole primaire, Tsa	(Elève collège, Douala)

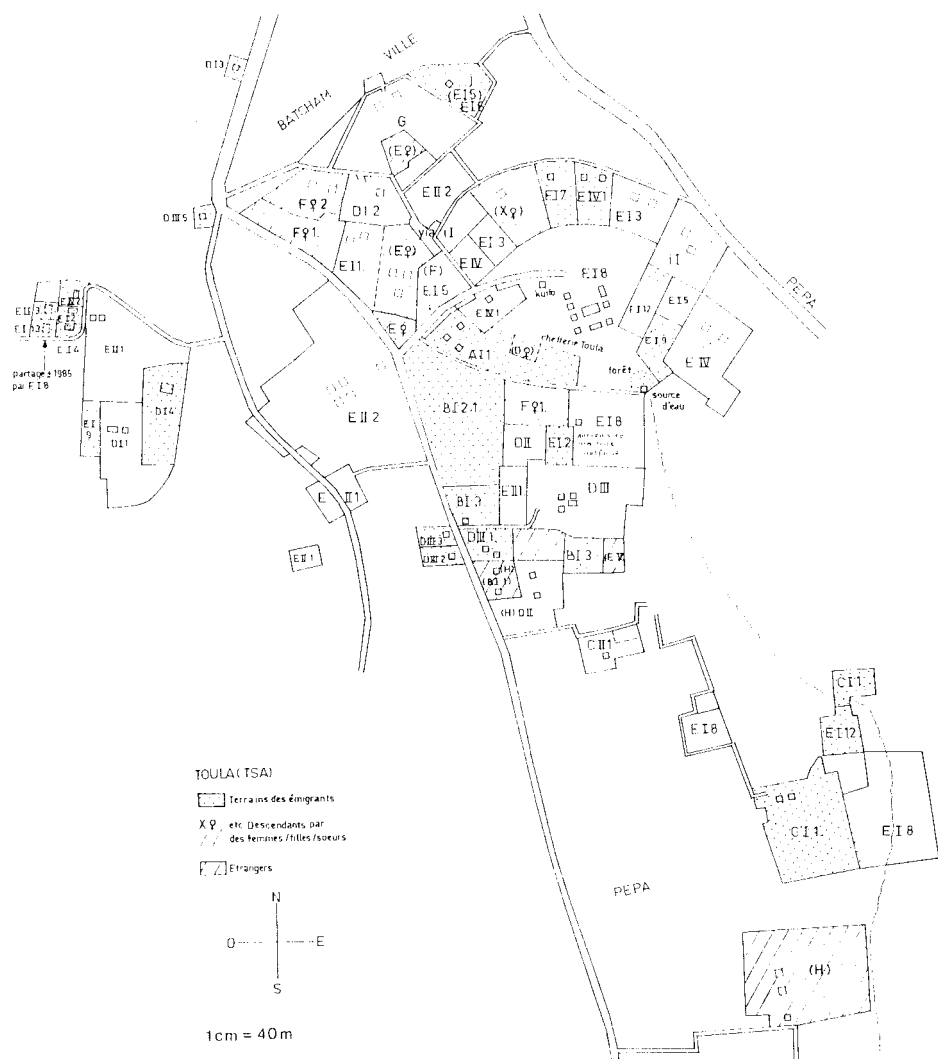
Situation socio-économique des 16 fils de C, Biété (au moins 6 femmes) en 1978 et (1987).

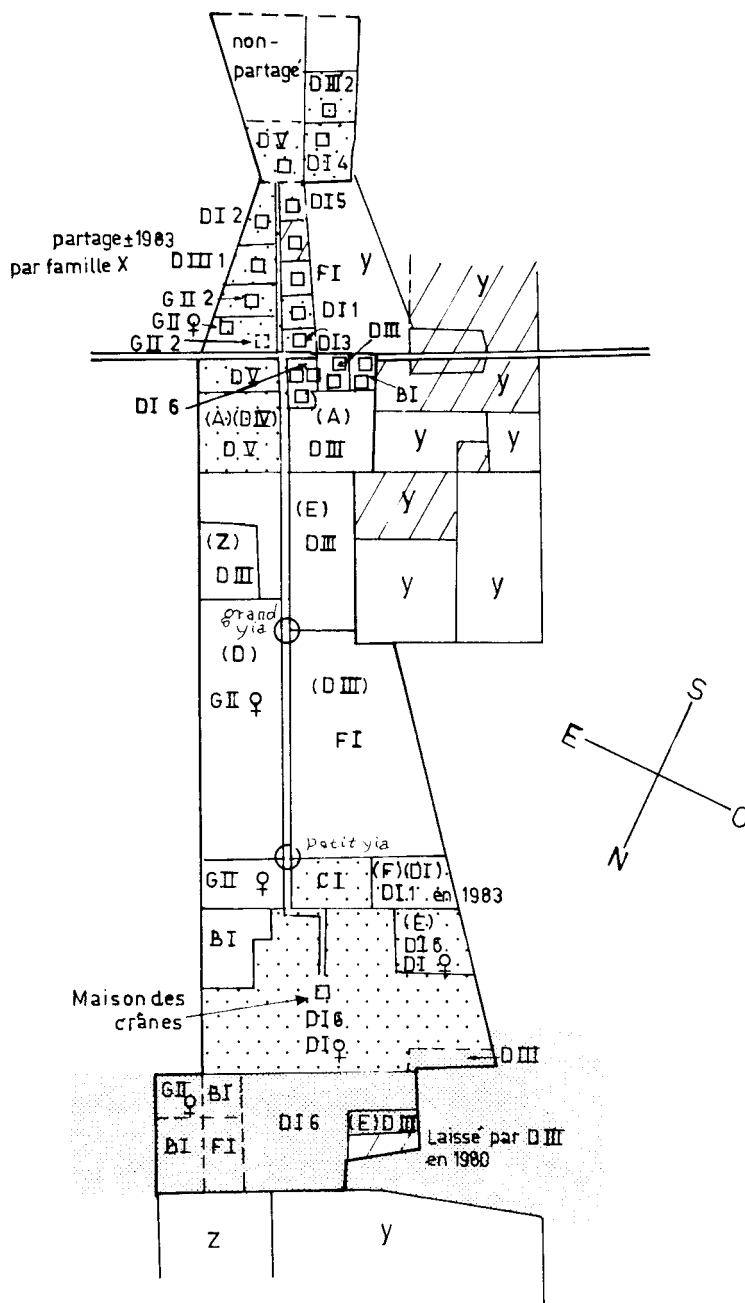
C	I	Instituteur, grand planteur, chef de quartier, riche	(Instituteur en retraite, etc; riche)
	II	Planteur, Ngang; moyen	(Idem)
	III	Planteur et maçon, Ngang; moyen	(Planteur et ouvrier CDC, Ngang;moyen)
	IV	Planteur et corsaire de café, Ngang; moyen	(Commerçant et planteur, Ngang; moyen)
	V	Planteur, ouvrier commune Batcham, Ngang; moyen	(Idem)
	VI	Planteur, Ngang; moyen	(Décédé)
	VII	Ouvrier chantier de construction, Nigéria; moyen	(Planteur, Moungo; moyen)
	VIII	Planteur et maçon, Ngang; moyen	(Planteur, Moungo; moyen)
	IX	Sculpteur de bois, Douala; moyen	(Sculpteur de bois, Mbouda; moyen)
	X	Petit commerçant, Douala; pauvre	(Chômeur, bandit, Douala; pauvre)
	XI	Maçon, Douala; pauvre	(Chômeur, bandit, Douala; pauvre)
	XII	Corporal de l'armée, Ngaoundere; moyen	(Corporal de l'armée, Douala; moyen)
	XIII	Chauffeur, Yaoundé; moyen	(Camionneur, Douala; moyen)
	XIV	Elève école normale, Yaoundé	(Instituteur, Douala; moyen)
	XV	Lycée, Bafoussam	(Professeur d'éducation physique, Maroua; moyen)
	XVI	Elève collège technique, Nkongsamba	(étudiant?, Douala)

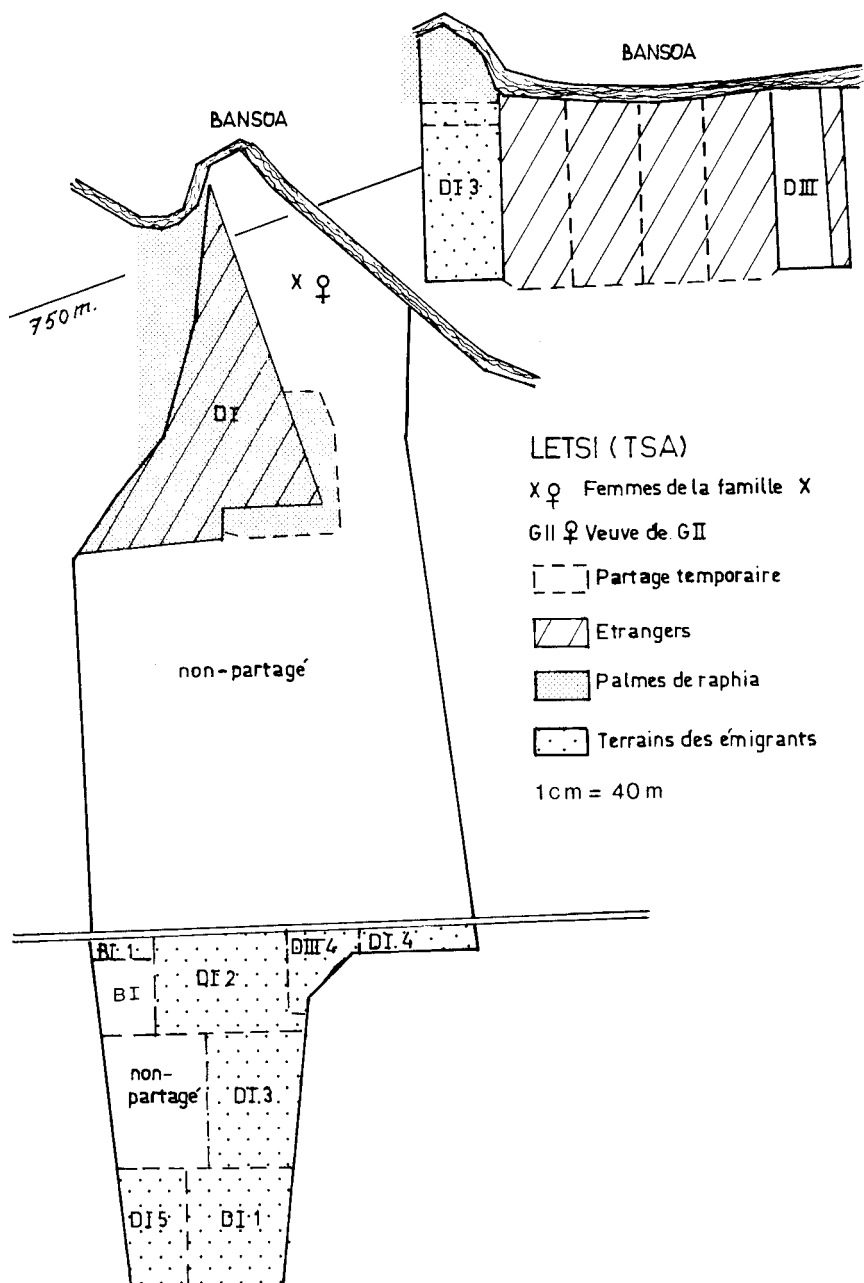
ANNEXE 2.

GENEALOGIES ET DISTRIBUTION DE LA TERRE
DES SIX FAMILLES AGNATIQUES
A TSA ET NGANG.

Si j'indique '*étranger*' dans la légende des cartes de la distribution des terrains des hommes, cela veut dire "des personnes qui n'appartiennent pas à la famille agnatique". Ces "étrangers" peuvent être des membres de la famille cognatique. Je ne connais pas de personnes *non*-Bamiléké qui possèdent des terrains dans les territoires des six "lignages patrilineaires" à Tsa et Ngang et dans d'autres concessions de ces chefferies.







LATCHUET (T S A)

$\underline{X}^+$

A^+	$\underline{B}^+$				
I^+	$\underline{I}^+$	$\underline{II}^+$	$\underline{III}^+$	$\underline{IV}^+$	$\underline{VI}^+$
1	$\boxed{1} \boxed{2} \boxed{3}^+ \boxed{4} \boxed{5}$			$\boxed{1} \quad 2 \quad 3$	$\boxed{1} \underline{\boxed{2}} \boxed{3} \boxed{4} \quad 5$
i	$\boxed{3} \boxed{1} \boxed{5} \boxed{12}$			$\boxed{1} \quad (2) \quad (1)$	$\boxed{3} \boxed{1}$

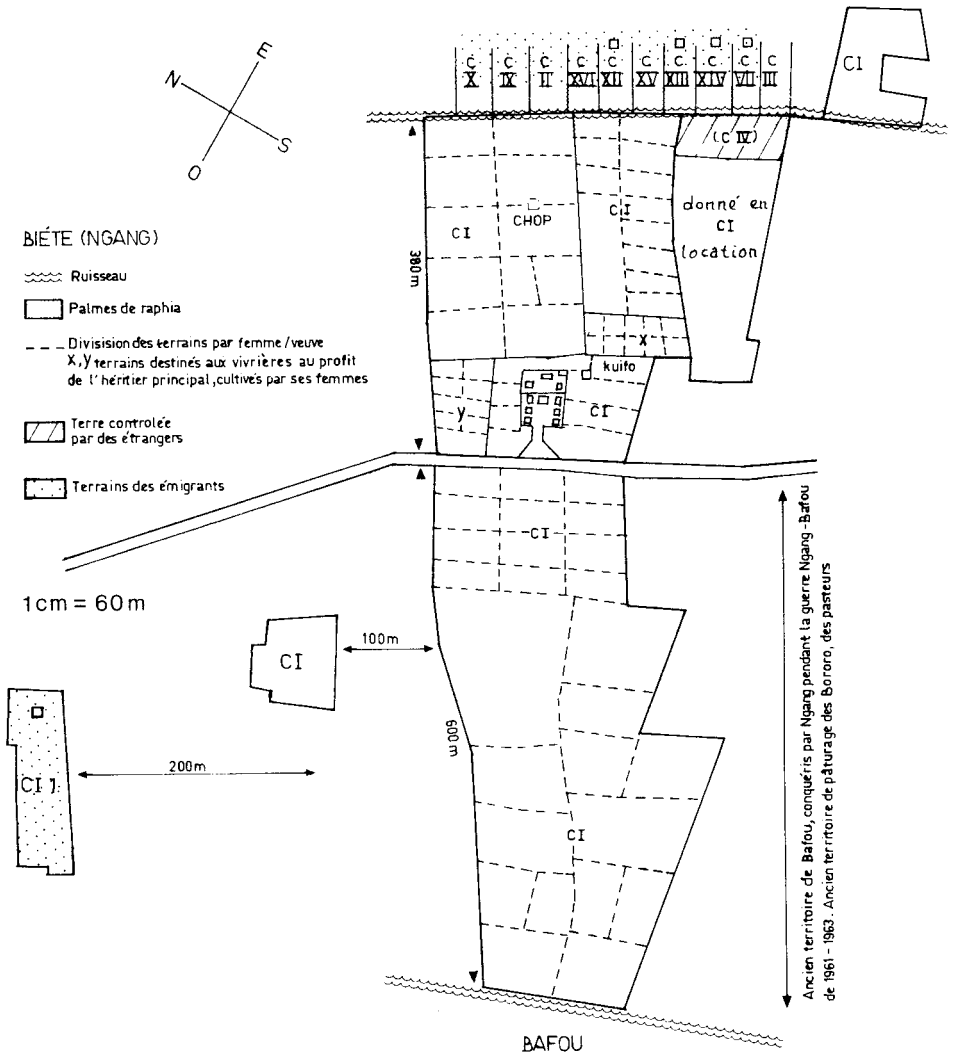
X, A, I, 1: des hommes/garçons individuels

(3) : nombre total des hommes

☐ : des émigrants

i : inconnu

$\underline{\underline{I}}$ etc. : héritier principal



MENGUEA (NGANG)						
A ⁺					B ⁺	
I ⁺	II ⁺	III	IV	V	I ⁺	II
I	1 2 (6)	(9)	(2)	(4)		I
		4	5	3		
I	(1) (3)					I

X, A, I, 1: des hommes/garçons individuels

(3) : nombre total des hommes

□ : des émigrants

i : inconnu

I etc. : héritier principal

TOMEGO (NGANG)	
<u>A</u> [†]	B [†]
<u>I</u>	<u>I</u> [†] <u>II</u> [†]
<u>I</u>	1 [†] 2 <u>3</u> <u>4</u> <u>5</u> (5) (6)
<u>I</u>	

X, A, I, 1: des hommes/garçons individuels

(3) : nombre total des hommes

I : des émigrants

i : inconnu

I etc. : héritier principal

LES POPULATIONS COTIERES DU SUD-CAMEROUN A LA RECONQUETE DE LEUR ENVIRONNEMENT

Pierre TITI NWEL

La côte maritime camerounaise s'étend de la frontière nigériane à Campo-Beach. Elle est divisée en deux parties: La partie septentrionale va de la frontière nigériane à Londji; la pêche y est exercée par des pêcheurs non sédentaires qui ne quittent leurs villages que pour passer quelques jours ou quelques semaines dans les campements maritimes.¹ C'est notamment le cas des Yakalak (Département de la Sanaga-Maritime), qui, "pour pratiquer la pêche maritime ... doivent, de longs mois, abandonner leurs villages pour s'installer dans des campements de pêche".² La partie méridionale, objet de cette étude, est habitée par des pêcheurs sédentaires, à l'exception des gens de Londji qui, parfois, se rendent vers le Nord durant la saison des aloses.

Ainsi, de Campo-Beach, extrémité Sud du Cameroun sur la côte atlantique, à Londji-Plage, en passant par la Sous-Préfecture de Campo et par Kribi, chef-lieu du Département de l'Océan, vivent, sur une zone d'environ 100 km de long sur 8 km de large, des populations dont l'activité principale a été, depuis l'époque pré-coloniale, la pêche. On ne peut guère dire d'elles ce que NGUYEN VAN CHI-BONNARDEL³ écrit à propos des populations côtières du Sénégal:

Jusqu'au début des années cinquante, les hommes du littoral sénégalais n'ont demandé que peu de chose à la mer. Agriculteurs avant tout, ils traitaient la pêche en activité complémentaire de subsistance et n'exploitaient les eaux côtières que dans les temps morts de la vie agricole.

La pêche ne serait devenue une activité première sur la côte sénégalaise, selon cet auteur, qu'avec l'accroissement des besoins nationaux en produits halieutiques et l'introduction des embarcations motorisées.

Les Yasa, les Mabea et les Batanga (Batanga-Bapuku, Batanga-Banoho) sont, pour les Camerounais de l'intérieur, les "hommes de la mer", les "hommes de l'eau" parce qu'ils sont

¹Cf. MONOD T.: *L'industrie des pêches au Cameroun*. Paris, Sté. d'Ed. géographiques, maritimes et coloniales, 1928, p. 176.

²DIKOUME C.: *La Pêche Artisanale Maritime et ses Implications sociologiques sur la Société Yakalak en basse sanaga*. Douala, Institut Panafricain de Développement (I.P.D.), 1976.

³ NGUYEN VAN CHI-BONNARDEL R.: "L'essor de l'Economie de pêche artisanale et ses conséquences sur le littoral sénégalais", in *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 79, XX-3, 1980, p. 255.

réputés nager comme des poissons et qu'ils ne se laissent aucunement émouvoir par l'immensité et l'écume blanche de l'océan mais, aussi et surtout, parce qu'ils vivent principalement de la faune maritime.

Depuis une vingtaine d'années, des groupes d'immigrés nigériens se sont installés dans quelques-uns de la trentaine de "villages de pêcheurs" qui jalonnent la zone ci-dessus indiquée.⁴ Leurs techniques de pêche, tout en étant artisanales, se sont révélées de loin plus efficaces par rapport aux méthodes jugées archaïques des populations camerounaises. Ce succès spectaculaire des expatriés dans un domaine traditionnellement réservé à leurs hôtes n'a pas manqué de créer quelques malaises⁵, d'autant plus que les techniques ancestrales de pêche sont à l'heure actuelle dépassées par les exigences de l'économie de marché: les activités halieutiques ne servent plus aujourd'hui à la seule auto-consommation du pêcheur. Le gouvernement camerounais s'en est ému et a pris des mesures tendant à améliorer le régime traditionnel de pêche au Cameroun. Mais les fruits n'ont tenu la promesse des fleurs. Des décisions prise en haut lieu sans toute fois que soit pris en compte l'univers mental des populations concernées, se sont révélées sur le terrain peu porteuse de changement. Les Camerounais sont tenus à l'heure actuelle d'instaurer des rapports nouveaux entre eux d'une part, et d'autre part entre eux et leur milieu, s'ils veulent le reconquérir.

I. LE REGIME TRADITIONNEL DE PECHE

Lorsque les Batanga affirment qu'ils sont "nés avec l'eau", ou quand M. MPOLO, Chef du quartier Mboamanga (Kribi) énonce la proposition suivante: "Un arbre sans racines d'existe pas; un batanga sans filet ne vit pas". (Kribi, 25/03/1985), ils n'expriment pas ce qu'un étranger au milieu croit percevoir comme une réalité première: la familiarité de ce groupe ethnique avec la mer. L'Océan Atlantique est une force naturelle que les anciens Batanga n'ont pas pu dompter. L'absence chez eux de rites magiques et de cérémonies religieuses propres à apaiser le tumulte des vagues le prouve.⁶ Pressés par leurs voisins de l'intérieur, ils durent, malgré la victoire de leur chef et ancêtre NJONJE YA EBADANE sur IMAE, le "Führer des Bakokos" (comme ils l'appellent), déployer des trésors d'ingéniosité pour tisser des liens organiques avec un milieu hostile. Ils restent si attachés à ce milieu qu'ils ont célébré jusqu'à ces derniers temps le 14 Février et le 9 Mai de chaque année, l'anniversaire de la fin de leur

⁴Pour une liste complète de ces villages, voir Dikoumé C., Cloutier B. et le MAGADOU, A.: *Recherche sur la Technologie de la Pêche Artisanale Maritime*, Douala, I.P.D., 1977, p. 11.

⁵Cf. DIKOUME, 1977, p. 6

⁶Il existe des rites pour nourrir les génies de l'eau en temps de disette et de pêche non fructueuse.

déportation à l'ancien Cameroun britannique. Le vieux MUKEKA, né en 1898 et éduqué à l'école allemande, nous racontait en 1985 le détail de ces moments de déportation;

Ce sont les forces alliées qui opérèrent cela en Août 1914 parce que la guerre battait son plein ici. Les alliés prirent Douala sans se battre. Ici à Kribi, il y eut de la résistance de la part des Allemands au point que nombre de maisons à étages furent détruites. Les Allemands étaient installés à Petit Batanga, Londji, Mpala, Kribi, Lokoundje, Grang Batanga I et II. Quand les alliés occupèrent ces lieux, les Allemands reculèrent dans la brousse non loin d'ici. Il y eu donc échange de tirs et les populations se trouvaient entre les deux camps. C'est alors que, pour nous protéger, les alliés nous transportèrent par bateau vers Limbé, Tiko et Idenau. Notre séjours hors d'ici dura deux ans. Le groupe qui était à Idenau revint le premier le 14 Janvier 1916; les autres arrivèrent le 9 Mai de la même année.

Les Batanga furent déportés un peu plus loin au Nord sur la même côte atlantique. mais les alliés en firent les manoeuvres dans les plantations laissées par les Allemands. Ces hommes dont le savoir social intégrait jusque-là comme premiers instruments de l'économie de subsistance le filet, la pirogue et la pagaie, furent amenés à gagner leur vie par le maniement de la machette. Dans ces conditions, on peut interpréter les festivités accompagnant le souvenir de la fin de la période de leur déportation comme ayant été, initialement, la manifestation de leur joie de retrouver les conditions de vie leur permettant le redéploiement intégral de leur savoir social traditionnel.

Car il y a à la base du rapport entre ce peuple et la mer, un *savoir* de type rationnel, quoique non accompli mais, dépouillé de connotations magico-religieuses. Leurs techniques de pêche ne sont pas, comme le laisserait croire un texte de Marcel MAUSS, à la fois techniques et magiques.⁷ Nous avons trouvé ici, il est vrai, la croyance de la côte-africaine aux "mamy-water", ces génies de l'eau, mi-femmes, mi-poissons, appelées "commandants de l'eau" et auxquelles le peuple Batanga offre des plats de nourriture en période de pénurie de poisson. Mais mis à part ce rite occasionnel, ces populations ne connaissent pas le culte de "mamy-water". Cela veut dire qu'il n'y a pas de rite individuel, ni collectif qu'on accomplit en allant pêcher en mer. Le pêcheur compte principalement sur ses gestes techniques et son expérience et accessoirement, sur la chance de rencontrer un banc de poisson. Le savoir en matière de pêche est acquis dès l'enfance:

⁷Cf. MAUSS, M. *Sociologie et anthropologie*. Paris, PUF, 1973, p. 12.

Avant de mourir, mon père m'a donné deux filets et deux pirogues-moustiques. Je suis devenu pêcheur. Les anciens transmettent leurs techniques aux jeunes lorsqu'ils sont en mer avec eux. (Un pêcheur d'Ebodje, le 26/03/1985).

Ce "dur métier de la mer" dont le Batanga ne se débarrasse que difficilement quand il s'y est engagé⁸ est, selon G. NDENGA, le résultat d'un long processus de socialisation:

Dès son jeune âge, le Batanga est habitué aux méthodes et techniques de pêche. C'est sur sa propre initiative qu'il apprend à nager, fabrique sa première canne à pêche ou utilise celle de son frère aîné ou d'un autre membre de la famille. Il apprendra également à chercher et à attraper ses appâts. D'apprentissage en apprentissage, d'observation en observation, il saura comment sortir les poissons de l'eau; comment tremper un filet; comment extraire les poissons des mailles du filet... Par transmission, il connaîtra les périodes de pêche, les marées ... Plus tard, il pourra prendre seul sa pirogue et aller en haute mer.⁹

Les Batanga utilisent deux sortes d'embarcations. La pirogue-moustique, appelée ainsi pour sa forme très réduite, est creusé dans un tronc de parasolier. Elle ne peut transporter qu'une seule personne et un filet de petite dimension (100 m). Selon J. LAURE, cette sorte d'embarcation que l'on peut transporter sur la tête à cause de sa légèreté et qu'utilisent 60% des pêcheurs du littoral camerounais est, dans la zone étudiée, surtout fabriquée par les Mabea.¹⁰ Pour T. MONOD, la partie méridionale de la côte maritime camerounaise:

mérite aussi bien le nom de zone de la pirogue-moustique que celui de zone de la ligne à main ou de zone Batanga, du nom de la principale peuplade littorale.¹¹

La grande pirogue est comme la précédente, monoxyle mais, plus lourde, plus longue et plus épaisse. Elle peut mesurer 14 mètres de long sur 3,25 mètres de large. Creusée généralement dans un tronc d'Okoumé, son temps de fabrication est long. Les fabricants de pirogues sont reconnus comme tels de père en fils mais, il ne forment pas une caste, à la manière des

⁸Parlant des Yakalak, C. DIKOUME écrit: "Elle (la pêche) fait partie de leur existence quotidienne. Dans ce contexte, la période de la pêche maritime représente un cycle de vie par lequel devait passer tout garçon quelle que soit sa profession future" (Dikoume, C. 1976 ii).

⁹NDENGA, G. *La pêche artisanale dans la région de Kribi: perspectives de développement*. Mémoire de maîtrise en sociologie. Université de Yaoundé, 1980, p. 48.

¹⁰Cf. LAURE, J. *La pêche artisanale du Littoral du Cameroun: Essai d'estimation quantitative*. Yaoundé, ORSTOM, 1968, p. 19.

¹¹MONOD Th. Op.cit. p. 179.

forgerons de l'Extrême-Nord du pays. Par nécessité, tout un chacun peut s'initier à ce métier. Il existe aussi des spécialistes de fabrication de filets.

Le filet dormant ou fixe est de forme rectangulaire et porte deux flotteurs aux bouts de la ralingue supérieure et inférieure. Le lest sert à maintenir le filet en place tandis que le flotteur est un signal indiquant l'emplacement où le filet est posé. Le filet dormant est trempé le matin et retiré en début d'après-midi ou alors dans la soirée et repris le lendemain matin. Les filets baladeurs ou dérivants sont mobiles et se déplacent au gré des courants marins. Ils sont également trempés pour un laps de temps donné. Tous les filets sont de largeur et de résistance de mailles différentes suivant la qualité du poisson pêché. Les indigènes connaissent en nomment dans la langue locale une trentaine d'espèces de poissons.¹² Certaines de ces espèces comme le requin, le mulot, la carpe, le capitaine, la dorade, la carangue, la sole, le tetrodon, ont de trois à cinq appellations différentes, suivant les variétés.

Cet arsenal de capture auquel il faut ajouter palangre, épervier et, pour la pêche à pied le long du littoral, canne à pêche, nasse, senne et autres appât ou boîte, conçu et utilisé au moment où le poisson pêché servait à l'auto-consommation du pêcheur, aurait dû être repensé et réévalué pour son adaptation aux conditions modernes de vie. Les populations côtières du Cameroun, comme plusieurs autres, sont des sociétés traditionnelles dans les quelles les modèles sociaux de conduite pour l'individu comme pour le groupe sont situés dans les temps ancestraux. Les nouveaux modèles de comportement qui viennent de l'extérieur sont reçus dans le groupe en fonction des acquis culturels du passé. G. NDENGA signale, à ce propos, la réticence des Batanga vis-à-vis de l'innovation.¹³ Il faut dire que ce "traditionalisme" ne suspecte pas seulement l'introduction de nouveaux modes de comportement: il interdit la dépréciation des façons d'agir et de penser des ascendants par la remise en cause de leur héritage culturel.

Parti le matin de bonne heure, notait Th. MONOD en 1928¹⁴... le pêcheur demeure sur les lieux jusque vers le milieu du jour, après avoir capturé 10 à 20 petits poissons, parfois jusqu'à 40, paraît-il, jusqu'au lendemain matin, il se reposera du genre de pêche le moins fatigant que l'on puisse imaginer et, comme le dit spirituellement SKOLASTER, "der Angelsport ist den Schwarzen eine zusagende Beschäftigung; man vergiest keinen Schweiß daher und hat doch statt zu essen. (la pêche à la ligne est une occupation qui convient aux Noirs puisqu'on y fond pas en sueur et qu'on a pourtant de quoi manger).

¹²Cf. NDENGA G. op. cit. pp. 135 ss.

¹³Cf. NDENGA G. op.cit. pp. 18-19.

¹⁴MONOD, Th. op.cit. p. 182.

Cette remarque de SKOLASTER relève d'un temps et d'un univers de pensée bien précis. Cosme DIKOUME qui a observé des comportements semblables chez les Yakalak où la pêche n'est pas considérée comme une activité de production, les apprécie autrement:

"La période de grande pêche maritime est pour eux un moment de détente et d'évasion, un temps de liesse et de bombance.. La motivation à gagner de l'argent n'est certainement pas la cause suffisante qui incite la majorité des Yakalak (et leurs voisins Pongo et Malimba) à pratiquer la pêche maritime. Ils vont en mer pour *vivre* un instant...".¹⁵

Ces comportements parfaitement compréhensibles il y a une soixantaine d'années, le sont moins aujourd'hui où la mer, comme ailleurs la terre, est un moyen de production.

De nos jours, la pêche ne nourrit pas uniquement le pêcheur et sa famille, elle les habille, leur procure un logement, assure les frais d'instruction et d'éducation des enfants, etc... C'est une source de revenus pour toutes les commodités de la vie moderne. Dans ces conditions, on comprend que les techniques traditionnelles de pêche, mises en place pour des objectifs précis, se révèlent inadéquates par rapport aux besoins qu'elles sont censés satisfaire à présent. Un pêcheur peut gagner 100.000 Frs en une semaine de pêche et rester par la suite plus de deux mois sans rien obtenir de la mer, à cause des marées et de la pauvreté relative en poisson de la zone de Kribi.¹⁶ Mais, si sa pirogue était munie d'un moteur hors-bord, et s'il était associé à d'autres pêcheurs, il pourrait aller plus loin à la recherche d'une zone poissonneuse. Tel est du moins le point de vue de M. NDE Elie, Chef secteur de l'Océan:

Le poisson coûte cher à Kribi, écrit-il dans un rapport semestriel, très cher même à cause de nombreux aléas.

D'abord les pêcheurs très expérimentés mais, non organisés et sans moyens de production modernes ni améliorés, pêchent encore comme leurs ascendants. Cette façon de pêcher limite les prises à une quantité d'auto-consommation ou de subsistance. Un écart considérable sépare donc le pêcheur de Kribi de son homologue du Wouri, de Fako et de Ndian.

Il faudra donc l'amener à sortir du cadre de l'exploitation des pirogues moustiques à l'ère des pirogues à moteur hors bord, et de former des équipes de pêche de 3 à 6 personnes.¹⁷

¹⁵DIKOUME, C. op.cit. 1976, p. iv.

¹⁶ Cf. LAURE, J. op.cit. 1968, p. 44.

¹⁷NDE, E.: Rapport semestriel sur le Secteur de l'Océan, Juillet-Dec. 1984, Kribi, 31 Déc. 1984, p. 14.

Le pêcheur du département de l'Océan reste donc, d'une façon générale, prisonnier de la pêche individuelle sur de petites pirogues moustiques; la pêche communautaire et motorisée se pratique à mesure que l'on remonte de la côte du Sud au Nord.¹⁸

A la différence des Camerounais, la plupart des immigrants nigériens dans le département de l'Océan, pratiquent une pêche de groupe. Ils s'en vont à 5 ou 6 dans une grande pirogue motorisée dont les bords ont été surélevés de planches étanches assemblées avec des crampons de fer afin d'en augmenter le tirant d'eau et la jauge. Ils utilisent les filets dormants ou baladeurs, longs parfois de 4 km. Ainsi ils réalisent souvent des prises de 200 kgs de poisson par jour.¹⁹ Ils s'approvisionnent en matériel de pêche à Douala dans une boutique tenue par l'un d'eux. Il est difficile d'établir un prix précis de ce matériel de pêche, étant donné que les tarifs fluctuent selon les lois de l'offre et de la demande. Mais en 1985, le coût du matériel de pêche à Kribi était le suivant:

1 moteur hors bord (8 CV.)	575.000 Frs.CFA
1 grande pirogue	200.000 Frs.CFA
1 filet dormant (4 km)	400.000 Frs.CFA
1 filet à sardinelles	300.000 Frs.CFA
1 filet à aloses	200.000 Frs.CFA

Ainsi un "trousseau" complet (embarcation, moteur, 2 à 3 filets) revient à plus d'un million cinq cent mille francs, somme qu'un indigène ne saurait détenir de par ses activités économiques traditionnelles. Le Nigérien l'obtient facilement auprès de tontines qui fonctionnent au sein de son groupe. Selon un recensement opéré en 1984 par le Chef Secteur de l'Elevage, des Pêches et des Industries Animales du Département de l'Océan, sur 100 pêcheurs, 48 avaient des pirogues munies de moteurs hors bord. Quatre seulement des 48 pêcheurs (soit 8,33%) étaient des nationaux. Cette situation était en net recul par rapport à celle qui prévalait sur les lieux six ans plus tôt. En effet, selon J. LAURE (op.cit. 1968, p. 22) en 1968, sur les 24 pirogues motorisées de la circonscription de Kribi, dont la nationalité des propriétaires avait été identifiée, 17 (soit 70,8%) appartenaient aux Camerounais, et 7 seulement (29,2%) aux Nigériens. Comment expliquer ce revirement de l'état de choses au bénéfice des Nigériens?

L'homme de la rue, le fonctionnaire camerounais de l'intérieur affecté à Kribi, célèbrent dans l'admiration, le dynamisme des populations Ibo et Yoruba (Nigériens). Il faut dire que dès 1974, conscient de la nécessité dans laquelle se trouvaient nos pêcheurs de passer de l'âge de la

¹⁸Cf. DIKOUME et coll. op. cit. 1977, pp. 8-9.

¹⁹En Sanaga-Maritime, par pirogue et par jour de pêche plutôt bonne, la production est de 1000 ethmaloses, soit 112 kgs environ (Cf. Laure, op. cit. 1968, p. 47).

pirogue moustique à celui des embarcations motorisées, conscient aussi de leur manque de moyens matériels et d'un savoir technique adéquat, le gouvernement camerounais avait créé sur place des structures d'encadrement et de promotion de la pêche maritime artisanale. Seule les difficultés nées de la gestion de ces structures, et non pas la paresse congénitale de nos côtiers, rendent compte de la situation de 1984.

II. L'INTERVENTION DES POUVOIR PUBLICS

a) Une légère reprise de la situation.

De 1974 à 1983, quatre textes officiels organisent la pêche artisanale maritime.

D'une part, la loi n° 74-12 du 16 Juillet 1974 portant Code des Pêches Maritimes et le décret n° 83/171 du 12 Avril 1983 relatif au régime de pêche, définissent les différents types de pêches, fixent les limites de leur zone de réalisation et établissent l'inspection des produits de pêche. D'autre part, deux organismes d'encadrement de pêcheurs voient le jour: la Caisse de Développement de la Pêche Maritime (décret n° 74/991 du 16/12/74) et la Mission de Développement de la Pêche Artisanale Maritime (décret n° 77/363 du 9 Septembre 1977).

Le but de la CPDM est de contribuer à l'exécution des programmes d'actions en matière de formation et d'encadrement de pêcheurs, et à l'amélioration des circuits de distribution de poisson de la pêche artisanale. Elle encourage la formation des équipes de pêcheurs auxquelles elle octroie des crédits pour achats de matériel de pêche. En 1976, elle a débloqué un montant approximatif de huit millions de francs en faveur des pêcheurs de la région. On a tout de suite remarqué à l'époque comme le nous le notions plus haut, une situation hégémonique au bénéfice des pêcheurs camerounais.

La mission de développement de la pêche maritime artisanale (MIDEPECAM) est chargée, quant à elle, du support technique et logistique des artisans-pêcheurs. Elle s'occupe concrètement de la construction et de l'équipement des infrastructures de pêche, de la fourniture et de l'entretien du matériel de pêche. C'est ainsi que de 1977 à 1984, elle a construit six centres de pêche (Kribi, Douala, Limbe, Dihane, Mouanko) et progressivement, les a équipés d'un lot de matériel (filets, cordages, bobines, moteurs hors-bord de 8,15 et 25 CV). Le centre de Kribi fonctionne depuis Novembre 1984. En principe le pêcheur peut s'y procurer son matériel de deux manières soit par crédit soit en payant au comptant. Pratiquement, seule la seconde voie reste possible, les problèmes nés de la gestion des crédits accordés par la CDPM ayant obstrué jusqu'à nouvel ordre la première.

Le matériel est vendu hors-tax, à des prix qui défient toute concurrence. Un petit filet de 200 yards coûte 80.000 F. sur le marché et 15.000 F. à la MIDEPECAM; le moteur de 8 CV que la Mission livre à 305.000 F. est vendu ailleurs à 575.000 F., celui de 15 CV revient à 400.000 F. contre 785.000 en boutique.

Des mesures sont prises pour qu'il n'y ait pas de trafic de matériel. En outre la MIDEPECAM ne vend qu'au pêcheur, sur présentation du numéro d'immatriculation de sa pirogue, enregistré au service de la Marine Marchande.

La Marine Marchande est une administration qui intervient sur le plan de l'eau. Elle donne un nom et un numéro à chaque pirogue, relève ses caractéristiques (volume, nombre de personnes à transporter à bord, viabilité de l'embarcation et du moteur). Si l'immatriculation se fait une fois, la visite de sécurité de l'engin est annuelle: une embarcation peut être déclarée hors d'usage et interdite de circuler. La marine marchande assure la sécurité des pêcheurs en leur exigeant de se munir de bouées, brassières et d'un sifflet: trois ou quatre personnes peuvent s'aggriper sur une bouée en cas de naufrage et les brassières leur permettent de rester à la surface de l'eau pendant 48 heures en attendant qu'une embarcation quelconque alertée au loin par le son du sifflet vienne leur porter secours.

La pêche est considérée par les Pouvoirs Publics comme une "activité rurale" pratiquée par les paysans, et par laquelle ils gagnent leur vie et contribuent au développement de l'économie nationale. Des moniteurs de pêche chargés de l'animation et de l'encadrement des pêcheurs sont installés dans certains villages et plages réputés zones intenses de production et de commercialisation. Ils procèdent à l'inspection des produits de la pêche en assurant le respect de la nomenclature officielle des espèces commercialisables et la taille marchande des espèces de consommation courante. Pour éviter la destruction de larves et de jeunes produits le moniteur de pêche veille à ce que les filets utilisés aient des mailles de plus de 26 mm de large. Le matériel qui ne respecte pas ces normes fait l'objet de saisies et de confiscation. Le moniteur de pêche fait le relevé statistique et vérifie l'état sanitaire du poisson débarqué.

Ces structures d'encadrement visent une plus grande productivité de la pêche artisanale. En effet, un engin motorisé permet d'aller plus loin en mer et de pratiquer la pêche profonde ou de surface suivant la biologie des poissons (les gros poissons vivent en profondeur et les sardinelles se pêchent à la surface de l'eau). Et si la pirogue est munie de filets de grande dimension, exigeant plusieurs personnes à bord pour leur gestion, on réalise des captures journalières importantes.

Pourtant le poisson frais manque à Kribi. Que s'est-il passé pour que d'importants investissements consentis par le gouvernement pour la promotion de l'activité halieutique des population côtières se révèlent si peu efficaces?

De nombreuses expériences montrent que lorsque l'Etat intervient dans une opération de développement rural, il y met un lourd investissement humain et financier sans pour autant atteindre l'efficacité voulue.²⁰

Cette constatation est particulièrement pertinente ici. Pourquoi? Les pêcheurs et les responsables administratifs des structures de pêche se jettent mutuellement la balle.

b) Un dialogue de sourds.

Le poisson comme le cacao, a une saison. La pêche fructueuse a lieu de Septembre à Mars, voire à Avril et Mai, suivant les années. Juin, Juillet et Août constituent la saison morte où le poisson se fait rare sur le côte kribienne. Les pêcheurs estiment que les captures abondantes réalisées en pleine saison, conservées dans les chambres froides pourraient largement couvrir les mois de soudure. Des poissons comme le bar (*Argyrosomes hololepitis lacepédé*) et le bossu (*cornica nigrita cuvier valenciennes*) se conservent difficilement (trois heures au plus) au contraire du requin (*leptocharias smithii müller et Heule*) qui peut tenir frais pendant une journée et demie. Dans la zone de Campo, écrivent Dikoume et coll.,

La moitié des prises faites la nuit arrivent pourries au débarcadère d'Epono à cause des eaux très chaudes de la mer dans cette région (autour de 30°C) qui font que les poissons pris dans les filets ne peuvent pas rester plus de quatre heures dans l'eau...²¹

Les pêcheurs qui reviennent de la mer cherchent à vendre leur capture avant le temps fatidique où elle ne pourra plus être consommable. Ils se plaignent de la malice des revendeurs qui, bien au fait de cet état de choses, savent se faire liquider au bon moment le poisson invendu qu'ils revendent très cher sur le marché intérieur. Seul le recours à toutes les méthodes de conservation du poisson peut conférer au pêcheur une certaine maîtrise sur le processus de commercialisation de sa capture.

²⁰N'GOMA, P. FALARDEAU, M. *La pêche artisanale dans le Sud Cameroun*. Douala, IPD, 1978, p. 30.

²¹DIKOUME et Coll., 1977, p. 10.

Le séchage au soleil est un procédé simple, économique et donnant dans la majeure partie de l'année de bons résultats; c'est du moins ce qu'affirment Blaché et Miton.²² Mais il est surtout pratiqué par les pêcheurs de la zone semi-aride du pays où les durées d'insolation sont considérables et le degré hygrométrique très bas pendant une partie de l'année. Nous ne l'avons pas personnellement observé sur la partie méridionale de la côte maritime mais, pour Laure,²³ les pêcheurs du littoral utilisent exceptionnellement ce procédé pour la conservation d'un tout petit poisson, le "Bany omtolo" (*Pellonula vorax* Günther).

Le système traditionnel le plus répandu le long de la côte est le fumage. Plus on s'éloigne des centres urbains, plus on l'utilise. Dès que les pêcheurs débarquent, les petits poissons comme les ethmaloses (*Ethmalosa dorsalis*) appelés "bonga" en pidjin ou "bipaga" en langues locales et les sardinelles (*sardinella*, *cameronensis*) ou "bilolo" en langues locales, sont lavés à l'eau de mer et placés verticalement la tête en bas, sur les claies, sortes de grillages métalliques qui constituent les fumoirs. Un feu de bois fort, puis faible, les dessèche progressivement. Les gros poissons sont vidés, écaillés, coupés en gros morceaux et mis à sécher. On les retourne de temps en temps. On rencontre chez les Nigériens à Ljondi et auprès de quelques autochtones à Ebodje, des cases-fumoirs où le fumage se pratique de façon semi-industrielle. Ces cases-fumoirs complètement fermées sont dotées sur l'un des côtés, d'une seule porte allant jusqu'au toit.

Toutefois, la commercialisation du poisson fumé n'échappe pas non plus au chantage des revendeurs. Dans des villages éloignés des centres urbains et des zones de grande production où chaque pêcheur dispose d'une claie dans sa cuisine pour fumer une partie de sa capture, l'offre en poisson fumé est largement supérieure à la demande, et d'éventuels revendeurs qu'on attend se font livrer, le moment venu, à très peu de frais, tout le stock réservé à la vente.

Cette situation n'échappe pas à l'attention des pouvoirs publics dans la mesure où les populations réclament sans cesse la construction d'une chambre froide à Kribi. Mais les responsables locaux du service départemental de la pêche pensent que la production étant insuffisante, le problème du stockage ne se pose pas:

Le poisson coûte plus cher ici qu'à Douala. On ne stocke que s'il y a un surplus. Or, les gens d'Akom II(80km de Kribi) ne voient pas un seul poisson de Kribi. On en peut donc pas mettre

²²Cf. Blaché, J., Miton, F.: *Première contribution à la connaissance de la pêche dans le bassin hydrographique Logone-Chari-Lac-Tchad*, Paris, ORSTOM 1962, p. 35.

²³Laure, J.: *Valeur nutritionnelle des produits de la pêche conservés par séchage, fumage et salage*, Ydé, ORSTOM, 1971.

sur pied une chambre froide dans l'espoir d'une éventuelle grande production future. (Kribi, 25.3.85).

Mais la nécessité d'une telle entreprise n'échappe cependant à personne d'autant plus qu'on rend bien compte que si le fumage est un procédé intéressant pour la durée de la conservation et le transport des denrées, il reste évident que si le produit est très sec, il devient cassant et difficile à transporter. En outre, des expériences faites sur des échantillons d'ethmaloses et de sardinelles par J. Laure (Cf. 1977, p. 7), il s'est avéré que la perte en éléments nutritifs du poisson séché est appréciable et s'évalue à 6% pour les protéines et 15% pour les lipides.

Du côté de la MIDEPECAM, on attend de voir les résultats de la première phase (réalisation des structures d'encadrement) avant la mise en valeur du terrain qui doit accueillir les infrastructures de conditionnement et de conservation du poisson invendu.

A cette logique, 'administrative', les pêcheurs opposent une logique du terroir: "Le service de pêche ne dispose pas d'une balance pour mesurer la quantité de poisson pêché; comment peut-il alors dire qu'il n'y en a pas assez? Le bon Dieu a-t-il d'abord créé l'enfant ou alors le ventre d'une femme pour porter l'enfant? C'est quand il y a une chambre froide que tout le monde apporte son poisson". (entretien chez le Chef Mpolo).

Version Kribienne de l'insoluble énigme de l'oeuf et de la poule? Tout le monde reconnaît à Kribi que, dans leur grande majorité, les pêcheurs n'ont pas profité comme il se devait, des mesures gouvernementales de promotion de la pêche artisanale. Les premiers crédits alloués n'ayant pas été remboursés en totalité, les organismes d'encadrement ont suspendu leur intervention en la matière. Dans ces conditions, le problème d'une infrastructure moderne de conservation du poisson n'est qu'un alibi qui dissimule un malaise plus profond, né d'une part du sentiment de gêne qu'éprouvent les responsables administratifs devant les engagements pris, mais non tenus, de l'autre, de la conscience qu'ont les pêcheurs que des espoirs soulevés n'ont pas été comblés.

Au commencement étaient les chalutiers... Les pêcheurs artisans attribuent la plupart de leurs malheurs aux chalutiers ces impitoyables "rapaces" qui déchirent et emportent dans leur sillage tout filet dormant ou baladeur qu'ils rencontrent sur leur chemin. Le pêcheur endetté se retrouve du coup sans ressources (pour honorer les échéances de son crédit) parce que sans "moyens de productions". La législation camerounaise prévoit cependant un dédommagement en la

matière²⁴, mais, aux dires, des pêcheurs, aucune plainte contre les chalutiers n'a jamais abouti "parce que les chalutiers ont des avocats". Nous pensons, quant à nous, que la législation est mal connue, voire difficile à comprendre.

En effet, d'une part, la loi 74-12 du 16 Juillet 1974 distingue (article 5) la pêche traditionnelle (pratiquée par les équipages d'un volume de moins de 25 tonneaux²⁵ de jauge brute, dans une frange de mer n'excédant pas deux mille marins), de la pêche artisanale (art. 6) qui a sa zone d'action à partir du deuxième mille marin et en haute mer, et est pratiquée par des bateaux d'une capacité de 25 à 150 tonneaux de jauge brute. D'autre part, le décret de 1983 relatif au régime de pêche stipule en son article premier que la pêche artisanale ou traditionnelle est celle pratiquée au moyen de matériels ou d'embarcations de conception ancienne, pirogues traditionnelles ou engins assimilées se déplaçant à l'aide de voile, de pagaie ou propulsés par un moteur hors-bord de moins de 30CV et ayant un volume de moins de 10 tonneaux de jauge brute.

Suivant les informations reçues à la Marine Marchande, une seule pirogue dans la zone de Kribi en 1985 avait une capacité de trois tonneaux; toutes les autres étaient de plus petites dimensions et les moteurs les plus puissants étaient de 25 CV. Ainsi, selon la loi de 1974, et si l'on tient compte des caractéristiques de leurs embarcations, les pêcheurs de la côte kribienne pratiquent la pêche traditionnelle et de ce fait, doivent évoluer en deça de deux milles marins. Par contre, le décret de 1983 qui assimile la pêche traditionnelle à la pêche artisanale, en restant muet sur la zone de réalisation de ce type de pêche, n'interdit nullement le propriétaire d'une pirogue motorisée de prospecter de plus en plus loin (comme l'indique la loi de 1974 à propos de la pêche artisanale).

Si l'on ajoute à cette lecture différentielle des textes le manque total d'instruments de repérage et d'orientation dans lequel se trouve le pêcheur en plein mer, on allègue considérablement la tâche des "avocats" des chalutiers, même lorsque les bateaux viennent pêcher "au vu et au su de tout le monde" comme le déclarent les pêcheurs. J. Laure écrivait déjà en 1969: "Les petits chalutiers de bois pêchent le long des côtes avant 30m de fond, le poisson étant surtout situé entre 0 et 5m dans les estuaires".²⁶

Il incombe à la Marine Marchande, en patrouillant le long de la limite prescrite, d'intimider les uns et les autres. Le pêcheur obtient cette protection contre les chalutiers en partie en payant les

²⁴De 50.000 F à 4 Millions de francs (Art. 32 de la loi 74-12 du 16/7/74).

²⁵Un tonneau = 2,83 m³.

²⁶Laure, J.: *La pêche industrielle au Cameroun*, Yaoundé, ORSTOM, 1969, pp. 39-40.

taxes d'immatriculation de sa pirogue. C'est du moins de cette façon là que parfois le droit de pêcheur en toute tranquillité est assuré aux riverains.

Par exemple, dans le bassin de la Bénoué:

"En principe, chaque emplacement de pêche est cadastré, surveillé et pour y être autorisé à pêcher, le candidat paie une taxe qui n'est pas fixée mais, varie selon la richesse et l'importance du cours d'eau ou de la nappe permanente et souvent également en fonction des besoins du chef et de ses représentants...

En contre partie de cette imposition, l'autorité coutumière devait protéger ses sujets contre les incursions étrangères, intervenir le cas échéant en temps de disette, etc..."²⁷

Mais au moment où nous menions nos enquêtes, la Marine Marchande manquait de vedette qui lui permettait d'assurer ce contrôle.²⁸ Toutefois, d'habitude, lorsque la gendarmerie côtière est saisie à temps de la présence d'engins traînants" tout près de la côte "et qu'elle emprunte quelque remorqueur pour se rendre sur les lieux, elle dresse le procès-verbal de l'infraction dans lequel elle indique le nom et le numéro du bateau, sa société d'appartenance, le lieu et l'heure de l'incident. Le rapport rédigé emprunte alors un véritable "parcours du combattant": l'agent qui constate l'infraction saisit son directeur à Douala (la Marine Marchande dépend du Ministère des Transports dont la Direction des Transports se trouve à Douala) qui saisit à son tour la Direction des Pêches du Ministère de l'Elevage, des Pêches et des Industries Animales (MINEPIA) à Yaoundé, lequel retourne le dossier au Service Départemental de la Pêche (Kribi) pour vérification et confirmation du travail fait au départ; après avoir émis son avis, le Service Départemental de la Pêche fait tenir le dossier au Service Provincial de la Pêche à Ebolowa, qui l'envoie à la Délégation Provinciale du MINEPIA (Ebolowa). "Après, on ne sait plus à quel niveau le rapport se trouve; peut-être le Délégué Provincial du MINEPIA contacte-t-il son Ministre (Yaoundé), lequel informe le Gouvernement pour qu'une décision soit prise..." (Kribi, 28/03/85).

Le même agent qui se plaint ainsi des lenteurs administratives fait remarquer, pour le regretter, le refus des pêcheurs de faire usage d'objets phosphorescents qui signaleraient la présence de leurs filets en pleine mer, dans la nuit. Il ne croit pas qu'il existe de leur côté la volonté ferme de se départir de la tradition et de s'adapter à des situations nouvelles. L'échec de la pêche de groupe introduite par la CDPM confirme cette manière de voir. Pour octroyer un crédit la CDPM exigeait la constitution de groupes de 10 personnes. Mais la gestion de ces mini-associations spontanées, une fois le matériel de pêche obtenu, s'est avérée d'une complexité

²⁷Stauch, A. : *Le bassin camerounais de la Bénoué et sa pêche*, Paris, ORSTOM 1966, p. 121).

²⁸Cf. DIKOUME et Coll., 1977, p. 7.

rare eu égard aux ressources et ressorts culturels traditionnels des partenaires: des luttes d'influence au sein de ces groupements ont rendu impossible leur fonctionnement. Dans ces conditions, comment les associés auraient-ils pu honorer leurs engagements vis-à-vis de leur créancier?

Mis à part donc l'action néfaste des chalutiers, des blocages d'ordre sociologique ne pouvaient que ramener les pêcheurs à la case départ. La reconquête de la mer qu'exige la situation du moment n'est certainement pas une simple question de moyens financiers. Elle appelle, comme préalable, à une restructuration des rapports interpersonnels au sein de la communauté des pêcheurs. Une nouvelle perception de l'environnement marin s'impose donc: la mer ne reste une mère nourricière pour la communauté que si les membres de celle-ci modifient la manière dont ils se perçoivent entre-eux. Une réévaluation de l'action administrative sur le terrain doit en conséquence être envisagée.

III. APPRENDRE A RECONQUERIR LA MER

a). Par la connaissance des principes fondamentaux de la vie associative.

Personne ne conteste plus aujourd'hui à Kribi les avantages de la pêche associée. Mais devant les expériences sans issues des premières associations de pêcheurs, on a pensé qu'il fallait réduire le nombre de membres de chaque équipe en responsabilisant l'un d'eux au départ. On attribuerait le crédit à une personne qui se choisirait trois ou quatre aides. C'est ainsi que certaines élites intérieures et extérieures du département de l'Océan ont procédé: elles ont acheté quelques grandes pirogues qu'elles ont équipées et confiées à de groupes de pêcheurs, sous la direction de l'un d'eux.

Ce système est économiquement rentable autant pour le priétaire des moyens de production que pour chacun des associés, le principe de répartition du revenu étant le suivant: chaque jour on prélève le nécessaire pour le carburant et le reste est réparti en fin de mois en parties égales entre associés, étant entendu que moteur, filet et pirogue forment autant de parts. Ainsi, le propriétaire du matériel, s'il est membre de l'équipage, reçoit sa part en tant que pêcheur, à laquelle il ajoute ce qui revient aux engins de pêche.

Pareille organisation mettrait un terme au marasme de la pêche artisanale dans le littoral sud du Cameroun, s'il suffirait de donner des "chefs" à ces sociétés lignagères semblables à celles que Evans-Pritchard appelait des anarchies ordonnées, pour les rendre "gouvernables". Une certaine représentation de la vie politique nationale attribue par ailleurs la "docilité", l'aptitude à la vie coopérative des membres de certains groupes ethniques à leur appartenance à des sociétés à

pouvoir centralisés. Habitué à être commandées, pense-t-on, ces personnes obéiraient plus facilement et présenteraient plus de dispositions à se soumettre aux exigences qu'impose la vie collective. On a ainsi tendance à idéaliser l'institution "chefferie", à en faire un "facteur essentiel de développement".

On oublie que toutes les sociétés traditionnelles sont des sociétés hiérarchiques²⁹; l'individu qui naît dans un statut social donné, se situe toujours à une certaine distance par rapport aux autres. Jamais ou du moins rarement sur le même plan qu'eux mais, au-dessus ou légèrement en dessous. Dans ce cas, tout le monde a un chef tout le monde commande et est commandé.

Le cas des sociétés lignagères mérite d'être spécifié. Le clan n'est pas une structure politique homogène et indifférencié: il est composé de lignages classés par ordre de primogéniture de leurs ancêtres éponymes. De même la phratrie ou ensemble de clans frères comporte-t-elle un clan aîné, un clan puîné, un clan cadet... Sur ce seul plan, sans tenir compte du statut social personnel de ses ascendants immédiats dont il hérite, l'individu est "positionné". Il peut lui arriver de donner des ordres aux autres ou d'en recevoir. Personne n'est donc à l'abri du "commandement". C'est-peut-être pour cela que ces sociétés "anarchiques" sont tout de même "ordonnées" On nous dira qu'ici le pouvoir n'est pas concentré aux mains d'une personne ou d'une caste qui fait sentir sa prééminence aux autres membres de la communauté. Pour nous, l'essentiel n'est pas le pouvoir, mais sa représentation.

Au Chef de quartier Mboamanga (Kribi) à qui nous avons demandé ce qu'il pensait du reproche qu'on fait aux natifs de sa région de manquer du sens de l'autorité, il nous a répondu: "Vous m'avez demandé de convoquer les gens parce que vous voulez causer avec eux. Je l'ai fait et ils sont tous là!"

Le chef est donc obéi ici. Deux jours après, j'ai rencontré sur la plage de Londji des jeunes gens, Camerounais, qui avaient refusé d'aller en mer avec leur chef-pêcheur. L'un d'eux s'est expliqué:

"Nous avons refusé aujourd'hui d'aller à la pêche, parce que notre patron qui est propriétaire du matériel ne veut pas travailler comme tout le monde. Il veut que c'est nous qui fassions tout. Il faut qu'on devienne ses esclaves. Il veut qu'on lave sa pirogue après la pêche pendant qu'il se repose... Il veut montrer qu'il est Chef. (27/3/85)

²⁹Lire à ce propos: Louis DUMONT: *Homo hierarchicus: Le système des castes et ses implications* (Gallimard, 1967); *Homo Aequalis: Genèse et épanouissement de l'idéologie économique* (Gallimard, 1977).

On pourrait croire que ces jeunes gens acceptent bien qu'il y ait un chef mais, à condition qu'il soit comme tout le monde, c'est-à-dire, en somme, qu'il ne soit pas chef. C'est bien de l'anarchie, mais une anarchie désordonnée. Nous pensons le contraire. La représentation de l'autorité qui ressort de cette réplique se rapproche de la conception moderne de la démocratie qui fait du chef le "primus inter pares", le premier entre ses égaux. Il s'agit d'une égalité de droit, celle qui, selon A. de TOCQUEVILLE ³⁰ est le principe fondamental de toute démocratie. Il ne doit pas y avoir d'un côté un maître, de l'autre des esclaves mais, des partenaires attelés à la même tâche sous la direction de l'un d'eux qui, en la matière, est plus qualifié et parfois, propriétaire des engins de pêche.

Malheureusement, tel n'est pas le désir fondamental de ces jeunes gens. La suite de l'entretien nous montre que pour eux, le chef doit devenir l'esclave et, chacun d'eux chef. Autre édition kribienne de la dialectique du maître et de l'esclave! Au vrai, il s'agit de l'abolition de toute hiérarchie, pas seulement comme le note C. DIKOUME à propos des Yakalak, de l'effacement momentané des clivages traditionnels et villageois au profit de la différenciation professionnelle en mer:

Ainsi un chef de village peut être le sujet de son administré sur le campement de pêche. L'autorité et les statuts sur les campements n'interfèrent pas avec ceux du village.³¹

A ma question: "Comment souhaitez-vous que le Chef se comporte pour que vous alliez bien avec lui? Voici leur réponse:

Il doit être gentil (nous sourire, nous faire des faveurs). Nous partons en mer à 7 heures du matin; avant qu'on arrive ici, il faut qu'on trouve tout prêt, qu'il arrange la pirogue, le filet, qu'il mette du carburant. Nous, on arrive, on pousse la pirogue et on va pêcher. Quand nous revenons fatigués, ça ne vaut pas la peine de nous demander de laver la pirogue. Nous, nous habitons à 2 km d'ici, lui est sur place. Tant qu'il a besoin de nous, il doit nous prier pour aller en mer car, sans nous, il ne peut pêcher. Il faut donc qu'il nous manie comme des oeufs. Il doit être souple".

- Mais vous n'aurez pas de poisson aujourd'hui!

³⁰Cf. TOCQUEVILLE, Alexis de: *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, Tome I Garnier-Flammarion, 1981, pp. 107 ss.

³¹DIKOUME, C. op. cit. 1976, p. 14, note 1, lire également p. 13.

"Tant qu'on est pêcheur, on peut prendre du poisson de consommation chez n'importe qui. Le pêcheur ne peut jamais mourir de faim. Les pêcheurs sont solidaires entre eux. Il faut les flatter".

Fallait-il rappeler à ces jeunes gens que leur patron vit lui aussi le "dur métier de la mer", qu'il ne reçoit en tant que pêcheur que la même quantité du butin qu'eux? Ce raisonnement simple et fugitif n'aurait pas percé la croûte de leur représentation de la vie collective. Puisque chaque personne, dans sa situation sociale commande et est commandée, elle n'apprécie, ne met en exergue que sa position de "chef", de "quelque'un d'important" et jamais celle de "subordonnée". Elle se sur-estime à ses propres yeux, par rapport aux autres membres de la société. Ce n'est pas en la plaçant sous le poids d'une autorité, fut-elle tyrannique, qu'elle changera la perception qu'elle a d'elle-même et des autres.

Or, la vie associative, ou plus généralement les exigences de la sociétés moderne, supposent que l'individu se perçoive comme étant un élément dans la trame de l'existence sociale. Certes, la spécialisation qu'apportent les temps modernes et de laquelle découle la division du travail, fait de chaque individu, un chaînon important et nécessaire au fonctionnement du group. Mais elle n'en fait qu'un élément. Un vertèbre n'est pas la colonne vertébrale, quoique sans celle-là, celle-ci ne remplit pas son rôle dans l'organisme. La spécialisation bien perçue est productrice de ce que DURKHEIM appelait la solidarité organique. En faisant que l'individu ne puisse pas se passer du groupe en même temps que celui-ci compte pur sa survie, sur l'individu, elle est source d'intégration sociale et force des sociétés modernes.

Il se trouve que le discours politique camerounais depuis quelque cinq ans, tourne autour des mots-clés: solidarité, intégration, démocratie. On dirait qu'il a été conçu pour les besoins de promotion de la pêche artisanale maritime. Il intervient certainement au moment où les Camerounais font leur entrée dans la société moderne. On peut regretter que ce discours reste "politique" au niveau des structures du Parti, que l'"ouverture démocratique" soit uniquement entendue par les Camerounais comme la possibilité qui leur est offerte de choisir, pour une poste électif, un individu parmi plusieurs candidats. Mais la pluralité de candidatures aux élections suppose au préalable, la négation d'une société formée d'individus à statuts sociaux innés et figés, ou chacun se dit être un homme plus important que les autres.

L'administration devrait tenir compte de cette situation. Tout en répercutant sur place de manière adéquate le discours politique de Yaoundé, elle devrait procéder à une réévaluation de son action auprès des pêcheurs.

b) Par une réévaluation de l'action administrative

"Il faut se résigner à une réalité assez terne: les Bantangas, Mabéas et Yassas sont virtuellement de bons pêcheurs, ils n'ont pas encore effectivement pêché de façon productive et autrement qu'en amateurs. En conséquence, tout est à faire... Je suis convaincu que les Batangas bien outillés n'auraient pas d'hésitation à se livrer à la pêche qui correspond à un de leurs goûts les plus profonds, si le produit de leur travail trouvait un débouché régulier".³²

Ces passages sont extraits d'un rapport de M. le Chef de Circonscription de Kribi, daté du 08 Février 1926. Ils expriment parfaitement l'une des tendances majeures d l'anthropologie classique: décrire et paraître fixer les groupes ethniques dans leurs potentialités et leurs manques. Les X sont ceci, les Y sont cela... Si le colonat s'est inspiré jadis de ces trouvailles ethnologiques pour administrer le pays, les nationaux eux-mêmes n'hésitent pas à les exhumers aujourd'hui dans un but de compétition politique et économique.³³ Notre souci est ailleurs: nous voulons relier les problèmes liés actuellement à l'exploitation de nos richesses aquatiques aux préoccupations de l'administration coloniale à ce sujet.

En effet, en Novembre 1923, le Gouverneur MARCHAND ordonna une enquête sur l'état de la pêche sur tout le territoire. L'année suivante, une dizaine de pêcheries furent créées dans les subdivisions de Yoko, Bafia, Yaoundé, Akonolinga et Kribi. Certaines pêcheries étaient contrôlées par les autorités locales, d'autres regroupaient les pêcheurs autonomes, l'administration se bornant à stimuler leur activité et contrôler leur production; d'autres regroupaient les pêcheurs en une sorte de mutuelle de production; d'autres enfin étaient gérées par l'administration qui avait édifié des bâtiments spéciaux et recruté des pêcheurs à cet effet. Mais organiser les équipes de pêche n'avait pas paru suffisant à l'administration; elle accorda des crédits aux circonscriptions pour équiper les pêcheurs. Les premiers engins étaient délivrés à titre gratuit sous condition qu'un prélèvement de 10% de la production soit chaque fois effectué pour constituer une caisse de réserve en vue du renouvellement du matériel.

L'administration se réserva d'abord l'achat de toute la production non consommée par les pêcheurs pour ravitailler ses hôpitaux et maisons d'arrêt; chaque circonscription disposait d'une camionnette pour assurer le transport du poisson qui était séché dans des fumoirs collectifs. Les commerçants, les entreprises agricoles et forestières devaient être sollicités plus tard pour acquérir le surplus que l'Administration n'aurait pu absorber en période de grande production.

³²MONOD, Th. op.cit. pp. 420 et 422.

³³C. KENGNE POKAM, E. : *La problématique de l'unité nationale au Cameroun*. L'Harmattan, 1986 pp. 106 ss.

Bien qu'une telle organisation fût de nature à modifier profondément le visage de la pêche artisanale au Cameroun, l'Administration se heurta à deux difficultés majeures.

La première fut que les indigènes n'exerçaient la pêche que dans les limites de leurs besoins personnels et familiaux. Produire pour produire, ou produire pour vendre, ne les intéressait pas. Aujourd'hui, on dirait comme Max Weber que les pêcheurs manquaient d'"esprit du capitalisme". Mais il est remarquable de constater la ferme détermination et même une conviction profonde de l'Administration de pouvoir, à la longue, venir à bout de cette mentalité:

La pêche, dira-t-on, peut être un métier lucratif pour l'indigène? Sans doute mais, il faut reconnaître que pour un être dont les besoins sont aussi élémentaires et aussi vite satisfaits... le seul mobile de l'appât du gain, ailleurs tout-puissant ne joue pas, ou très peu seulement. D'autant plus que la rémunération certaine qui attend tout pêcheur actif et régulier, exige quand même des efforts, et des efforts soutenus, voire quelque fatigue. De l'insuccès ou du succès actuellement médiocre des pêcheries organisées, il ne faudrait pas conclure à leur inutilité; l'oeuvre entreprise est de longue haleine et n'est pas de celles dont on peut attendre immédiatement les résultats visibles considérables. C'est une oeuvre de patience qui ne portera de fruit dans l'avenir que si l'on y donne sans relâche une application fidèle; le jour viendra où peut-être le succès de l'entreprise prouvera que les efforts actuels n'auront pas été vains.³⁴

La deuxième difficulté est aussi d'ordre humain: c'est l'indiscipline des pêcheurs, leur manque d'esprit de corps et du sens de l'intérêt général:

Il faut pour que ces organisations (coopératives de production) donnent des résultats un concours exceptionnel de qualités morales chez les participants: honnêteté, discipline, sentiment de l'intérêt général, ordre, esprit de prévoyance, etc... Je sais d'avance, conclut le Chef de circonscription de Kribi, que nous ne rencontrerons ces qualités dans aucun groupement Batanga même après les sélections les plus sévères.³⁵

De là à conclure que ces populations sont *par nature* indisciplinées et qu'on ne peut en rien modifier cette situation, il n'y a qu'un pas que bien de nos compatriotes franchiraient allègrement aujourd'hui. Au contraire, le Chef de Circonscription pense que "tout est à faire" chez ces pêcheurs amateurs qui sont appelés à devenir des pêcheurs professionnels. Le sens de

³⁴ MONOD, Th. op.cit. pp. 418-419.

³⁵ ib. p. 421.

l'histoire les y oblige. Naguère, note l'Administrateur, les peuples côtiers "vivaient confortablement dans leurs villages grâce au mouvement incessant de porteurs qui arrivaient chez eux", mais dans l'avenir, Kribi ne verra plus affluer vers elle "de gros convois de porteurs, les transports se feront par automobiles".³⁶ Il faut donc préparer les populations kribiennes à ces changements. Le Chef de Circonscription de Kribi prend des mesures qui s'imposent: constitution des équipes de pêcheurs, dans chacune d'elles, un lettré assiste le chef de l'équipe et prend note de l'apport de chaque individu afin d'assurer une répartition équitable de la faune maritime capturée. Surtout, il veille à ce que l'ordre et la discipline règnent:

"Tout défaillance est réprimée, écrit-il: il faut une contrainte analogue à celle qui est imposée pour les cultures vivrières. La discipline, l'esprit de suite, l'organisation qui sont les conditions de la réussite doivent être imposées. La première semaine, j'ai obtenu 90 Kgs de poisson. Les équipes avaient très mal fonctionné. Il s'était produit de graves défaillances. J'espère arriver à obtenir 100 kgs par semaine de chaque équipe, puis 200 kgs..."³⁷

On imagine facilement qu'au sein des équipes de pêche l'usage de la chicotte devait être de rigueur. Si cette pratique pédagogique est aujourd'hui dépassée, l'essentiel reste incontournable: la nécessité de contraindre d'une façon ou d'une autre, les individus à adopter de nouveaux modes de comportement. Car l'entreprise dont il est question ici ressemble fort bien à une oeuvre d'éducation. Il s'agit, certes, non pas de transmettre aux jeunes générations les us et coutumes de la société mais, de faire adopter par tout un peuple les manières d'agir et de penser nées certes, d'autres cerveaux, mais conformes à la situation qu'il vit. De même que l'individu non éduqué et non socialisé devient un déviant et vit en marge du groupe, de même un peuple qui ne s'adapte pas au contexte de son temps rate-t-il le tournant de l'histoire. Or, le concept de contrainte inhère celui d'éducation. Pas d'éducation sans contrainte. Ainsi, le peuple doit-il être contraint de changer ses habitudes. Se poser ici le problème de l'opportunité de bousculer les habitudes des peuples, d'amener les uns à adopter les comportements des autres, nous semble sortir de notre propos. En fait, rien ici ne vient d'ailleurs: l'ordre, la discipline, l'organisation étant partout "les conditions de la réussite", on les fait vivre par les pêcheurs conformément au contexte de leur histoire et aux données de leur environnement.

Que devint cette vaste entreprise de restructuration de la pêche artisanale initiée par le Gouverneur Marchand? Th. MONOD en donne les premiers résultats dans son ouvrage (Cf. pp. 419 ss). On peut supposer que la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale et, surtout les revendications

³⁶ib. p. 420.

³⁷ib. pp. 421-422.

indépendantistes des nationalistes camerounais qui la suivirent entraînaient un certain désengagement de la part de l'Administration coloniale. Par contre, il n'a pas de doute qu'au début des années soixante-dix, la situation de la pêche artisanale maritime au Cameroun demeurait, dans le fond, la même qu'à l'aube de la colonisation française: prédominance de la pêche individuelle et d'auto-consommation, inorganisation de circuits de commercialisation du poisson, rusticité des engins et empirisme des méthodes de pêche, indiscipline des pêcheurs, etc... Les mêmes causes produisant les mêmes effets, l'impulsion nouvelle que l'Administration camerounaise a donnée à ce secteur n'a pas produit immédiatement les résultats escomptés. La situation s'est même quelque peu compliquée avec la rentrée en compte des pesanteurs propres à notre administration.

Il nous semble que l'échec total en ce domaine ne peut être une fatalité que si l'on se refuse à jeter un regard évaluatif sur cette action administrative.

Cette action des pouvoirs publics auprès des pêcheurs artisans se résume en un encadrement humain, technique et matériel. Quelques-unes des structures de cet encadrement sont en place depuis quelques années. Si l'on se réfère au rapport du Chef Secteur de l'Océan cité plus haut, les infrastructures et le personnel en place sont insuffisants:

"Le centre (MIDEPECAM) est fonctionnel depuis Novembre 1984. Il vend le matériel moderne de pêche; moteur Hors Bord, filets; mais à peine l'ouverture la pénurie se fait sentir, puis- qu'après le Comice, des pêcheurs s'y sont rendus acquérir des filets, mais en vain". (p. 7)

Les moniteurs de pêche chargés de l'animation de la pêche, de la récolte des statistiques et de la perception des taxes d'inspection sanitaire vétérinaire, ne disposent, ni de moyens de locomotion, ni d'instruments de pesée. Celui que nous avons rencontré à Londji doit couvrir à pieds, sur une distance de 22 km, 8 villages de pêcheurs: Londji, Ebuda Vae, Idolo, Djaman Mony, Hondja II, Hondja I, Lokoundje, Pala. Dans ces conditions, tous les sites ne peuvent aucunement être tous les jours visités! Sur les huit villages, six sont occupés par de pêcheurs nigériens qui eux, pêchent pour vendre.

Le bureau du moniteur de pêche est situé à quelques mètres de la route carrossable, sur une piste peu praticable. En principe, les revendeurs qui passent sur la route portant des ballots de poissons fumés doivent s'arrêter et faire peser leur charge, puis payer la taxe correspondante. Non seulement rien ne les contraint à s'arrêter mais, même s'ils le faisaient, la balance ne fonctionne pas! Son collègue basé à Ebodje couvre à pieds, lui aussi, 14 villages, de Campo-

Beach à Lolabe; quand nous sommes passé sur les lieux, aux dires des pêcheurs, sa balance était en panne depuis trois ans. Lorsque de temps en temps, il arrive à ces agents de la CDPM d'être par hasard sur une plage au moment où les pêcheurs débarquent, ou quand ils rencontrent les revendeurs portant des ballots de poissons fumés, ils estiment à vue le poids de cette marchandise...

C'est ainsi que nous savons qu'au premier semestre 1984-1985, le poisson fumé produit et contrôlé dans le Secteur de l'Océan a été de 177 095 kgs pour une valeur de 52.547.500 Frs. Le même secteur a expédié hors de ses frontières à même période 49.430 kgs de poisson fumé.³⁸

Les agents de l'Etat qui sont astreints à accomplir une tâche aussi ingrate, souffrent d'un mal plus profond: l'incrompréhension des populations. Des spécialistes qui sont censés éduquer les pêcheurs en leur apprenant des méthodes modernes de pêche manquent complètement de prestige auprès de ces derniers. Les populations imputent leur inactivité, soit à leur ignorance des techniques de pêche, soit au fait qu'ils sont étrangers au milieu:

Nous, hommes de la mer, personne de nous n'est responsable des structures officielles de la pêche. Tous ces responsables n'ont jamais mis pied dans une pirogue" (Entretien avec les pêcheurs, 25.03.1985).

Ainsi s'ébranlent les bases d'un édifice porteur de beaucoup d'espoir.

En somme, les problèmes de la pêche artisanale maritime ne sont pas, comme certains de croient, insolubles. C'est parce qu'on ignore leur nature qu'on les fait dépendre soit du sous-développement économique de notre pays, soit de l'appartenance ethnique des pêcheurs. Ainsi nos populations côtières seraient, par nature, paresseuses, indociles, et les Nigériens dynamiques.

Pour nous, toute action thérapeutique à ce niveau doit revêtir un caractère éducatif et viser en primeur lieu les représentations mentales. Faire en sorte que l'individu accorde aux autres la même humanité dont il s'estime être doté est le plus sûr moyen de le rendre serviable, coopératif, travailleur, juste et honnête. Un tel message peut être diffusé lors des tournées des reponsables administratifs et politiques, et les rencontres des encadreurs de la CDPM. Mais le discours moral ne porte que s'il est prononcé par un "meneur" qui inspire confiance. C'est

³⁸Cf. NDE, E. op.cit.p. 14.

pourquoi il importe que les encadreurs jouissent d'un grand prestige auprès des pêcheurs, prestige lié à leur sens de dévouement et à leur compétence professionnelle.

Le manque de moyens financiers n'est pas un obstacle majeur si les objectifs d'une action sont clairs et la détermination à la mener, profonde. De quel poids réel pèsent sur le budget de l'Etat une pirogue motorisée et une balance en bon état? On peut retorquer que l'Etat a à faire face à l'achat de milliers et de milliers de "pirogues" et de "balances" sur tout le territoire. Il est aussi vrai que du moment qu'il existe un moniteur de pêche quelque part, ces outils lui sont absolument nécessaires.

La vivification et l'opérationnalisation progressives des structures d'encadrement mises en place par l'Etat sont en fait le vrai message qui apportera à nos pêcheurs artisans un supplément de foi en eux-mêmes. "Doter l'homme d'une foi, écrivait Gustave Le Bon, c'est décupler sa force".³⁹ Et Serge MOSCOVICI de commenter ce passage:

"La foi est chez une foule ce que l'énergie atomique est dans la matière; la force la plus considérable et presque la plus terrifiante dont un homme puisse disposer. La croyance agit".⁴⁰

Une pression de cette nature est beaucoup plus efficace qu'une flopée de coups de chicotte.

³⁹Cité par S. MOSCOVICI in *L'âge des foules*, Edition Complexe Bruxelles, 1985, p. 169.

⁴⁰MOSCOVICI, S.: *op.cit.*p. 169.

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AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION FOR FOOD SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN CAMEROON

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Cameroon is one of the few sub-Saharan African countries that can boast of being food self-sufficient. And all those who are familiar with the food situation in black Africa will easily admit that Cameroon does deserve this claim to fame. Indeed as opposed to several other African countries, Cameroun has not suffered from any food shortage, let alone famine, since independence; people are not starving either in the cities and towns or in the villages and rural areas. And, even during the economic crisis the country is going through now, food market places are still full of all kinds of products for anybody to buy.

It is not my intention, in the following pages, to try and show how this enviable situation came about. I shall rather address myself to the question: what can be done, especially in the field of education, to make food self-reliance more effective and to sustain and maintain food self-sufficiency in Cameroon? But, in order to better stress what I think can be done, I shall briefly present what is being done now first.

Training experts in agricultural problems.

The main contribution of the Cameroonian education system to food self-sufficiency today consists in training experts in agricultural problems. There exist indeed training schools that turn out cadres at all levels, from the highest ranking to the lowest position of responsibility. Three ministries are respectively in charge of educating these different types of personnel: the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESRES), the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI), and the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MJS).

Under the authority of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research¹ two University Institutions² are concerned with the training of personnel in the domains of food

¹The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research was created in 1984. Before this date, higher education was part and parcel of the Ministry of National Education. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research supervises also all the research activities carried on in the country.

²Five University Institutions fall under the authority of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research: the University of Yaoundé, the University Centre of Dschang, the University Centre of Douala, the University Centre of Ngaoundéré, and the University Centre of Buéa. The University Centres were created in 1977 and are exclusively made of professional training schools ("*grandes écoles*" in French).

production and processing and livestock. The University Centre of Dschang (UCD) is totally devoted to training in agriculture. It comprises two schools, which teach agriculture, animal husbandry and pastoral studies, forestry, rural economics and rural sociology:

- ENSA (National Higher School of Agriculture) enrolls *Baccalauréat* or GCE/AL³ holders and turns them into (*Ingénieurs*) *agronomes* in 5 years;
- ITA (Institute of Agricultural Techniques) recruits *Baccalauréat* or CGE/AL holders and BEPC or GCE/OL⁴ holders and prepares the former to become *Ingénieurs des Travaux* in 3 years and the latter to become *Techniciens* in 3 years also.

The *Ingénieurs agronomes* enjoy a higher ranking than the *Ingénieurs des Travaux*, who are supposed to get a less theoretical training than the former and therefore to be closer to the people actually involved in agricultural production. At the higher education level, the training of the *Techniciens* is the lowest and it prepares them to much lower positions of responsibility.

It is worth noting that the University Centre of Dschang is now undergoing very important reforms aimed at transforming it into a landgrant type institution. I shall say more about that later.

The second institution of higher education that is concerned with food problems is the University Centre of Ngaoundéré (UCN). Right now it consists of one school, ENSIAAC (National Higher School for Agro-Food Industries of Cameroon), the special characteristic of which consists in training its students in the area of agro-industry: the transforming and processing of agricultural and pastoral products and the conservation thereof, as well as maintenance. ENSIAAC recruits *Baccalauréat* or GCE/AL holders and BEPC or GCE/OL holders. And the school turns the former either into *Ingénieurs de conception* in 5 years or into *Ingénieurs des Travaux* in 3 years; and the latter into *Techniciens* in 3 years.

While the schools of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research provide the country with upper, middle upper, and middle ranking cadres (*cadres supérieurs, moyens-supérieurs et moyens*), the school under the authority of the Ministry of Agriculture are in charge of training middle lower and lower ranking personnel. These schools provide their students with basic notions and training in agriculture and forestry: the *Centres Régionaux*

³The *Baccalauréat* and the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE/AL) are the secondary school leaving certificates in the French school system and in the British school system. Cameroon has its own version of both the *Baccalauréat* and the GCE/AL.

⁴The *Brevet d'Etudes du premier Cycle* (BEPC) and the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (GCE/OL) are certificates a student gets half way through the French school system and the British school system respectively. Here again Cameroon has its own version of either certificate.

d'Agriculture (CRA) (Regional Agricultural Training Centers), turn out *Assistants Agricoles* and the *Ecoles Techniques d'Agriculture* (ETA) (Agricultural Technical Training Schools) run out *Moniteurs Agricoles* or *Encadreurs Agricoles*. These are personnel who are sent to the villages (supposedly) to work closely with people on their plantations. However, it is worth noting that their education and training are almost entirely geared towards cash crops production; therefore, they can hardly be of any help to food producers on their peanuts, corn, cassava or yams farms.

The *Centres de formation coopérative* (Cooperative Training Centres, CFC) train a special type of personnel, namely cadres meant to help create, organize and run cooperatives among agricultural producers.

Surprisingly enough, the Ministry of Youth and Sports is also involved in educating some of the personnel that participate somehow in food production, as it is still in charge of training experts and cadres of Community Development (CD), although the Department of Community Development itself is now part of the Ministry of Agriculture.⁵ This training is carried out at the National Institute of Youth and Sports (INJS) and consists of courses in social psychology, group dynamics, leadership, motivation and the like. This program reflects more the concept of "animation", familiar to the French speaking side of the country, than the notion of "community development" as the English speaking provinces are used to it.

Now, the very existence of all these schools and the important amounts of human and financial resources invested in them by the State are a clear indication of the key role the Government assigns to agriculture in general, and to food production in particular, in the development process of Cameroon.⁶ And it is expected that these schools shall, in turn, live up to the expectations the Government and the nation as a whole have put on them, which they have been trying to do so far.

That is the more reason why one cannot help deploring the fact that most people trained in these different schools turn out to be bureaucrats rather than actual contributors to agricultural or

⁵The Community Development Department was inherited from the Federated State of West Cameroon in 1972; its closest counterpart in the Federated State of East Cameroon was the *Service de l'Animation*. The Community Development Department Services have gone from the Ministry of Youth and Sports to the Presidency of the Republic and then to the Prime Ministry, before becoming a Department of the Ministry of Agriculture. This in itself may be an indication of how this notion is not very clear in the minds of some decision makers in Cameroon.

⁶Other important efforts and investments made outside the field of education, and mainly through the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI) and the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Industries (MINEPIA), are also an indication of this special option for agriculture and food production.

pastoral production, let alone becoming agricultural or pastoral producers themselves. One can find several reasons to try and explain this state of affairs.

For one thing, people trained in these schools tend to develop what I call a "civil servant mentality".⁷ They enter these schools on the basis of competitive examinations, with the explicit or implicit understanding that, when they graduate, they shall work for the Government or for parastatal companies.⁸ Their ideal is, however, to do bureaucratic work in an office, and their tendency is to follow the law of the lesser effort, since Government employees get paid anyway regardless of the amount of work they actually put in. This mentality and this attitude do not foster their becoming agricultural producers themselves, i.e. creating their own farms, plantations or agro-industries.

Nor do they prepare them to be of real help in advising the farmers in the rural areas: the general tendency is for this personnel to establish condescending, patronizing, imposing and authoritative relations and methods vis-à-vis the rural populations.

Furthermore, programs and training in these schools are still in general more theoretical and less practical than one would expect them to be. The training programs do generally include short field training periods (*stages*) and sometimes fieldwork research ranging from one to three months duration. However, these exercises can be -- and generally are -- considered as school assignments and student homework rather than real attempts at constant contact with farm or plantation work, the rest of the programs consisting mostly of theoretical lecturing, readings and examinations. Some of the schools also own experimental farms and/or pilot projects that help their students visualize some of the teachings, or experiment *in vivo* some of the research findings *in vitro*. But so far, no school has come out with an extension program to reach out to the plantation owners or the farmers in the rural areas, in order to constantly help them ameliorate their knowledge and techniques of food production.

Finally, one has to admit that there is no large scale agricultural education in the country as a whole. Only those who qualify to enter the different schools mentioned above get training in agriculture; besides those, nobody else is exposed to any course or lecture on agriculture in the

⁷This is not peculiar to agricultural training schools: the "civil servant mentality" seems to characterize graduates from most *Grandes Ecoles* and even from other schools of higher or professional training education.

⁸On entering the school, each student signs a ten year contract (*Engagement décennal*) whereby he (she) will have to work for at least 10 years for the Government, since the State is paying for his (her) education. The terms of this ten-year contract have been changed in the last two years for scholarship holders, to mean that the student will simply have to work for at least 10 years in Cameroon.

formal educational system.⁹ From time to time also, different ministries concerned (e.g. the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Women's Affairs) organize seminars for adults, during which the participants are exposed to elementary notions in agriculture and/or to techniques of farming. But, here again, there is more than practices and there is no follow-up.

Focusing on Agricultural Education

As I said before, Cameroon is doing well so far as food self-sufficiency is concerned: there may be malnutrition, but there is no hunger in the country; many food items are imported from abroad, but this is not due to the fact that there is lack or shortage of food nor that people are starving. However, I think that Cameroon can do even better. I have also tried to show that the education system is doing something to address the problems of agricultural production in Cameroon by providing the experts and cadres thereof. But I believe it could and ought to do even more to improve food self-sufficiency and to insure food self-reliance in the country. This concerns both formal and non-formal education.

In formal education, *there is*, I think, *pressing need to introduce the concept and practice of extension in the existing schools*, in order to actually be of help to agricultural producers, and particularly to the small farmers and grazers in rural areas. Fortunately enough, the University Centre of Dschang is now undergoing very important reforms aimed at transforming it into a landgrant type institution, the only such university in Central Africa and even, I would dare say, in the whole of French speaking sub-Saharan Africa. Curricula are to be changed and reorganized, research is to be launched and intensified and, above all, extension programs are to be introduced and systematically carried on. The Dschang University Centre will then be able to have the farmers benefit directly from the results of agricultural research and technological progress.

Food self-sufficiency and self-reliance are also likely to be enhanced if the students in agricultural schools are trained in such a way that they have a mind to become eventually food producers themselves. After all, they possess the know-how to better do so. And now that the

⁹Some private, semi-private or international institutions do also offer some training in agriculture. I have particularly in mind here the Office National de Participation au Développement (ONPD), a Government organization which recruits young men and women (called *assujettis* in French) and offers them in 2 years a military-like education, including training in agriculture. After their training, these young recruits are supposed to settle in the rural areas and create modern plantations and/or farms. However, they generally end up moving to the cities in search of employment. I also have in mind the Pan-African Institute for Development (PID), an international non-governmental institution the trainees of which are recruited as cadres by the Ministry of Agriculture or by development organisms.

Government encourages the creation of small and medium-size enterprises and industries by Cameroonians, they are in a better position than rural dwellers to get loans from credit banks or to get access to SODECAO, FONADER¹⁰ and other such funds.¹¹

Finally, I think there are several good reasons that should make Cameroon introduce at long last agricultural training programs in its secondary and primary schools. The Government's option to make agriculture the priority sector in the national economy and proclaim the farmers "*les seigneurs de la terre*" ("the lords of the land") has been stated over and over again. The vital contributions of the *Office National de Commercialisation des Produits de Base* (ONCPN) and the like to national economic ventures such as Cameroon Airlines and Cameroon Shipping Lines and, *a contrario*, the economic crisis the country is going through today show clearly that when Cameroon's agriculture fares well, Cameroon's economy also fares well. When one adds to these the impressive number of drop-outs from the school system.¹² and the difficulties in finding employment today both in the public and the private sectors, especially at the secondary school and the primary school levels¹³, the necessity to introduce agricultural training in primary and secondary schools becomes obvious, since plenty of land is still available for people to till and exploit.¹⁴

Physical education has been introduced in the school system at all levels¹⁵, to indicate the need for man's well balanced education between mind and body (*mens sana in corpore sano*). English and French have also been introduced as requirements in the school system from higher education down to primary school, to stress the importance of bilingualism in the country and the commitment of the Government to that policy. It would therefore be logical and necessary to introduce agricultural training programs in the Cameroonian school system and appoint teachers to teach them,¹⁶ for the country to be true to the priority it has given to the agricultural sector.

¹⁰SODECAO (*Société de Développement du Cacao*) and FONADER (*Fonds National de Développement Rural*) are two among the numerous organisms created by the government to promote rural development. Others are SODECOTON (*Société de Développement du Coton*), SODEBLE (*Société de Développement du Blé*), SOCOODER (*Société Coopérative de Développement Rural*), to name just a few.

¹¹Many from ENSIAAC, for instance, now have difficulties finding a job. And it doesn't seem to occur to them that they could try and create their own industries.

¹²Statistics from the Ministry of National Education have it that out of 1000 children who enter primary school, only 4 make it to higher education.

¹³Even some graduates from higher education have difficulties finding jobs today. To alleviate the problem created by these "*diplômés chômeurs*" (unemployed graduates), the Government decided in 1985 to recruit 1,700 of them in different ministries and administrative bodies. But today the State can no longer afford doing that.

¹⁴The use of this land needs to be regulated by land tenure reform laws, though.

¹⁵Every year national Sports Competitions are organized for secondary schools (OSSUC) and for higher education students (*Universiades*) by the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

¹⁶Surprisingly enough, there are no agricultural teachers training schools in the country to date. To my knowledge, the experiment of the *Institut Pédagogique à Vocation Rurale* (IPAR) in the late 1960's and early 1970's has completely failed.

This early formal education would have people used to agricultural techniques and practices (new and old) from childhood and youth, and prepare them to become better farmers and food producers than the older generations. The "*Prix du Travail Manuel*" (Manual Work Award) instituted by the Government¹⁷ can only serve as an incentive to do some manual work at school: it cannot be considered as agricultural training; nor can it be enough to achieve the objectives of food self-sufficiency and self-reliance.

As concerns non-formal education in agriculture, which seems also to be an utmost necessity, it would be given more effectively through extension programs set up by schools and/or other development organizations. Indeed, rather than taking people from their villages to some training center for a few days, weeks or even months, it would be more useful, I think, to go and meet them regularly on their farms and plantations or grazing land and pastoral resorts. The populations would then benefit both in know-how acquisition and in improving their production activities. The problem of follow-up would also be taken care of, since the training and practice would take place on the farms themselves.

Women would have to be given more and special attention in this process of non-formal education. It is indeed common knowledge that, in Cameroon as elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, women produce most of the foodstock, as opposed to men who are mostly cashcrops producers. And, today, women are also getting more and more involved in the cashcrop business. It would not be an overstatement, therefore, to say that women are contributing more to food self-sufficiency and therefore deserve being given special treatment in agricultural education.

If these suggestions were taken into consideration, education could do much more than it has accomplished so far to maintain food self-sufficiency and enhance food self-reliance in Cameroon. This would not solve all the problems of food in development, though: the country would still have to address itself to the important issues of land tenure reform, food distribution and therefore, food transport and marketing.

Summary

The school system in Cameroon has contributed to food self-sufficiency in the country by training experts and cadres in the areas of agriculture, livestock, forestry and agro-pastoral

¹⁷Each year the Ministry of National Education awards this Prize to deserving primary and secondary schools.

industries. But education could play an even more important and effective role in sustaining food self-sufficiency and enhancing food self-reliance, the author of this paper thinks, by giving a more practical bent to the training programs that already exist, by introducing agricultural training programs in secondary school and primary school, by adopting and spreading extension programs and by paying special attention to women in rural areas, who actually produce most of the food crops in the country.

DISCUSSANT'S NOTE

SESSION IX - POLITICAL CULTURE AND NATIONAL MOBILISATION

Wim van Binsbergen

A discussion of:

Nantang Jua - The petty bourgeoisie and the politics of social justice in Cameroon

Richard Fardon - The creation of peripheral places: an example, a history and a comparison

Fabien Eboussi - La crise économique et la mobilisation des militants

The discussion of these three papers in one session poses considerable problems of integration. Situated together towards the end of our assessment of the political economy of Cameroon, they are implied to have a converging bearing on the contemporary political process of the country. Yet they are widely divergent, even though Richard Fardon in his oral presentation pointed out a possible common theme which had initially escaped me; in a way, he said, all three papers deal with: what does the population consider a just and viable national society, and how do they respond to the socio-political reality in this light?

On a more abstract level, the papers are concerned with the production of adequate academic knowledge on modern Cameroon, and with the relevance of that knowledge. They touch on three major concepts that are often considered to be applicable to Cameroonian society:

- 'tribalism' (Fardon)
- class formation (Jua)
- political mobilization (Eboussi)

These concepts have a wider use than academic work alone - they are often at the heart of political debate and of social processes. In that context, the possible contribution of the social and political sciences would be to lend scholarly precision to these concepts, to free them of built-in stereotypes, to verify empirically the relationships that are commonly associated with these concepts. Can modern scholarship add to our understanding of 'tribe', class and political mobilization, in a way that could have, or at least deserves to have, an impact on the socio-political process in the wider society of Cameroon?

From this perspective, we can see all three papers strive at freeing their central concept from the *reification* to which social and political concepts so often fall victim. Can such critical cleansing make them into viable instruments for political analysis and action?

Fardon shows that the *ethnic group* is not a thing, formed once for all and henceforth acting out some well-defined identity within well-defined geographical and socio-cultural boundaries - no, instead the protean nature of the ethnic identity of the Chamba is traced in three different historical contexts, each leading to an amazingly different variety of being Chamba, with each variety clearly related to the nature of the economic and political context in which it finds itself. In this, of course, *Fardon's* paper is very much up-to-date, and allows us to hear the echoes of contemporary work on ethnicity in many other parts of Africa in addition to Cameroon. Its message for practical politics would be that the fixation on ill-understood and therefore fossilized ethnic categories would block our view from the underlying dynamics of groups of people defining and seeking their interests in the context of the changing nation-state.¹ Ethnic groups are seldom what they are taken to be in the popular image — and an ethnically-based argument in socio-political practical discourse, therefore, would often appear to be shorthand for an underlying discourse in terms of economic interest, historical experience, and the perception of social justice.

In his explicit and critical discussion of social justice in Cameroon, in a vein that contributes to the de-reification debate, *Nantang Jua* stresses the fact that the *state* is not an abstract thing blindly justifying, through some legal authority in the Weberian sense, whatever patterns of economic extraction and appropriation that state generates or supports - no, the state is (also) a group of people who have appropriated the state apparatus and use it for their own particularistic class interests.

In developing his argument, characterized by commitment and concern, *Jua* marks his political identity by using popular images coined by Marx (who called the peasantry a 'bag of potatoes') and Fanon ('the wretched of the earth').²

The figures in the paper are convincing and alarming: investments in tourism twice as high as those in agriculture; price indexes for elite families having risen by 0.6% but for average

¹ Or even, in the Chamba case, given the option of more than one, neighbouring nation-states.

² But Fanon did not particularly refer, by this phrase, to 'over 70% of [Cameroon's] active population (...) made up of farmers who constitute "the wretched of the earth"', but to the colonized peoples.

families by 14.9% between April 1986 and April 1987. The patterns of self-promotion and self-cooptation within the state elite are adequately evoked.

But especially when, with the topic of social justice, such a vital aspect of modern Cameroonian society is touched, one is well advised to dwell somewhat longer on the descriptive and analytical level before plunging into a normative approach that points the finger at class injustice. The concept and the contents of social justice are not universal datums, and the actual assessment of a socio-political system's performance in this respect partly depends on the specific cultural and symbolic patterns the society in question has developed to structure inequality, hierarchy, redistribution, recruitment of elites, etc. I say *partly*, for my political views are sufficiently in line with Jua's to share his concern, admire the courage of his assessment, and believe that social justice is not entirely culture-specific.

While deferring judgment, our understanding of how the socio-political system of Cameroon works might be enhanced if we ask additional sociological questions. If the social sciences do possess the illuminating and liberating force the founding fathers of the profession sought to endow them with, such understanding would not necessarily justify the status quo: it might, alternatively, help us to formulate realistic proposals for change.

What is the ideological and judicial background of the processes of appropriation Jua evokes? Clearly they have a basis in existing social relations, where they derive justification if not legitimation, in the popular perception, in a number of ways. Ethnicity creates networks of regional accumulation and redistribution that benefit not only those at the top but also those at the grass-roots level (at least in the latter's subjective perception). Neo-traditional structures of aristocracies and chiefs act out time-honoured concepts of hierarchy and cultural identity which may well alleviate such inequality as they entail. Patronage, much like ethnicity, creates links across the class boundaries, and syphons off some wealth (if not enough) from the top to the bottom of the socio-economic system, in exchange for political and ideological support from below. And, in a society whose state elite is only a few decades old and recruited through personal mobility partly based on educational success, patterns of kinship tend to encompass both state elites and their less successful and powerful relatives, - thus creating a structure within which these processes of redistribution can be embedded. Viewed from this perspective we can begin to understand the relative stability and persistence of, and even the popular support for, the patterns of inequality as exposed by Jua. We might even begin to take a more relative view of the elites' wealth. For surely, they cannot cut themselves loose from this wider social network of redistribution, so that, ironically, they may well have to be increasingly greedy in

order to be increasingly able to live up to the expectations of redistribution from below. Part of their wealth - but which part? - is sociologically not theirs, nor meant to be.

Further questions could be asked along this line. What is it in the nature of the state that allows it to become a major instrument for the accumulation of wealth? How do we balance our assessment when patronage turns out to create both political stability (which many of us favour) and inequality (which many of us abhor)? What real possibility is there for change? Would change be likely to come from below (after a breakdown of the redistributive mechanisms?) or rather from the top, from conflict between factions in the state elite itself? What is, in this respect, the contribution of scholarship - in other words, what, again, is the relevance of scholarly analysis in the face of the serious problems that beset modern Cameroonian society? Is there a way to transform our armchair argument, however well-intentioned, into political mobilization?

Eboussi's paper³, finally, poses the philosophical and methodological *prolegomena* for an analysis of political mass mobilization rather than (as in his oral presentation) presenting the descriptive results of such an analysis. In terms of de-reification this author even goes so far as to present reification (in a particular Wittgensteinian reformulation) as the central difficulty in the study of society and politics. One can only agree with Eboussi's passionate plea for *understanding* of socio-cultural phenomena, although one is surprised to miss out Max Weber among the company of such eminent minds as Spinoza, Wittgenstein and Bourdieu, to whose works the argument refers. Equally well-taken is Eboussi's point that Africa should not be made into the passive testing ground for theories primarily derived from the study of other societies and epochs - the sort of thinking that, for instance, forced me, a junior lecturer and budding Africanist, to teach nothing but the sociology of industrial North Atlantic society when I first came to the University of Zambia in 1971. But a closer look at the development of African Studies in the last quarter of century might have somewhat alleviated Eboussi's fears. The convergence of interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary approaches, from political economy to history (the present conference is a case in point) did indeed generate a common ground of Africanist questions, at a middle range between description and theory — to such an extent that now one would deplore the *lack* of theory in African Studies, rather than the imposition of alien theory.⁴ However, while many of the other contributions in this conference have rushed to empirical arguments within the narrower confines of the authors' respective disciplines,

³ Unfortunately, Dr. Eboussi's paper was not submitted in time for publication. (P.G. - P.K.)

⁴ Cf. W.M.J van Binsbergen & J.M. Schoffeleers (eds), 1985, *Theoretical explorations in African religion*, London/Boston: Kegan Paul International.

Eboussi's paper reminds us of the necessity of methodological and philosophical reflection, without which the attempt at interdisciplinary exchange that characterizes this conference, would utterly fail.

THE PETTY BOURGEOISIE AND THE POLITICS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE IN CAMEROON

Nantang Jua, CRESS/ISH, Yaounde

(B)etter aware of the situation and realities..., I absolutely channelled national activities along the paths that are most favourable to speeding up our rate of development and improving the quality of life of our citizens... Indeed, the ultimate aim is certainly to build and sustain a society which is prosperous. But it is even more to forge a Cameroonian society where everyone participates in its development efforts and equally shares in the fruits of its growth...¹

Je suis tout à fait conscient des insuffisances de notre politique de justice sociale, des inégalités et des déséquilibres qui existent entre les différentes couches de notre population... En effet, les personnes nanties ne constituent qu'une minorité alors que le grand nombre connaît parfois une réelle pauvreté.²

Cameroon's development policy is hinged on four pillars - balanced development, self-reliant development, communal liberalism and social justice. Whether these goals are complementary or conflicting is not germane to this paper which focuses rather on their feasibility. From the above quotes, it can be deduced that there is an unbridgeable (?) gap between ideology and reality in the realm of social justice. This incongruity - between the normative and the empirical - has spun a lot of polemics as far as the development problematic is concerned, especially in the Third World. Restricting my analysis to the case of social justice in Cameroon, this paper begins to examine whether this incongruity can be attributed to a failure of will or to a failure of vision. This, question cannot be answered failing an examination of the nature of the post-colonial state in Africa, its class composition and the hegemonic function of the ruling class.

It has been posited that one can distinguish between two phases of the state: one during which the state is merely an instrument for the accumulation of wealth and another during which it is treated by various classes and/or fractions of classes as an object of struggles.³ This is

¹President Paul Biya in "General Policy Report", *The Congress of the New Deal*, Bamenda, 21-24 March 1985. (Group Media International), n.d., p. 19.

²Paul Biya, interview in *Cameroon Tribune*, N° 3818, 8 et 9 mars 1987, p. 21.

³Jacques Depelchin "The Transformations of the Petty Bourgeoisie and the State in Post-Colonial Zaire", *Review of African Political Economy*, N°. 22, October-December 1981, p. 30.

especially true of post-colonial states in Africa were efforts at state formation and the processes of class formation constitute some of the most salient features. It has been advocated that these processes are being conditioned by the petty bourgeoisie that is Africa's ruling class. This class is a triumvirate that comprises the governing class whose corporate interests are subservient to those of the metropolitan powers, the small capitalists (traders and kulaks) and a supportive class, the bureaucratic salariat. Interpenetration is very common among this petty bourgeoisie as it seeks to reproduce itself. Whereas it may compromise on some peripheral interests so as to garner support for itself, it jealously guards over its vital interests. This insatiable desire to retain state power is not enigmatic as the latter is a patrimonial state that is "the major avenue of upward mobility, status, power and wealth."⁴

CAMEROON'S PETTY BOURGEOISIE

Studies on class formation in Cameroon have adopted the restrictive approach, thus the inordinate focus on the ruling class.⁵ It is noteworthy that there is a budding consensus among all these studies that this class - which comprises members of government, hauts fonctionnaires, la haute magistrature, top officials (civilian and uniformed) responsible for security and military, members of the intelligentsia directly involved with government, members of parliament, businessmen directly involved with the government and the leaders of parapublic institutions, and apparatchiks - is composed of, at most, 1500 people. Some would argue that this figure is spurious as it is based on fragmentary and inconclusive evidence. This is a moot point, as the aim of this paper is to show how the governing class, acting in collusion with members of the supportive class, has turned the state into an instrument for the accumulation of wealth.

The petty bourgeoisie in Cameroon, as in most of post-colonial Africa is going through its chrysalis. Membership into this class is obtained either through invitation or cooptation and by seizing the chance. Access into the governing class is usually obtained through cooptation. Le Vine has aptly demonstrated that one of the characteristics of the governing class is the

⁴Thomas M. Callaghy "Politics and Vision in Africa" in Patrick Chabal (ed.), *Political domination in Africa*, Cambridge: CUP, 1986, p. 36

⁵see, inter alia Jean François Bayart "Les catégories dirigeantes au Cameroun" *Revue française d'études politiques africaines*, Vol. 9 (105), 1974, EDIAFRIC "Les élites Camerounaises. Qui est qui au Cameroun" Numéro spécial du *Bulletin de l'Afrique Noire*, Paris: EDIAFRIC, 1976; Pierre Flambeau Ngayap, *Cameroun: Qui gouverne* Paris: L'Harmattan, 1983; and Victor T. Le Vine, "Leadership and Regime Changes in Perspective", in Michael G. Schatzberg and I. William Zartman (eds.), *The Political Economy of Cameroon*, New York: Praeger, 1986. It should be noted that these studies have avoided a lot of controversy by referring to this class as the "ruling" or "governing" class rather than the "dominant" class.

longevity of its members.⁶ This is as a result of the patrimonial character of the post-colonial state and the penchant among the members of this group for the consolidation of their positions. Permutations occur but these are no more than mere façades (of change). consequently, it is commonplace to appoint former ministers as ambassadors.

TABLE 1

Name	Ministry	Ambassadorial appointment
Jean Keutcha	Foreign Affairs	Belgium; now China
Felix Sabal Lecco	President of Social and Economic Council	Italy
Philomen Yunji Yang	Mines and Power	Canada
Gibering Bol Alima	Higher Education and Scientific Research	United Kingdom
Aminou Oumarou	Foreign Affairs	Saudi Arabia
André Ngongang Ouandji	Justice	Spain
Etienne Ntsama	Finance	Japan
Christopher Nsahlai	Ass. Secretary General at the Presidency	Central African Republic

Sources: Decrees N° 84-914 of 26 July 1984; N° 85-571 of 20 April 1985 and N° 84-98 of 22 January 1987.

Failing an ambassadorial appointment most former ministers are appointed to strategic public sector posts.

⁶See Le Vine, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-44.

TABLE II

Name	Ministry	Corporation
Gilbert Andze Tsoungui	Defence	Chairman of the Board of FONADER
Youssoufa Daouda	Planning and Regional Development	Director General of CAMAIR
Toyne Mbog Felix Ayissi Mvodo	Telecommunications Territorial Adminis- tration	Director General of SODECAO Chairman of the Board of SNI
Samuel Eboua	Secretary General at the Presidency	Chairman of the Board of CAMAIR
Maikano Abdoulaye	Armed Forces	Director of LANAVET
Victor Kamga	Finance	Chairman of the Board of INTELCAM
Albert Ngome Kome	Transport	Director General of FONADER

Sources: *Africa Economic Digest*, Vol. 7, N° 18, 3-9 May 1986; Decrees N° 85-1234; N° 85-1235; N° 85-1236 and N° 85-1237 of 14 September 1985.

As a result of this almost horizontal transfers, membership in the governing class is cumulative rather than fluctuating and fluid. A similar case does not obtain among the bureaucratic salariat who seize the chance (education) in order to gain access to the supportive class. Thus, the composition of this class is always in a state of flux. This characteristic is reinforced by the ability of the governing class to coopt some of its members into the upper echelons of this class that is "à la reserve de l'Etat".

TABLE III

Name	Profession	Political Position	Absorbed as	Index
Zanga Delphine Tsanga	Nurse (Special Class)	former Minister of Social Affairs	Minister Plenipoten- tiary	Category A2 940
Lobe Ekwele Nwalipenja	Tutor of Teachers Training College	Member of Parlia- ment	Minister Plenipotentiary	Category A2 940
Wadjiri Yaya	Executive Officer	Member of Parlia- ment	Foreign Affairs Secretary	Category A2 630
Jospheha Ngon Mua	Teacher (Grade 1)	Member of Parlia- ment	Foreign Affairs Secretary	Category A2 530
Ali Malounry	Executive Officer	Member of Parlia- ment	Foreign Affairs Secretary	Category A2 530
Houly Harambe	?	Member of Parlia- ment	Foreign Affairs Secretary	Category A2 480
Emah Basile	Treasurer Controller	Government Dele- gated of Yaounde	Senior Adminis- trative Officer	Category A2 940

Sources: Decrees N° 82-524 and N° 82-525 of 22 October 1982.

It is patently obvious from Table III that these apparatchiks who were/are bound to be relegated to virtual obscurity following the loss of political power have been catapulted to choice positions in the supportive class. This guarantees them enormous pecuniary benefits and plausibly another lucrative appointment to governing positions. Table III also provides irrefutable evidence of the interpenetration that occurs among the petty bourgeoisie in its quest to reproduce itself.

The possibility, if not the probability, of a (petty) bourgeoisie existing without a material basis is null. Given the lack of private capital in the post-colonial state, it is obvious that the state has to be used firstly, as an instrument for the accumulation of wealth and secondly as an object of struggles by various classes and/or fractions of classes, à la Depelchin's schema.

As Cameroon goes through the first phase, the petty bourgeoisie, in its determination to guarantee the reproduction of the whole system, has compromised on some of its peripheral rather than vital interests. Can the quest for social justice be seen from this vantage point? Whatever the case, it cannot be denied that the petty bourgeoisie is sponging on the state. This can be gleaned from the fact that under the Fifth Five-Year Development Plan, the amount of money spent on salaries increased from 149.7 in 1974-75 to circa 305.5 billion francs in 1978-79. This represented 25.8% and 26.8% of the national income respectively.⁷ Parenthetically, it should be pointed out that the public sector comprises only 170.000 as opposed to an active rural population of about 2.590.500 in 1981.⁸ The disparity, in terms of income becomes more glaring when it is realized that it would take a peasant about eight years to earn what a parliamentarian makes annually!⁹ It should be noted that this represents a marked increase over the 1960's ration which was 1:3.¹⁰

A focus on the salary structure does not begin to unravel the whole picture as to how the petty bourgeoisie, especially the bureaucratic-salariat fraction of this class, has used the state to accumulate wealth. The economic apparatuses of the state have undergone expansion. This is amply demonstrated by the fact that the National Investment Corporation has equity in more than 80 Corporations that was estimated at 52.8 billion francs CFA in 1986.¹¹ The state has also created parastatals to cater for the commanding heights of the economy, agro-industry and regional

⁷see Ministry de l'Economie et du Plan, *Ve Plan Quinquennal de Développement Economique, Social et Culturel 1986-1991*, p. 287.

⁸Ministère du Plan et de l'Aménagement du Territoire, *VIe Plan Quinquennal de Développement Economique, Social et Culturel 1986-1991*, p. 287.

⁹A parliamentarian's basic annual salary is about 1.760.000 francs per Decree N° 82-12 of 26 June 1982. A successful peasant in Nyamanga in the Ombessa-Bokito region, for example, earns about 216.500 francs per annum. See Mokpokpo Muki Dravi, *L'Allegement de la Pauvreté en Milieu Rural au Cameroun*, FAO, Série d'études approfondies: N° 11, 1984, p. 62.

¹⁰René Dumont *L'Afrique noire est mal partie*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1962, p. 235.

¹¹*Le Messager*, N° 113, 16 juillet au 02 août 1987, p. 6.

development. Whereas state capitalism, per se, may be important, it provides the governing class an opportunity to further coopt some members from the supportive class whose positions become almost sacrosanct, albeit their managerial (cap)abilities. It is little wonder that corruption or what has been referred to elsewhere as "prebendal politics"¹² has become rampant in Cameroon. This is aptly depicted by Cameroonians, facetiously or should I say their parlance, when they claim that managers of parastatals have "titres fonciers" over their concerns.¹³

The endemic prebendalization of power pervades both the para-public and public sectors. It is as a result of this that it has been posited that

Un fonctionnaire (au) Cameroun, c'est plutôt ce privilégié qui se sert de l'Etat et dans les caisses de l'Etat pour se constituer une fortune garantie de toute impunité, affichant au passage le plus souverain mépris pour tout qui n'est pas Etat ou fonction publique...¹⁴

Some may argue that acquiescence by the State to these practices is tangible evidence that the governing class does not want to carry out a full-fledged assault on the bureaucratic-salariat for fear of alienating it. Their argument could be buttressed by the fact that even the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court has stigmatized these practices while lamenting the inability of the courts to preempt or deter them.¹⁵ Whereas there is a kernel of truth to this argument, it should also be pointed out that Paul Biya has deplored this practice of "pots de vin" and "détournement des deniers publics" and iterated that sanctions are already being meted out on those that are found guilty.¹⁶ Biya further argued that the corruption of individuals impacted negatively on the state at large as it prompted the former to endorse inflated bills (surfacturation) presented for state contracts. Should this lead to a shortfall in state receipts, social development programmes, that help to promote social justice, would easily be shelved.

¹²Richard A. Joseph "Class, State and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria", *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. 21, N° 3 1983, passim. Clientelism, it should be noted, is a "by product of European rule". See R. Lemarchand, 'Political Clientelism and Ethnicity in Tropical Africa', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 66, 1972, p. 77.

¹³*Le Messager* op. cit. p. 5.

¹⁴Op. cit. p. 4. This corroborates an earlier observation by Cosme Dikoume that is cited in Richard A Joseph "Economy and Society" in R.A. Joseph (ed), *Gaullist Africa: Cameroon under Ahmadu Ahidjo*, Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1978, pp. 156-157.

¹⁵This can be inferred from Chief Justice Nguini's speech in which he cites Paul Biya that "(g)ardienne des libertés et de la sécurité des citoyens, la justice camerounaise doit devenir un véritable pouvoir judiciaire face à l'exécutif et au législatif", see Marcel Nguini "Discours de Monsieur le Premier Président", Audience Solennelle de Rentrée de la Cour Suprême 23 Décembre 1987, mimeo, passim.

¹⁶See interview by President Paul Biya in *Cameroon Tribune* N° 3804., 20 février 1987, p. 6. Biya has since taken measures to curb some of the excessive benefits that the bureaucratic-salariat, especially, enjoyed at the expense of the state. These include the 'suppression' of the use of administrative vehicles that had been virtually appropriated by those to whom they were attributed (see Decree N° 87/975 of 10 July 1987) and a law to control the abusive use of state telephones (Decree N° 87/972 of 10 July 1987).

Cognizant of the fact that it cannot be the eternal parasites of the state, the petty bourgeoisie has resorted to spread out the material basis of its wealth, thus its new-found interest in merchant capital. An overt manifestation of this trend is the proliferation of companies that carry out supplies for the State at lucrative prices that assures them a substantial profit margin. The overwhelming (?) presence of some members of the petty bourgeoisie, especially the governing and the bureaucratic-salariat.¹⁷ Ere some find the failure to react by the state enigmatic, I should reiterate that the collusion that exists among the various fractions of the petty-bourgeoisie renders this inevitable. It may even be conjectured that the non-action by the state is predicated on a realization that the transition to expanded accumulation under the neo-colonial state is linked to the problem of capital formation; providing supplies to the state constitutes just one way of shortcircuiting this problem. Yet, I should caution that this class has obtained most of its capital in form of bank loans.

The transparency of the banks to the members of this class is aided by anomalous banking practices. State intervention on behalf of people seeking loans is commonplace, thus rendering it difficult, if not impossible for the banks to put a heavy emphasis on collateral as sine qua non for loans. This attitude may be hinged in fact that the deposits that the state and its parastatals have maintained with the banks have hovered around 30% of total deposits.¹⁸ It is partly as a result of this Procrustean approach to lending that the banks have accumulated circa 214 billion francs CFA in bad debts.¹⁹ One banker estimated in 1984 that Northern merchants alone owed the banks about 100 billion francs including two individuals who each owed about two billion francs.²⁰ For a while, it had become de rigueur for the petty bourgeoisie to invest the loans so acquired in real estate. This was predicated on the logic that these houses could easily be rented out to the state at exorbitant prices that assure them windfall gains within a short period. To this end, it is not surprising that the housing budgetary allocation which was fixed at 5.632 billion in 1982-83 galloped to 10.091 billion francs CFA in 1985-86.²¹ However, it is alarming when it is realized that all these funds were used to lodge only 5.6% of the more than 180,000 workers that comprise the public sector.²²

¹⁷Per Article 48-1b of Decree N° 74-138 of 18 February 1974, civil servants are forbidden to "(e)ngage in a private gainful activity of any nature whatever for (their) own account, unless specifically authorized by enactment. Such prohibition shall not apply to rural production, the production of scientific literary or artistic works, or to tuition given as a supplementary activity".

¹⁸Cameroon Banking Sector, *Airgram*, 30 August 1986, p. 6.

¹⁹calculated from *Le Messenger*, op. cit., p. 6.

²⁰Cameroon Banking Sector, *Airgram*, op. cit. In order to understand the reasons behind this situation, see, Ndiva Kofele-Kale". Ethnicity, Regionalism and Political Power: A Post-Mortem of Ahidjo's Cameroon in Schatzberg and Zartman, op. cit., pp. 53-82.

²¹cited in Fidelis Chendi Nde "To Be Lodged or Not to be Lodged" paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Ministry of Town Planning and Housing, 16-18 January 1986, (mimeo), p. 2.

²²*ibid*, p. 3.

The foregoing analysis begins to reveal the patrimonial character of the post-colonial state in Cameroon, where the petty bourgeoisie uses the state as an instrument for the accumulation of wealth. The prebendalization of politics has served as an insurance for this class, thus vitiating, if not obviating, disclosures of abnormal or reproachable practices from having any seismic aftereffects. This is attributable to the fact that the (dyadic) relationship amongst the various fractions of this class is predicated on either nepotistic or reciprocal altruism.²³ This is also responsible for the 'softness' of the post-colonial states, to boot. Yet, the task of nation-building in these states is often presented as a challenge to all its citizens. Consequently, if Rawls' justice as fairness principle has to be applied in this context, it would be argued that inequality should obtain in these states "only if there is reason to believe that the practice with the inequality, or resulting in it, will work for the advantage of every other party engaged in it" (nation-building).²⁴ Is the accentuation of the ideology of social justice in Cameroon designed to help redress the inequities that characterize the post-colonial state as it goes through its first phase à la Depelchin? Parenthetically, some would posit that this is a moot point, for a goal has to be possible or probable before it is desirable.

SOCIAL JUSTICE IN CAMEROON: TWENTY-TWENTY VISION OR A FAILURE OF WILL?

Rather than continue to delve on this question, ad nauseam, I would point out that Paul Biya envisages the creation of a new society in the wake of a (peaceful) social transformation. This society would be different from the post-colonial state

where various social classes had been set up, a minority which allied itself to the colonial power, thus claiming exorbitant privileges, also exploited the majority of the impoverished population in the same way as the urban centres exploited the rural areas.²⁵

²³Nepotistic altruism purports that humans aid their own kin because it increases their own inclusive fitness, that is, their genetic representation in the next generation. On the other hand, reciprocal altruism argues that aid is extended to non-kin only if such aid is likely to be returned at some time so that it increases their own inclusive fitness.

²⁴John Rawls "Justice as Fairness" in Richard E. Flathman, *Concepts in Social and Political Philosophy*, New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1973, p. 407.

²⁵Paul Biya, *Communal Liberalism*, London: MacMillan Publishers Ltd., 1987, p. 74.

This new society would be predicated on a new humanism that would be reflected in the promotion of various sectors, inter alia. the democratization of education, the provision of health care and decent housing for all, and the introduction of the "just desserts" principle in the distribution of the national cake that would be preceded by the setting up of redistribution services - so as to facilitate the material advancement of the greatest number and the reduction of inequalities.²⁶ This vision, designed to give birth to a society analogous to a New Jerusalem (?) can only be pre-empted (from being reified), given a failure of (political) will. An examination of present (and continuing) practices as well as some legislation and/or decrees can enable one to make some prognosis vis-à-vis the probability of this new society obtaining. For reasons of parsimony, my analysis would be restricted to the (in) justice that is the trademark of the urban-rural divide now.

I was indicated earlier that the active rural population comprised about 2.6 million people. Cognizant of the contribution of this group to the growth/development, if not the very existence of the post-colonial state, whose peripheral status relegates it to a supplier of raw materials to the Centre, the state has ostensibly sought to promote the standard of living index of the farmer. A first step in this direction was to consist of the integration of peasants in broaching the development plans. This is evident from the fact that in the wake of the second Five-Year Plan (1965-70) that was dubbed "The Peasant Plan", Ahmadou Ahidjo described the Third Five-Year Plan as

...not merely the work of experts (but) of the whole Cameroon population. The population of Cameroon has cooperated in establishing democratically the nation's aspirations and the means whereby these might be achieved.²⁷

Richard A. Joseph wonders why only 43.5% of the 32.3 billion francs CFA projected for agricultural investment was actually realized as opposed to a corresponding percentage of 61.2 for industry. This skepticism is not abetted by the fact that the agricultural envelope was reduced under the Third Five-Year Plan, a plan that was conceived democratically (!), to 25.5 billion as opposed to 32.3 billion francs under 'the Peasant Plan'. This trend is further rendered anomalous by the fact that the agricultural envelope amounted to only 9.2% of the total projected investments, a figure that paled considerably in the face of the 20.5% that was assigned tourism.²⁸ Is this attributable to a persistence of "false consciousness" or a low level of class consciousness, at best, among the "sacks of potatoes"? Such an argument is flawed; I would rather posit that, despite the rhetoric, the petty bourgeoisie's grasp over the broaching of the plan remained intact. Consequently, it is not

²⁶Ibid, pp. 74-80; p. 129.

²⁷cited in R.A. Joseph, *Gaullist Africa*, op cit., p. 149.

²⁸Ibid, p. 150.

enigmatic that a lot of money was pumped into tourism which was reputed to be one of the most lucrative industries in this period of affluence and exploration in the metropolitan states.

If the move to democratize the drawing up of the plan was no more than a chiliastic proposal, one can begin to discern the negation of the justice as fairness principle in the remuneration that was/is granted farmers for their produce. Whereas cocoa beans were being bought from the farmers around Ebolowa for 180 francs CFA per kilogram in 1954-55, the buying price hovered around 75 francs in 1964-65 and only 85 francs in 1970. In the case of robusta coffee, the buying price dipped from 127 francs CFA per kilogram in 1964-65 to 117 francs in 1970.²⁹ One cannot rely on these figures to begin to talk about the extraction of surplus value from the farmers. Such an argument only becomes relevant when it is realized that the cocoa farmer received only an average of 49% of the free on board (FOB) price for cocoa between 1961-79 and only 33% between 1973-79; corresponding percentages for robusta coffee were 57 and 40% respectively.³⁰ Subsequently, the price for a kilogram of cocoa increased to 370 in 1983-84 and 420 francs in 1986-87; in the case of robusta coffee, it jumped to 390 and 440 francs respectively.³¹ Despite these galloping increases, the case for the sponging of the Cameroonian farmers is still germane, especially when he/she is compared with his/her Equatorial Guinea counterpart where a kilogram of cocoa was purchased for 125 in 1983-84 and coffee 400 francs CFA in 1984-85, corresponding prices were 551 and 500/450 francs CFA respectively in 1986-87.³² Consequently, price increases were more substantial in Equatorial Guinea, a poorer country, than in Cameroon for the period under review.

By and large, the farmer's revenue has continued to dip, especially in relative terms, at a time when the cost of living index is on the upsurge. This submission is bolstered by the observation that

Au Cameroun, l'indice général des prix à la consommation des familles de type européen n'a augmenté que de 0,6% entre avril 1986 et avril 1987; par contre, dans le même temps, l'indice des familles de condition moyenne à Yaoundé s'est relevé de 14,9%.³³

²⁹cited in *Ibid.*, pp. 152-153.

³⁰See Nantang Jua, "Economic Management in Resource Rich Countries: A Case Study of Post-Colonial State in Cameroon", (mimeo), p. 11.

³¹*Afrique Agriculture*, N° 147, Novembre 1987, p. 32.

³²*Ibid.* In the case of Ivory Coast, coffee was bought for 380 per kilogram in 1984-85 as compared to 400 francs CFA in 1987-88 while cocoa fetched 375 and 400 francs CFA respectively for the corresponding periods. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

³³Pierre Moussa, Congo's Minister of Plan and Finance and Chairman of the Board of Administration of Banque des Etats de l'Afrique Centrale (BEAC), quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 32.

If the cost of living index of an average family in Yaoundé increased by 14.9% in one year, it can be deduced from that that a family in the rural areas whose needs are analogous to that of its urban counterpart would succumb to a higher increase. A simple reproduction squeeze obtains in this circumstance where the farmer would have to produce more so as to assure that his/her level of living remains constant or he/she would acquiesce to (relative) deprivation vis-à-vis his/her needs. The deleterious effects of this increase could easily be mitigated in circumstances where the farmer received a fair price for his/her produce. This does not obtain in Cameroon as the prices guaranteed the farmer by the National Produce Marketing Board (ONCPB) are consistently inferior to world market prices. In 1978/79 and 1980/81, for example, only 40% of the total revenue of ONCPB was used to cover its normal marketing and operation expenses. The remaining 60% was devoted to other ends, prominent among them, the direct contribution to the government's budgetary revenue which was circa 2% between 1977/78 and 1979/80.³⁴ Yet, a complete picture of the role of ONCPB in supporting the various fractions of the petty bourgeoisie becomes obvious only when one considers the subsidies that it grants to various parastatals.³⁵

Conscious of its reliance on the extraction of surplus value from the farmers, the petty bourgeoisie has succeeded in maintaining producer prices at attractive levels so as to help guarantee a reproduction of the system. As a further bait (?) to farmers, the petty bourgeoisie-qua-state instituted the National Fund for Rural Development (FONADER) in 1973 to accord agricultural loans. Thus FONADER was also supposed to help catalyze the transition from primitive to expanded accumulation. Realizing that the latter practice was/is also linked to the problem of capital formation in the post-colonial state, the avid petty bourgeoisie has not refrained from seeking to obtain loans from this institution. And loans are not a common good.

³⁴Carole Gagne-Gervais "Cameroon - The Cash Crop Sector: Its Performance and Future Development Possibilities", a study prepared for the US Agency for International Development, Yaounde, November 1984, (mimeo), p. 10.

³⁵for further details, see Nantang Jua, op. cit.

TABLE IV

FONADER'S LOAN SCHEME (PROJECTED) UNDER THE SIXTH FIVE-YEAR PLAN

	(million CFAF)					
YEAR	1986/87	1987/88	1988/89	1989/90	1990/91	TOTAL
SECTOR						
Agriculture	2163	2812	3656	4752	6178	19561
Stock Breeding	1335	1735	2256	2932	3812	12070
Equipment	516	670	871	1132	1473	4663
Cooperatives	1168	1518	1973	2566	3335	10560
Social Loans	664	863	1122	1459	1896	6004
Miscellaneous	982	1277	1660	2158	2806	8883
Sub-Total	6828	8875	11538	15000	19000	61741
EAMI ¹	-	4250	6205	8070	9155	27680
Other Plantations ²	1000	3000	4000	4000	4000	16000

Source: Directorate of projects, Ministry of Agriculture

1 = Medium-sized plantations

2 = Village plantations surrounding agro-industrial complexes

A cursory examination of the partitioning of FONADER credits per the Sixth Five-Year Plan gives the impression that all sections of the the population benefit equally and judiciously as a result thereof. This should begin to alleviate the effects of the 'squeeze' on the farmer. Further probing reveals that such a view is mistaken as the number of small farmers benefitting from this scheme is minimal. For instance, in 1986/87 FONADER accorded 2436 loans, an amount of about 5.510 million francs.³⁶ It can be ascertained that the number of farmers properly-so-called among these beneficiaries was small, as FONADER displays an inordinate penchant to give loans mainly to civil

³⁶FONADER, Direction du credit *Confirmation des Credits Accordés du 11.04.87 au 30.09.87*, (mimeo), n.d., p. 10.

servants and wage earners (fractions of the petty bourgeoisie) wishing to engage in agriculture.³⁷ The transparency of FONADER to farmers is hindered by the former's emphasis on loan conditions (such as an overwhelming emphasis on collateral) that farmers cannot satisfy. The 10 branch offices of FONADER are located in the chief towns of the Provinces, to boot. Being in urban areas, these offices are beyond the reach of most small farmers. Consequently, it can be posited that exposure of this institution to farmers is mainly through the loans that it grants to Cooperatives and the modern farmers' groups (GAM). In 1986/87, this amounted to circa 1.490 million francs or about 20% of the total loan envelope.³⁸ Is this an indication that FONADER is supposed to help promote what is seen now not as a peripheral, but a vital, interest of the petty bourgeoisie as its members seek to become kulaks?

There are various indicators that lend credence to the argument that some fractions or members of the petty bourgeoisie are (on the threshold of) embarking on schemes in or capturing the agricultural sector. One of the avowed aims of the proposed Agricultural Credit Bank is to "strive to encourage the participation of the national elite in agricultural activities by financing medium-sized plantations".³⁹ Table IV demonstrates the state's unalloyed commitment to the promotion of this concept. The money allocated for the promotion of medium-sized plantations (EAMI) would increase by twofold over the life span of the sixth Five-Year Plan from 4.250 million in 1987/88 to 9.155 million francs in 1990/91. This figure is further bolstered by the 16.000 million francs that is set aside for plantations that surround agro-industrial complexes.

The commitment to promote medium-sized plantations, per se, cannot be frowned on. Yet, one begins to look askance at the rationale of this policy in a state where it had been established that traditional farming as practised on family plots was more profitable than industrial farming.⁴⁰ This skepticism is further buoyed up by the tendency to marginalize farmers properly-so-called from loan-grant schemes. A cursory glance at the list of those who have been pre-selected for the 1987/88 EAMI grants - four million francs for each beneficiary - reveals that probable beneficiaries include at least five ministers, three director-generals of parastatals, one ambassador, several members of parliament and a multitude of civil servants.⁴¹ Small farmers are conspicuously absent from the list. It can be contended that the original aim of the policy may not have been to provide

³⁷see Mark W. Delancy, "The Role of Cooperatives in Cameroon's Development from the perspective of the Current Five Year Plan: The Dual Inheritance of the Colonial Period", a paper presented at the African Studies Association Conference at Boston, Mass., USA, October 1983, (mimeo), p. 20.

³⁸calculated from FONADER, op. cit.

³⁹Ministère de l'Economie et du Plan, Ve Plan, op. cit., p. 89 (English version).

⁴⁰International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Economic Mission to Cameroon, "Le Secteur rural", 1975, (mimeo), p. 17.

⁴¹FONADER, "EAMI promoteurs Première Campagne", 01/01/BO,n.d., pp. 1-2.

members of the petty bourgeoisie that seek to become Kulaks with outright grants. However, by some perverted logic, bureaucratic politics and the pervasive nature of prebends in the state rendered this outcome inevitable. Consequently, there has been a failure of will rather than of vision.

The significance of the increasing interest of the petty bourgeoisie in agriculture becomes obvious when one takes into consideration the ramifications of the 1974 Land Ordinance.⁴² Per Article 1-2 of the aforesaid ordinance, the state which is the guardian of all lands

"may in this capacity intervene to ensure rational use of land or in the imperative interest of defence or the economic policies of the nation.

The right of private property, per Article 4-1 is granted to those (who would be) in possession of

"land certificates within a period of ten years as from 5 August 1974, the said limit shall be extended to 15 years for land in rural areas.

It is evident that most of the land would revert back to the state at the end of the 15 year period (1989) as only 4.2% of the total land area is being cultivated now.⁴³ Given this, is there a possibility or a probability that the budding class of Kulaks would benefit most as a result of this ordinance? It should be stated already that whereas the vast majority of the rural population remains (totally) unaware of this ordinance, those that have attempted to register their land have found the procedure cumbersome. It is as a result thereof that Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) recommended at its Bamenda Congress that the housing and lands legislation be revised so as to speed up and simplify procedures relating to them.⁴⁴ Most of the land certificates (as of date) have been issued to members of the petty bourgeoisie.⁴⁵

The tendency to concentrate land and money in the hands of the kulaks, mostly absentee landlords, does not augur well for the small farmers that are suffering from the effects of the 'squeeze'. As a

⁴²Ordinance N° 74-1 of 6 July 1974.

⁴³Ministère du Plan, *Vle Plan*, op. cit., p. 55

⁴⁴Cameroon People's Democratic Movement, *Bamenda: Fresh Impetus*, Group Média International, n.d., p. 76.

⁴⁵for further details, especially in the case of the North-West Province, see Cyprian Fisiy Fonyuy, *Land Law Reforms and Social Differentiation in Cameroon*, Yaoundé, Institute of Human Sciences: forthcoming, passim.

matter of fact, it signals the fact that a landless peasantry is in the offing in Cameroon. As the petty bourgeoisie, egged on by profit motives continue to penetrate the agricultural sector, I would contend that this new class of kulaks would not refrain from exploiting the labour of this new landless class. This would be happening at a confluence of circumstance where the state would have guaranteed the prices of food crops and developed enough farm-to-market roads to facilitate the evacuation of these food crops so as to guarantee, if not widen, the profit margins of mostly absentee landlords. Given this scenario, it cannot be postulated that Cameroon's land legislation is designed to promote social justice for all its citizens.

Apologists for the state may argue that some of these obnoxious (?) effects of the land ordinances and credit granting practices did not constitute part of the calculus of the decision-makers at the time that the legislation was envisaged. Afterall, does not Paul Biya call on

...villagers to engage in large-scale agriculture, organized into real enterprises, to pull traditional agriculture out of its mediocrity... This dream can come true thanks to loans from financing bodies which will have to give special attention to food crop farmers who contribute in a substantial way to consolidating food self-sufficiency in our country.⁴⁶

I am unpersuaded that this scenario can obtain easily in post-colonial Cameroon as has been amply demonstrated above. In this tantamount to a denial of social justice for a large percentage of the Cameroonian population?

It can be inferred from the foregoing that the concept of social justice (at the level of praxis) is only applicable to the petty bourgeoisie as the post-colonial state goes through its first phase where it is perceived solely as an subject for the accumulation of wealth by this class. This would not deter some from insisting that this concept (social justice) has not been sacrificed on the altar of reality. This submission is hinged on the thesis that social justice cannot be seen only from the unidimensional perspective, that is, the focus on the individual per se. Has it not been posited in the Cameroonian context that an "equitable regional application of the revenue from our collective efforts"⁴⁷ constitutes another dimension of social justice? The creation of agro-industrial complexes and regional development missions is meant to redress this imbalance. If this is a necessary and sufficient condition for the promotion of social justice, I would readily submit that Cameroon has done a lot to his end. But this argument smacks, or is reminiscent, of the discredited

⁴⁶Paul Biya, *Communal Liberalism*, op. cit., p. 61.

⁴⁷Ibid, p. 80.

trickle down theory which automatically assumes that the benefits of (balanced regional) development would be readily accessible to all (the individual).

The strive to assure that regional development is carried out on an equitable basis contributes more to the promotion of balanced development than social justice. There is no doubt that regional development missions contribute to the amelioration of the standards of living of their targeted population. Yet, their efficacy as instruments for the promotion of social justice suffers a severe blow when all the foregoing practices and effects of the land legislation are taken into consideration. As concerns agro-industrial complexes, it has been postulated that most of them offer job opportunities only to illiterates.⁴⁸ Besides that, the number of job openings created by all these complexes amounts to only 60,000.⁴⁹ Whereas the new emphasis on medium-sized plantations may lead to job creation, I would conjecture that these would be minimal, given the inordinate accent placed on mechanization that virtually ignores the fact that Cameroon has a comparative advantage in labor. Consequently, the new landless peasantry, especially the semi-literate amongst them that would be unable to secure jobs in rural areas, would not hesitate to drift in urban areas. The attendant repercussions of this spatial shift would be an increase in the un(der) employment rate and the sprouting up of squatters in urban areas. This would render the promotion of social justice improbable, if not impossible.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

As Cameroon goes through the first stage of class formation, it is almost inevitable that the quest for social justice be relegated to the background. This is attributable to the fact that at this phase, the state constitutes merely an instrument for the accumulation of wealth for the members of the various fractions of the petty bourgeoisie. The Cameroonian leadership seems to have grasped this fact as is aptly depicted by the following observation that the petty bourgeoisie, which composes a comprador class has/is exploiting the majority of Cameroonian population in the post-colonial state.⁵⁰ The petty bourgeoisie that has consistently and systematically sponged the state has sought to reproduce itself through the adoption of the principle of cumulation of posts and horizontal transfers, the cooptation of some members of the bureaucratic salariat class and the conferral of the mantle of legitimacy on the prebendalization of power. Granted, it has had to compromise on some of its peripheral as opposed to vital interests so as to assure a reproduction or continuous survival of the system. Can the embrace of the politics of social justice in Cameroon be seen from this vantage point? Having accepted social justice as a developement option, has its promotion been

⁴⁸G. Courade "Des Complexes qui coûtent cher", *Politique Africaine*, N° 14, June 1984, p. 82.

⁴⁹Carole Gagne-Gervais, op. cit., p. 66.

⁵⁰Supra, footnote 25.

vitiated, if not obviated, as a result of a flawed vision or the failure of (political) will at the implementation phase?

Realizing that over 70% of its active population was made up of farmers who constitute "the wretched of the earth", the state which was already extracting surplus value from this group set up a small farmer (?) credit institution, FONADER. Yet, the cumbersome procedure that loan requests undergo and the emphasis on collateral gives rise to suspicion that FONADER is not for the "unbanked". Thus, it is not enigmatic that mostly members of the petty bourgeoisie have benefitted from the FONADER loan scheme. Despite this, or should I say because of it, FONADER has had a harrowing experience in the realm of loan recoveries. Their efforts have been stymied by the intervention of outsiders, to wit, politicians and senior bureaucrats, in the decision-making process.⁵¹ Alas, this gives the semblance that FONADER is like most other credit institutions in Janus Africa or the Third World which are designed to guarantee funds for members of the petty bourgeoisie to enable it make the transition for primitive toward expanded accumulation. Thus, the small farmer who is already pauperized as a result of the extraction of his surplus value is also largely marginalized from the benefits of the FONADER loan scheme. This is attributable to a failure of vision and will.

The new emphasis on medium-sized plantations (EAMIs) and the coming into force of the provisions of the 1974 Land Ordinance in the post-1989 era would not help to alleviate the plight of the peasant. Again, the petty bourgeoisie is benefitting inordinately from the EAMI grants and the land registration drive. Parenthetically, the policy to promote petty bourgeoisie involvement in agriculture is not as flagrant as in the case of Ivory Coast, where the minimal size of plantations are specified on a rank basis. Ministers are to have plantations of at least 15 hectares, parliamentarians - 10 hectares and Chiefs of Service - 5 hectares.⁵² As a result, the peasant already pauperized and marginalized is on the threshold of becoming landless. This would enable the new class of kulaks or absentee landlords to exploit peasant labor thus assuring it comfortable profit margins. Those who abhor this option would find it imperative to drift into urban centres in search of jobs, thus helping to swell up the ranks of the proletariat. This trend would deal a severe blow to the justice as fairness principle.

⁵¹ Ph. K. Heinrich Bechtel "Challenge, Scope, Constraints and Limits of the Rural Financial Market/Institutions in Cameroon: Role of FONADER" a study prepared for Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit GmbH., Eschborn, May 1985, (mimeo), p. 43..

⁵² quoted in Alain Dubresson "Derrière la contradiction, l'Etat. Discours et pratique de l'aménagement du territoire en Côte-d'Ivoire", *Politique Africaine*, N° 21, Mars 1986, p. 86

This provides evidence, even if only partial and inconclusive, that the promotion of social justice is not a viable development option in this first phase of state formation. It is consistent, if not incompatible with the insatiable urge of the petty bourgeoisie to use the state to carve out the material basis of its existence or to promote and protect its value-orientations. There is a realization in Cameroon that this chasm cannot be bridged failing the development of a humane spirit in Man.⁵³ Rather, I would submit that the promotion of social justice may only be feasible when the post-colonial state in Cameroon goes through the second phase where it will be the object and not the subject of intense struggles. This phase, I would contend, is ushered in earlier in multi- than in single-party states.

⁵³Paul Biya, *Communal Liberalism*, op. cit. p. 82.

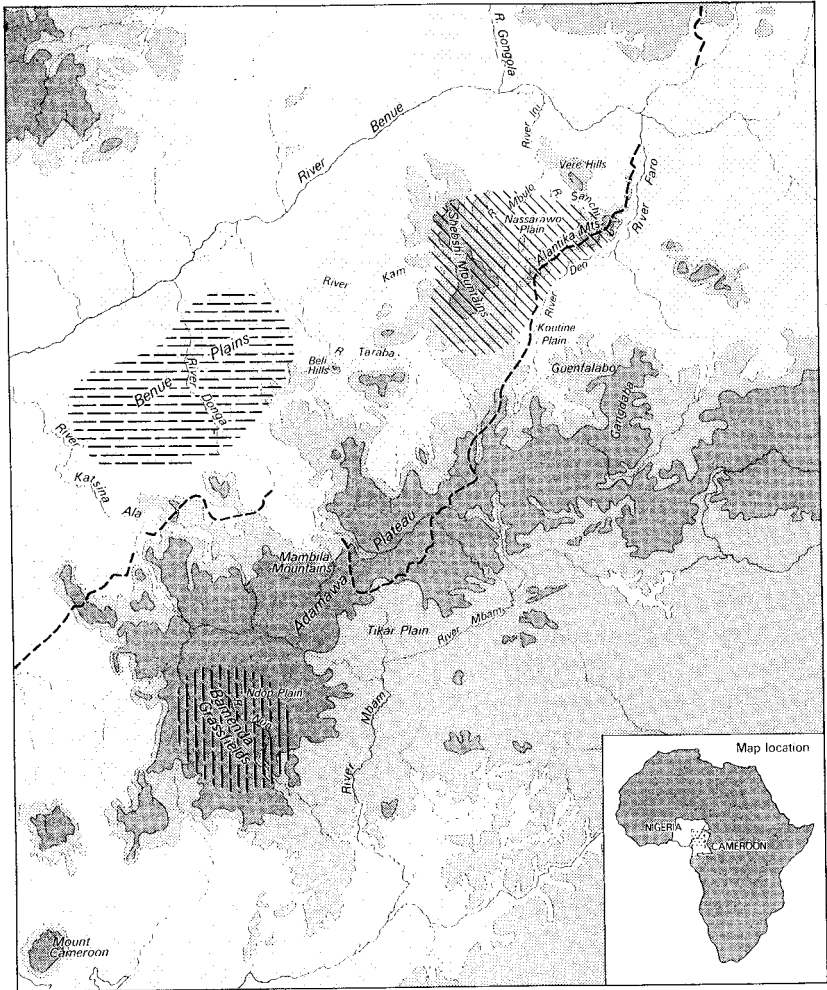
THE CREATION OF PERIPHERAL PLACES: AN EXAMPLE, A HISTORY AND A COMPARISON

Richard Fardon

CENTRE, PERIPHERY, BOUNDARY: SOME PROBLEMS WITH SPATIALISING PROBLEMS

Among our commensensical notions of place, ideas of centre and periphery, or of core and margin, evince a practical self-evidence. These categories invite direct experience through movement: of a peripheralised self towards a centre, or conversely by a marginalisation of a self once construed to be central. This intimation of material immediacy, which makes the distinction obvious, may obscure the extent to which notions of centrality and peripherality belong to a more general tendency to spatialisation of our ideas (Salmond 1982). The ideas of centre and peripheries are, therefore, particularly persuasive when they are applied to "physical" spaces when, that is, the centre/periphery image imbues relative location with a charged sense. Geography, development economics or political science each has its versions of centre-periphery models. Peripheries are places of absences, negations or withdrawals, whether seen in terms of marketing systems, communications, the locus of power, the creation of wealth, or the dynamics of culture (Ardener 1987).

Two consequences seem to follow, peripheries either need to be "brought in", connected to the centre so as to resemble it more closely, or else they need to be cut off, so as to develop in greater independence from the centre. Which of the alternatives prevails depends largely upon the interplay between centre/periphery and other images to which I turn below. Initially, I want to note how reliance on centre and periphery as images to think with has two important consequences, each of which is potentially useful but also potentially misleading. By assimilation to a single distinction, different instances of centre/periphery relations are made to belong to a single class of such relations. The relations between centres and their peripheries are thus seen to constitute a general problem, which may imply that they have a common solution. Other polarities gravitate onto this distinction by virtue of its congruence with distinctions which also take spatial form. Among the possible results of this are tendencies to ahistoricism and to an essentialisation of the characteristics of the peripheralised by contrastive reference to features the centre attributes to itself (or even by reference to characteristics that the self-consciously peripheralised attribute to the centre). Little cause for surprise then if anthropologists, whose researches so often take them to places considered peripheral, but where their own interests



 Modern Chambaland

 Land below 600 m

 600 - 1000 m

 > 1000 m

 International boundary

0 150 km

become "centred", frequently plead the case for local particularities against the generalising schemes into which they are forced (Burnham 1980; Richards 1985).

To head off an immediate misunderstanding, I am not going to argue that the images of centre and periphery refer to no reality simply by virtue of being images. Instead, I shall argue, firstly, that it is always worth the attempt to be self-conscious about ideas that have come to seem obvious, especially when activity planned in terms of them has not been universally successful and, secondly, that this is especially the case when an image is so attractive, in the literal sense, as the centre/periphery relation. As an immediate, disorienting question, we might ask why, accepting that spatial metaphors are pervasive, choose one in preference to others? For instance, why favour centre/periphery over left/right or up/down? We know that some cultures have emphasised laterality as a spatial metaphor (our political cultures also do this in speaking of left and right). Hierarchical arrangements (like administrative organisations or stratification systems) favour vertical metaphors. The appropriateness of the centre/periphery image is presumably related to the inappropriateness of these other candidates. This seems to require of us a more general effort to think through types of spatial metaphor.

The centre/periphery image is an example of a more general class of radiating images. In these the centre is self evident and fixed, other points are defined in terms of their proximity to it (like points on the spokes of a wheel radiating from a hub). Yet the radiating metaphor is only one image to which writings about development and the state make appeal. The other common class of images to appear in the literature consists of boundary or containment metaphors. In general, statal issues of development and authority, both internal to a country and in global terms, are most frequently couched in centre/periphery terms; issues of nationhood draw upon containment metaphors. Frequently the two images appear in different, often contested, appreciations of the same problems, but the tendency to their distinction is readily appreciable. The centre/periphery terms address differences of wealth and opportunity -- and thus practical inequality -- the containment metaphors appeal to people incorporated as members of a state with equal rights -- and thus formal equality. Neither the lateral nor vertical spatial metaphors could aptly conjure up the desired connotations. They are used in other discourses, or private versions of subjects publicly treated in other terms. However, even in its public terms, it is clear that the necessity to invoke both radiating and containment images fixes the relations between the state and its local communities in terms which are problem begging.

Every country has its peripheral places and marginal people; or, as we should now say, certain people and places are defined thus by particular others in certain contexts. The two do not necessarily coincide - marginal people need not live on the periphery - but, when these images

are congruent, the problems they are felt to present to the centre are peculiar because they appear at once intractable but not pressing. Unlike those who are socially marginal yet spatially central, who may be experienced as a threat to the order of the centre, the socially and spatially marginal may seem almost an irrelevance. Absolute marginality is resistant to schemes of incorporation and, yet, by virtue of their marginality, the peripheral are, if part of any scheme at all, usually tomorrow's project. However, the containment metaphor argues against this. In containment terms, the peripheral are part of the whole. For, in this instance, the whole is defined by its boundaries and the assumption that a particular form of sociation unites those within them. From this follows the choice to tie in the peripheries rather than to excise them.

In the new countries of Africa, the relations between centres and peripheries appear to be of relatively recent creation; especially when contrasted with the enduring relations between, say, the British state and its Celtic fringe. Any respectable commentator on current African predicaments prefaces an argument allocating responsibility by recognition of the arbitrary nature of the boundaries inherited from the process of political decolonisation. However, this is not to say that these relations have been established in a moment or that they are without historical precedent. The salience of the boundaries has been subjected to a local dialectic as people have modified their behaviour in relation to them (sometimes even modifying the boundaries in minor and local fashion). Centre-periphery thinking often leads to ahistoricism and a kind of essentialism that loads qualities onto the marginalised as if they were intrinsic properties. To put it another way, centre-periphery thinking often loses "sight" of its own relational, visual metaphor. In contrast to this, the investigator on the periphery is struck by the extent to which the marginal have always been connected, how open their situation appears to influence from outside the local community (at the same time that the centre is pondering their inaccessibility). In the context of routine neglect, occasional misguided intervention, and enormous obstacles to making their voice heard in places where their future is discussed, the peripheral have gone on supporting themselves and their families, increasing their numbers, and generally making the best of their situation. These innovative adjustments, especially where they involve people making the best of their situation on an international border, may serve only to increase central suspicion of the degree of their peripherality and the extent to which they resist incorporation. In acting in their own interests, the peripheral may find they also reinforce the image others have of them. If health care and education are not available nationally, it may be necessary to go elsewhere for them. If transport is lacking, then it may make no sense to increase production. If authority appears coercive, then appeal to it as seldom as possible. If life seems altogether better somewhere else, it may perhaps be necessary to uproot home and family. As the peripheral retrench, move out, and generally make the best of the options they see open to them, they may simultaneously confirm for those in authority that they are

backward, recalcitrant, disloyal and lacking in the potential to be developed¹. Yet, seen from another perspective, this very energy in accommodation to circumstances seems to tell us something different.

My purpose here is modest: apart from these remarks on the persuasiveness of images it is to offer the outlines of an account of the sense of belonging evinced by some differently placed members of new nation states. Although I do not wish to displace its terms, I hope in the process to shed an alternative light upon an issue which has been prominent in a number of discussions of the relation between the Cameroonian state and its historical precedents. This relation has normally been seen from the material vantage either of the formation of classes and the emergence of a national elite (Bayart 1979) or in terms of the economic and political interactions between tribal and statal forms of organisation (Geschiere 1982). Either perspective, while informative in terms of the problems it chooses to address, assumes the state as a material and political reality. Without denying that the state is such, I want to ask how the state is experienced by its differently placed members. In this context, I am interested particularly in the categories of locality, ethnicity or religion to which people alternatively or additionally express commitment. From this perspective, I converge with those who have assumed nation-building to be a crucial task of the new state (Levine 1964; 1971; see also Paul Biya's advocacy of the "greater tribe" of the Cameroon Nation in *AfricAsia* No. 41 May 1987). Distance from the imagined centre is a dimension crucial to these issues whether seen from the core or from the margin. However, as specialists in cognate disciplines would anticipate of an anthropologist, I am more concerned with (because better able to say something about) the view from the periphery than that from the centre. Less predictably perhaps, I am not concerned as an anthropologist to draw attention to the "traditional culture" of a peripheralised people but instead to suggest as a counter to this kind of essentialism the degree to which long term historical processes must be taken into account in order to understand the present situation of the peripheral - those whom development appears to have passed by.

This paper is not, then, as a final introductory point, directly concerned with what specifically to do about margins and peripheries (many disciplines already devote their efforts to schemes and plans for the fringes), it is more concerned with the construction of these categories - what peripherality and marginality are, where they come from, how they are felt, and how these features affect the directions in which people offer their loyalties. Towards the end of the essay, I shall suggest again that the material and symbolic perspectives are not wholly unrelated since

¹I draw very broadly, and by intention unspecifically, upon the informal ethnography of opinions offered by local officials to me. My research was not designed to address the problems to which this conference invites us to devote attention, so the officials concerned would not have imagined themselves to be addressing me in other than a private capacity.

the precepts of marginality and the practices which ensue from them may tend to reinforce one another. I take the opportunity to note from Nigerian experience that local and national identities need not conflict, but that the former may even assist the latter. Pluralism, already recognised in Cameroun's policy of bilingualism, may furnish the basis for bettering the terms of incorporation for marginalised people. Liberalisation, another aim of the administration, may need to be pursued to the further reaches of the administrative apparatus to foster local initiatives. Overall, I am conscious that these arguments reflect a limited and specific experience and knowledge of Cameroun and offer them explicitly in this light.

EXAMPLE: HISTORY AND COMPARISON

The comparison I shall draw involves three sections of people who would claim to be Chamba in the most extensive sense. The term Chamba is itself a twentieth century coinage which has earlier precedents, but I do not have space here to repeat the analysis of its history that I have attempted elsewhere (Fardon 1987; 1988). For our purposes, Chamba is a term of self-identification to which people may appeal despite the very many differences they could draw among themselves in other contexts. The three Chamba groupings to which I shall refer live respectively in Nigeria, North Cameroun and Northwest Cameroon. For the purposes of this paper only, I shall refer to them as the Nigerian Chamba, the Cameroun Chamba and the Bamenda Chamba ². The present Cameroun/Nigeria border area, where it follows the boundary of the southern section of the old Northern Cameroons Mandate/Trusteeship, is the only area of Cameroun of which I can claim first-hand experience of any duration. My acquaintanceship with the Chamba of Northwest Province is brief, although they (at least their ruling stratum) would claim an origin from the former area. I refer to them only in passing and to invoke a further contrastive case.

One peculiarity of the Chamba's career of national affiliations during the twentieth century deserves early mention because it relates directly to the issue of national unification which has justly been a prominent feature of much writing on Cameroun. The Fulani apart, Chamba are probably the only people of the border area to have experienced so many statal identities in the present century. The original German-British demarcation of the Kamerun border placed the majority of Chamba in Kamerun and a minority in Nigeria. The mandate and trusteeship periods further divided Chamba between the French and both the Northern and Southern British Cameroons Mandates. This situation persisted when the mandates became trusteeships with the

²Because the paper is to be precirculated, I employ variant spellings to distinguish territorial entities on the page: Kamerun, for the German colony; Cameroun for the French Mandate/Trusteeship and also for the independent, successor "reunified" state; Cameroons for the British Mandated and Trust Territories.

establishment of the United Nations. After the plebiscites of 1961, the Chamba of Northern British Cameroons joined Nigeria, while the Chamba of Southern British Cameroons joined Cameroun. Thanks to this history, different sections of Chamba experienced virtually every variant of French, British and German colonial regime to have existed during the years of colonial occupation. These colonial experiences are largely, but not solely, responsible for the political context of present perceptions of centrality and marginality, in terms of my radiating metaphor, and of a rather ambiguous position in terms of the containment metaphor. The literature on Camerounian unification has understandably been concerned with the consequences of absorbing the Southern Cameroons Mandate and the unique problems and opportunities posed by the commitment to bilingualism and the plurality of colonial heritages. Scant attention has been directed to the consequences of the retention of the Franco-British colonial boundary in the north following the absorption of the Northern Cameroons into Nigeria. This is understandable since the boundary in confirming the administrative status quo left the prevailing situation unchanged. Nonetheless, a preexisting peripherality was entrenched, and it may be worth imagining what the result of an annexation of Northern Cameroons might have been, if only to recall that peripheries are made and not given.

The old Northern Cameroons Mandate border area meets most criteria of marginality that might be proposed. Indeed, the area carries a patina of peripheralities which have accumulated from the use of centuries. Within this broader area, I can speak only of one people, the Chamba, although what I have learned from them may be indicative of a more pervasive sense of peripherality and of people's reactions to this sense. To understand their situation, we require a brief overview of the historical circumstances which drew them to it ³.

Chamba appear to have been the objects of other people's plans at least since the independence of their many chiefdoms was menaced with the onset of the Fulani jihad at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Chamba lived close to the early centres from which the Emirate of Adamawa was to be established. Their larger centres of population around the confluence of the Faro and Deo Rivers dispersed as the Fulani implanted their chiefdoms at Tchamba, Laro and Koncha. As the momentum of conquest and expansion impelled the Fulani south towards the Adamawa Plateau, so the Chamba of what were to become Cameroun and Nigeria found themselves living on the margins of Fulani chiefdoms that had themselves become peripheral to the state-builders. They formed a sort of penumbra to a periphery - doubly marginalised. To the Fulani, they appear to have constituted a nuisance that might periodically furnish some economic advantage.

³Because Chamba history between 1750 and 1950 is the subject of book to be published in 1988, I refer any interested reader to that work for the scholarly apparatus of references to the historical account in this paper.

An uneasy compromise, with many local nuances, may have characterised the relations between the sometimes raided hill dwellers, whom many Chamba had become, and the plains dwelling traders, pastoralists and agriculturalists who had laid claim to much of their older homeland.

The entire area was even more marginal to the Anglo-German boundary makers who admitted to drawing a blue line on a map they knew not where. Cut off from the old Emirate capital at Yola by the "Yola arc", the Fulani chiefs of the north of Kamerun were able to consolidate their authority under a German regime which saw this part of the north as part of a project for a tomorrow that was not to come. The establishment of a first German customs post in Chambaland during 1913 was quickly followed by Franco-British occupation of Kamerun during World War I. After a hiatus, the League of Nations' Mandate allocated the majority of the northern Chamba into the British Cameroons Mandate; a minority found themselves in a remote corner of the French Mandate.

The boundary between the British and French spheres of control may have looked persuasive on a map but made little sense on the ground. By choosing to run the frontier over the Alantika Mountains, the boundary makers isolated a strip of land between the Faro-Deo confluence and the mountains which, while relatively inaccessible from both sides, was especially so from Cameroun when the rivers were in spate. This strip was the home of the Cameroun Chamba. The Chamba in the British sphere, the bulk of the population, were to be administered on the lines of a self-supporting Mandate. The eventual upshot of this marginality to British interests in Nigeria was to be revealed in the fact that economic and political initiatives were to be both slight and belated even in relation to the pace of events elsewhere in Northern Nigeria.

To look briefly at the fortunes of the Chamba who evacuated their old homelands in advance of the Fulani jihad, they raided widely to their south and south-west. One section of this snowballing movement, augmented by allies incorporated en route who came to outnumber their Chamba leaders, settled in Bamenda and the Ndop Plain where they established the five Bali Chamba chiefdoms. Unlike the Chamba whom they had left in the north, the Bali Chamba achieved a position of political importance that was to be bolstered during the earlier phases of German annexation of the Kamerun colony (Chilver 1967). Baliburg became the early centre of German rule in the Grassfields and the Balitruppe its favoured instrument. Following the first World War, the Bali Chamba were placed within Southern Cameroons as part of the British mandate. After World War II, the League of Nations Mandate became a Trusteeship, and the end of the Trusteeship saw the incorporation of the southern mandated territories into Cameroun

4. Even a casual perusal of the annual British reports submitted under the terms of their trusteeship, shows the comparative importance that was accorded to the southern mandate relative to its northern counterpart. All manner of social initiatives: health, education, mission activity, and later, also, political initiatives, occurred earlier and on a greater scale in the south. In this, the pattern under British administration very much echoed that which had been established by the Germans. Although relatively isolated in terms of communication with Cameroun or Nigeria, the southern mandate experienced extensive development, relative to the north, and by 1954 was recognised to have a status as a semi-independent actor in Nigerian affairs.

The upshot of all the boundary moves was that the majority of the Chamba population of Chambaland finally joined Nigeria (thus joining also the Chamba who had remained within the British sphere throughout), while the Bamenda Chamba joined a Federal Cameroun to which the few Cameroun Chamba of the North had belonged from the outset. In both cases, an initial separatism was later abolished. The Bamenda Chamba were incorporated into a unified republic, while the Nigerian Chamba joined Northeastern and later Gongola states after the dissolution of the separate Saradauna state which had been formed to answer the political wishes of the people transferring from the trusteeship to the Nigerian state.

The Fulani jihad, and the continuities between this movement and colonisation in all their complexity, in great part established the terms on which incorporation into the new states became available to Chamba. However, the boundaries were not simply given as lines on a map, their salience depended upon the extent to which local actors were able to react to them, and the form their reaction took was influenced by political strengths established in preceding periods. We need to see why this was so in some detail. The jihadic wars, as I mentioned earlier, were responsible for entirely disrupting earlier Chamba settlement patterns and political relations. Not only did a high proportion of eastern Chamba quit their homeland definitively, but those who remained were forced to come to some accommodation with the new Fulani powers. Such accommodations seem to have depended to a great extent on the defensive position of the individual Chamba communities. The best placed to come to arrangements that were not unduly disadvantageous were the larger Chamba chiefdoms which also enjoyed a location close to one of the mountain ranges. Conversely, the Chamba of the plains were obliged to recognise Fulani authority in one form or another. These arrangements must have fluctuated locally over about three quarters of a century before the earliest observers' reports become available to us. By late in the century, it seems that a fairly clear division was apparent

⁴For an account of administration during this period, see Chilver 1963; for a contemporary reaction to reunification, see Ardener 1967.

to travellers between the conquered and free "pagans". The former lived in the plains and tended to dress like their overlords, the latter lived in the hills and were unruly and dangerous. The earliest European reports, in fact, reflect faithfully the fact that European passage was usually assured under the protection of Fulani chiefs and the watchful eye of Fulani guides. Visible markers easily became assimilable to presuppositions about peripherality. The travellers' perceptions and those of the Fulani cross-fertilised. The areas through which Europeans travelled safely in company with their Fulani guides were under the rule of law, correspondingly those in which they could not be offered protection were lawless⁵. The imposition of early German and British colonial regimes on the Chamba took place in the context of a rough sharing between Europeans and Fulani of ideas of advancement and primitiveness, accessibility and inaccessibility, centrality and peripherality. These sharings were reinforced by common interest in the problem of how to extract resources from settled domestic producers. In the short term, the colonial authorities appear to have supported an older Fulani organisation of tithe taking while attempting to regulate other aspects of Fulani extraction (such as slavery). Where Chamba were not agriculturalists, or not solely so, their sources of income (raiding caravans, demanding tolls for passage over the mountains) fell under the rubric of lawlessness and were repressed. This in turn seems to have enhanced the attractiveness of Chambaland as an area for Fulani settlers. If the common interests of Europeans and Fulani worked to the detriment of Chamba in the north, I have already noted how, in the absence of a Fulani presence in the south, they worked to Chamba advantage there.

To the Fulani, the northern Chamba had been one of the non-Muslim populations against whom jihad was launched; for the early German colonists, they had been the conquered, "heathen" people, sometimes mistakenly taken for slaves, of the northern part of a distant colony. Reading the records of the earlier travellers one is struck by their absorption and reworking of Fulani stereotypes which translated easily into European preconceptions. German colonisation of the northern Chamba necessitated major adjustments to the spheres of authority of Fulani rulers to compensate for the severing, by the "Yola arc", of the relation between the Adamawa capital at Yola and its nominal sub-chiefdoms. The Franco-British mandates divided the territories the Germans had allocated to their Fulani agents. Initially, British rule served to entrench Fulani dominance more strongly. On the justification of an understanding of tradition, three Fulani dynasties were transplanted from the French to the British administered sides of the border. Eventually, one of these chiefs was to become Lamido of Adamawa, and the Chamba were to find themselves administratively shuffled into the Fulani emirate (an outcome many of their communities had spent the nineteenth century resisting). The manoeuvrings effected by the

⁵Chapter 18 of Passarge's account of the Uechtritz expedition's traversing of the Shebshi Mountains is an instructive early account of the conceptions I am discussing.

Europeans and the Fulani in the face of the shifting boundaries answered to what both parties saw as their self-interest. The details of the successive moves are complicated (see Fardon 1988) but their result was a Fulani areal dominance that persisted despite successive organisational redescrptions and was continually endorsed in terms of changing understandings of the relevance of traditional organisation and legitimacy. In the midst of the considerable changes they wrought in areas of influence and means of imposing authority, and while the situation they brought into being diverged increasingly from any that may have prevailed in the nineteenth century, European officers in their reports reiterated the family lines and traditional claims which legitimised their activities. If the boundary was relatively fixed in geographical terms, it was also the case that its local salience, even who lived on which side of it, was far more flexible.

For the few Chamba in the French mandate, the initial outcome of the transition from German rule - continuing Fulani dominance - was similar to that of the Chamba in the British territories. However, subsequent developments in the two territories were to diverge. At its most basic the crucial difference between the Chamba on the two sides of the border was a matter of numbers. The Chamba of the British side far outnumbered their counterparts on the French side. But other factors complicated the impact of this gross difference. A drift of population from the French to British sides of the border is recorded in colonial officers' accounts throughout the early years of the mandate. The trend has continued into more recent times and has tended to reinforce an initial disparity in numbers between the two Chamba populations. The availability of land seems to have been one factor in the decisions that Chamba made to resettle in British administered territory. Communities descending from the, now partitioned, mountains seem to have enjoyed relative freedom in their choice of which side to come down (at least little could be done about their choices). But this was not the sole consideration. Chamba in the British territories appear to have been able to offer more local resistance to Fulani dominance, even before that dominance began to be dismantled (albeit half-heartedly and over a long period) by the British authorities. Successive reforms from the 1930's onwards sought to allow Chamba a degree of autonomy from their Fulani rulers. Initial attempts at reform were made at village level with the dismantling of the system of control through emplaced Fulani representatives (which seems to have remained intact during the German period) and its substitution by village headships which were supposed to reflect the ethnic composition of the villages over which they were appointed. Reforms to the higher levels of administration took place during the mid 1950s, and were accelerated on the eve of decolonisation when investigations were made to ascertain the reasons for the delaying vote registered in the Northern Cameroons plebiscite when the voters were asked to choose between union with Nigeria or postponement of independence. The outcome of the ensuing reorganisation was that most of the Nigerian

Chamba entered an independent Nigeria as the majority members of a division within a Sardauna Province which was severed from Yola.

During the same period, the position of the Cameroun Chamba hardly changed. While the British authorities felt compelled to take measures to address the extent to which their own administration was premised upon, thereby supporting, Fulani preeminence, their French counterparts seem not to have given much consideration to the affairs of the small, remote region where a few Chamba lived. Minor revisions apart, the rulers of the, by now tiny, lamidates were maintained in positions of authority. When French officials recorded their comments, these bemoaned the waning power of the Fulani chiefdoms, which were suffering from declining populations as well as reduced economic circumstances ⁶. While recording their impressions of the ineptitude and laziness of their administrative proteges and their frequent corruption, the officials had little good to say of the non Fulani, "Les habitants de ce Canton sont les plus veules et les plus paresseux qu'il m'ait ete donne de frequenter" (Relly 1954). Refusal on the part of Chamba to raise cattle, fish, cultivate rice or groundnuts was attributed to their insistence that these were the tasks of other peoples - Bata or Fulani. Recollecting this period, my own informants stated that their reluctance to accumulate was based on the certain knowledge that any wealth they amassed would be taken from them by their overlords. Their reasons are supported by the fact that the Chamba across the border are not attributed similar reservations about wealth creation by British officers of the same period. Given the scale of movement across the border at this time, there are reasons to believe that the same people may even have acted differently when they lived in different places. Perhaps the most evident symbol of the periphery as *carte blanche* is the creation of the Faro Reserve. Whatever its virtues in other terms, the demarcation of this area served further to isolate the people to its west while precipitating a new wave of emigration of Chamba towards Nigeria.

The experience of the Bamenda Chamba contrasts with both of these cases. Alone among the Chamba groups, they achieved a position of strength in the earliest period of colonisation. Their position was more directly analogous to that of the Fulani in the north than to that of the Chamba. Like the Fulani, they found themselves obliged to defend, during the later colonial

⁶Henry Relly's report of 1954 documents the numerous minor shifts in fortune of the Fulani chiefdoms up to the year in which he writes. He notes the collapse, between 1929 and 1931, in status of the authority and wealth of the chiefdom of Tchamba following, what he considers retrospectively to have been, the injudicious temporary removal of the chief for unproven irregularities. Quoting a predecessor, he shows that French officials thought that administrative order would be regained only by reestablishing the wealth and prestige of the declining local centre. The report is also interesting in drawing attention to the permeability of the international frontier. Population exchanges may have accounted for half of the Chamba in French territory either emigrating or immigrating during the previous five years. Chamba population growth was not reflected in any increase in the numbers of Chamba in French territory. Communications by vehicle with Yola, in Nigeria, via Jada (then the local centre of administration) were well established. One Chamba village chief in Cameroun was also a chief in Nigeria.

period, the privileged status they had achieved at its outset. Eventually, after playing an important role in the well documented events prior to unification, they found themselves in the Anglophone portion of Federal Cameroun. Their ascendancy from the early impact of their arrival as raiders in Bamenda, and their subsequent role as German auxiliaries, continue to have ramifications in land issues. I cannot pursue the Bamenda case here, but simply recall it as a reminder of the very different image entertained by outsiders of this people who, despite the substantial differences which we would expect to have accrued after a century and a half of separation, retain many features of language and culture derived from the Chamba culture of the north

However pressing the need to generalise the relation between tribal and state forms of government in terms of encapsulation and the encroachment of capitalist relations in theoretical terms, the situation I have described among related populations is one of considerable empirical complexity. This complexity increases if we pursue the three instances into the post-colonial period while also taking into account the differing legacies of the related patterns of religious change and establishment of institutions of education.

For both the Nigerian and Cameroun Chamba, early colonisation had been imposed via Fulani agents with newly defined authorities. Given that economic changes were relatively slight in this area, administration became, and continues to be, of paramount importance to the perceptions entertained of incorporation and relations to the new centres. The upshot of belated reform in the British Cameroons was the formation of a Chamba dominated division, Ganye Division, with a new administrative centre based in Ganye, prior to incorporation into Nigeria. Despite the subsequent dissolution of Sardauna State, and the eventual incorporation of Ganye Division into Gongola State with the old Emirate capital of Yola as its state capital, the very existence of Ganye Division practically enhanced the Chamba's ability to maintain a degree of autonomy from their erstwhile Fulani overlords. The result of the referendum in 1961, when the Chamba were one of two peoples to vote against the trend in favouring union with Cameroun⁷, reveals the extent to which Chamba tended to see incorporation into Nigeria in terms of the threat of Fulani dominance. In all probability their assessments were erroneous, since Fulani authority has remained entrenched among the Cameroun Chamba (although it could be argued that this would not be the case had the majority of Chamba become Camerounians). It is evident that from the 1930s onwards, the Nigerian Chamba were able to an increasing extent to gain access to administrative offices and thus to incomes. Progress in this respect was slow, especially during the 1940s when the mandate was scarcely administered by Britain at all.

⁷The other case was the Marghi of the northern part of British Northern Cameroons.

However, the constitutional changes of the 1950s, intended to prepare Nigeria for independence, along with the spotlight shed upon Northern British Cameroons following the 1959 referendum, accelerated the pace of change. Since independence, Chamba interests in their Division have come to predominate over Fulani powers.

Religious and ethnic considerations, and the relations between the two, cannot be ignored in our examination of these matters. Nigerian and Camerounian Chamba today deny the conversion of their chiefs to Islam (other than nominally or through the adoption of outward signs) before the colonial period. The widescale conversion of Chamba is even more recent. The arrival of Christian missions was also relatively late. An S.U.M. mission in Gurumpawo in Nigeria appears to have made relatively slight impact before World War II; the Catholic Missions appeared in this area of Nigeria during the second World War. However, by the 1950's Christians seem to have predominated over Muslims among Chamba adherents of world religions and, judging by the irregular results of election processes, this pattern has persisted until the present, notwithstanding recent celebrated cases of conversion from Christianity to Islam. Muslims have continued to exercise a virtual monopoly over positions within the "traditional" system of local government (village and district headships up to the created position of the chiefship of Ganye Division). However, Christians have been relatively overrepresented in the offices of local administration and in the teaching profession, which together are the most important sources of paid employment in an area which is short of alternative paid jobs. This kind of legacy of Fulani rule on the one hand and European education on the other is by no means unique to Chamba in this area of Nigeria (it seems to typify much of the "middle belt", see Bruce 1982 for an example from the plateau). To a very large extent the process of incorporation into the independent state has been most immediately apparent in the creation of opportunities for employment in positions generated by the expansion of education and of local government and administration. Both areas of employment have been subjected to insecurities and uncertainties attendant upon changes in the direction of government policy.

The Cameroun Chamba, who had been administered within the French mandate and trust as an integral part of a future independent state, were the focus of less attention (in fact no attention at all). As we have seen, the uncertainties surrounding the constitutional position of Northern British Cameroons worked in favour of the Nigerian Chamba and were directly responsible for the change in their administrative fortunes prior to joining Nigeria. No uncertainties attended the Cameroun Chamba position, and so they became the focus of no pressing concern. As part of the large French Cameroun Mandate they were less "visible" in the accounting processes than the non Fulani peoples of Northern Cameroons had been. With minor adjustments they

continued to be administered by Fulani chiefs. Missionary activity did not get under way until the mid 1950's and was hampered by the efforts of Fulani notables to impede the establishment of mission stations. The drift towards the more conducive surroundings which the Nigerian Chamba had found for themselves continued with occasional larger movements in reaction to actions that were felt to be unusually provocative. The underlying drift was reinforced by the wish to gain access to educational institutions and dispensary services which were felt to be better developed across the border. In addition to the movement towards Nigeria, a later trend developed for movement into more accessible regions of Cameroun - to the cities but more importantly (as it seems on the basis of informal information about recent emigrants) towards the south where cash crops could be grown and marketed. Communication with the Chamba strip was assured only by rebuilding a bridge across the Faro every dry season. Heavier vehicles could not make the trip (there is some indication that cotton growing developed and then ceased when the vehicles no longer came across the river), and the annual labour of rebuilding the bridge was resented. The result was a thorough peripheralisation of the Cameroun Chamba. Marketing systems tended to be geared towards Nigeria and the general unit of exchange was the Naira rather than the CFA. Uncertainties about exchange rates made the annual capitation tax a considerable imposition since Camerounians were forced to exchange their Naira for CFA at unfavourable rates. These problems, in their turn, made emigration to Nigeria appear a favourable prospect. A succession of poor harvests added to the costs of remaining in Cameroun for the Chamba, especially when assistance failed to reach them or was diverted to Nigerian markets (where they had to repair in order to buy it in Naira).

In summary, the border area of the old Northern Cameroons has become a microcosm of uneven development. Cameroun Chamba tend to look admiringly over the border to their Nigerian Chamba counterparts who have attracted government resources to their area for roads, schools, health services and so forth. The political condition for, what looks to them like, relative success is sought squarely in the way which Nigerian Chamba succeeded in finding a political voice that was heard directly rather than through Fulani intermediaries. Camerounian Chamba thus see one element of their own position to be remediable with the creation of a Chamba chiefship and the removal of their communities from the authority of Fulani officials. With their eyes fixed on other centres, the Nigerian Chamba are not wholly satisfied with their peripheral position and complain that the communication network which would tie them into the Nigerian marketing system on an all season basis remains incomplete. However, they would recognise how favourable their material and political positions are by comparison with their Camerounian counterparts. In terms of the radiating metaphor of centre/periphery, it is clear that circumstances appear to have diverged in neighbouring areas which share many elements of their history. We have next to see what this means in terms of attitudes to encapsulation.

A comparison between religious and ethnic breakdowns is informative here. In the literature on Cameroun, the non Fulani people of the north tend to be collectivised generically as Kirdi. The term evidently signals the extent to which the Fulani perspective in the north has remained unchallenged. References to Chamba, under their own name, occur only in the most locally focussed discussions. By contrast, in Nigerian studies the term Kirdi is virtually unknown and non Fulani populations tend to be listed under individual ethnic terms rather than as a collectivity.

A second feature, though Chamba form an interesting negative instance of it, seems to be related to this classification. Fulbeisation, the process by which northern peoples have laid claim to Fulani ethnicity (usually as an accompaniment to conversion to Islam) seems to be a more pronounced feature of northern Camerounian than northern Nigerian social life. This is consistent with classification of people into the two categories of Fulani and Kirdi. In more central areas of Nigeria than that with which I am familiar there may be a Hausaisation that forms a counterpart to Fulbeisation, but there is no evidence from Chamba that Chamba ethnic identities have been changed in favour of passing as either Hausa or Fulani, despite the large number of Chamba Muslim converts. This may relate to the comparative lateness of Chamba conversion to Islam, as well as the evacuation by Chamba of areas adjacent to the new Fulani centres of power established in what had been Chambaland during the nineteenth century. The modern ethnic process has rather involved the emergent definition of a unitary Chamba people with a special focus upon those Chamba who are also members of Ganye Division. If the Cameroun Chamba have also been relatively immune to the phenomenon of Fulbeisation, then this may be attributable to the common ethnicity that they recognise with their more numerous Nigerian counterparts. The position may, I think, be related to the distinction of images to which I drew attention at the outset.

Nigerian Chamba membership of the Nigerian state has been crucially mediated by local affiliations: most significantly an ethnic interest which has been largely institutionalised in an administrative unit. This interest has found representation in both "traditional" and various "modern" sets of offices. In this sense, the Chamba situation corresponds to a general feature of Nigerian politics, recognised in the creation of states, that local units are to be admitted in the federal nature of the state. To summarise roughly, but not too inaccurately, local and religious differences among Nigerian Chamba are of relatively slight significance in the political forum where the necessity for an ethnic interest is recognised. There is a clear realisation that other factors should not be permitted to split the Chamba vote (on the different occasions when voting has been called for). In terms of their common ethnic interest Chamba accept that their Nigerian

identity is amenable to management. Judging by administrative appointments made by the military, this ethnic interest is reciprocally recognised by representatives of the state as one factor in the accession to encapsulation by the Chamba. The identity serves as a counterweight also to the very considerable reservations which Nigerian Chamba have about membership of Gongola State, which is often represented as a kind of successor state to the Adamawa Emirate. Here I am arguing, quite contrary to popular opinion, that ethnicity in fact predisposes the acceptance of national identity. It does so, crucially, because of the relatively marginal position of the Chamba. Practically and imaginatively, ethnicity offers an encapsulated identity in terms of which the larger encapsulation can be negotiated. The proximate boundary makes the more distant less daunting - again both pragmatically and imaginatively. The important factors in this situation have derived not from the general facts of peripherality and encapsulation but from the specific form which these have taken locally. Significantly, in the context of increasing religious polarisation, the strength of the ethnic allegiance of Chamba, and other middle-belt peoples, and the fact that ethnicity rather than religion mediates encapsulation may serve to arrest the emergent line of cleavage (at least among these peoples).

The Cameroun Chamba case is different in several respects. Cameroun Chamba are offered individual national incorporation without the more proximate encapsulation of a local or ethnic boundary within which to organise their representation. There are only slight organisational correlates of Chambaness in the form of village headships, but these are effectively seen as tax collecting agencies. The Camerounian state makes little impact upon the lives of these Chamba except directly through Fulani chiefs recognised as administrators. Their sense of position in the Camerounian state is almost solely defined in terms of the centre/periphery metaphor which, in this case is usually redefined in "vertical" terms as a relation of domination. The common identity held out as Camerounians is at once distant from everyday experience and contradictory, since direct experience of the state is usually through the intermediary of Fulani. Whereas the Chamba in Nigeria are responsible for most aspects of their own routine administration, the Cameroun Chamba are effectively excluded from their administration other than as tax collecting agencies. In peripheral areas where the state apparatus has such overwhelming importance as a source of positions which carry both remuneration and authority, it is largely in terms of these positions that we have to judge the stake which people have been offered in the state.

CONCLUSION

A general conclusion would go against the grain of an account that has become involved with local detail in order to point to the complexity of the circumstances that metaphors deriving from

the centre may conceal. The instance I have described has a topicality because the building of a bridge across the Faro will bring an end to one element responsible for the seasonal isolation of the Cameroun Chamba. With better communications will come greater incentive to produce cash crops as well as a more precise extension of the authority of the state in the form of a more regular police presence and, probably, a tighter control over the international border. The changes are going to require understanding on both sides, but especially on the part of the Camerounian authorities there will be the need for a sympathetic appraisal of the adjustments which the peripheralised have made in reaction to the slight provision previously made for them by their state. It is to be hoped that the extension of communications will bring in its wake an extension of health and educational facilities and, perhaps most importantly, an administrative adjustment in the direction of increased local responsibility. If this is not the case, there is always the possibility that better communications with the rest of Cameroun will simply persuade more Chamba that greater advantages are to be had by moving into Nigeria.

To sum up some more general points: the centre/periphery metaphor is a powerful image of radiating importance, and it is predictable that those who consider themselves to be at the centre should see their position in these terms. Their version of encapsulation is likely also to be influenced by this sense of centrality. However, these images may not offer membership to the peripheralised on terms that seem attractive. Even if they admit their own peripherality, it need not be certain that they use the image in the same sense. Peripherality may be interpreted as a hierarchical relation and, practically, incorporation may be thought to serve an entrenchment of preexisting inequalities by offering new resources to the dominant. We have seen that this has been a recurrent theme of Chamba/Fulani relations in the colonial and post-colonial periods. Local democracy, by contrast, may require the recognition of identities which mediate between state and periphery. Contrary to popular opinion, the local identities of peripheral peoples may be a source of strength to the state, since they allow those who have systematically been disprivileged a "central space" of their own in which to organise the expressions of their needs. This situation offers a better prospect for compliance in other areas of development.

I have also suggested that the centre/periphery metaphor tends to ahistoricism and essentialism. It permits the suggestion that certain peoples are culturally predisposed to find themselves where they do (this applies as much to Ibo or Bamileke propensity to succeed as it might to a Chamba propensity for impoverished marginality). The very different trajectories of the three Chamba groupings I have discussed show that this hypothesis is unlikely. Finally, I think that the example I have outlined shows how the equation between development and level of production, sometimes self evident to members of the metropolitan centre as well as to external financial sponsoring agencies, may fail to correspond to the agenda local people have for

themselves. Seen from the periphery, development equally concerns matters of access to services available at the centre and to the means for influencing those who decide policy. In responding to the concerns of the marginalised, the centre can also establish a climate more favourable to enhanced productive effort.

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DISCUSSANT'S NOTE

SESSION X - STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Jeanne Koopman Henn

A discussion of :

Achille Mbembe - Bureaucratie et forces marchandes dans le Cameroun de l'entre - deux-guerres

Jean-François Bayart - Les fondements sociaux de l'Etat au Cameroun.

As the last discussant of the conference, I would like to draw together some of the predominant thematic threads of our conference, focusing in particular on a topic which draws together both Mbembe's and Bayart's papers and has been woven through most of our discussions, the topic of accumulation.

All processes of economic accumulation involve two conceptually and empirically distinct phases:

1. the production and extraction of an economic surplus, most often by one social group from another or, more rarely, in the context of a cooperative form of production and surplus appropriation, and
2. the investment of the surplus in economic resources (such as land, labor, technology, knowledge) and/or, some would suggest, in political resources (such as socio-political positions) which facilitate a new round of expanded production.

Reinvestment of the surplus is essential to accumulation. It is, perhaps, the phase of the accumulation process which has been the most problematic in Africa. It is therefore most appropriate that several of the papers at this conference have analyzed the social, political and economic impediments to reinvestment.

Some papers, like Mbembe's have focused on the political roots underlying the relative lack of accumulation which has characterized African economic history, while others, like Rowland's (and also Bayart's when evoking the Mercedes as a unifying status symbol for both governmental and private sector "elites"), have analyzed the socio-political imperatives of consumption which impede a more rapid pace of accumulation in the current period.

Accumulation, in its many aspects, have been an important unifying theme of this conference. The papers we have considered have analyzed:

1. the variety of traditional pre-colonial forms of accumulation (reinvestment in material resources such as land and cattle, and more pervasively, in various forms of political and ideological relations which result in the accumulation of control of labor-power) as well as the continuities in these traditional forms of accumulation to the present;
2. colonial transformations in traditional modes of accumulation and colonial imposition of capitalist relations, at times by enforcing a process of primitive accumulation which deprived African communities of their land or labor-power (e.g. forced recruitment of African laborers onto state projects or private European enterprises);
3. forms of state controlled accumulation which expropriate surplus from one economic sector (eg. agriculture) and invest it in another, or which may subsidize the consumption of particular groups rather than investing all or most of the surplus;
4. relations between gender and accumulation, especially the use of gender to facilitate the extraction of a surplus, a phenomenon which explains related empirical finding that women are predominantly located in those groups from which an economic surplus is expropriated but rarely included in those groups which decide how that surplus will be invested or consumed;
5. the struggle against "excessive" surplus extraction as documented in papers on plantation and other workers' struggles.

Several papers have demonstrated that excessive surplus extraction may initiate a process of disaccumulation and economic decline. Some of us have worried, in our papers and in our discussions, that contemporary processes of disaccumulation may be threatening the long-term viability of Cameroon's rural sector. Some papers and participants have offered commentaries on state policies which impact upon processes of accumulation.

While not directly addressing the policy issues which have been discussed in other sessions of this conference, both Mbembe's and Bayart's papers focus on the political and economic interactions which need to be dealt with if we are to understand the genesis of policy decisions. Both seek to provide a context in which contemporary political and economic developments can be more fruitfully analyzed.

Mbembe's major thesis is that one of the primary characteristics of the African historical experience has been a lack of accumulation (*défaut d'accumulation*). His paper analyzes the tensions between the logic of state-building pursued by the German and French colonial states in Cameroon and the logic of the free market, i.e. a market free of state intervention, which, it should be noted, was a concept the European planters and merchants continually invoked as an ideal, but were not, in fact, prepared to accept in reality.

Mbembe demonstrates how the colonial business sector constantly demanded political intervention by the state in support of its various economic interests. He is highly convincing in arguing that from the consolidation of French administrative power in the early 1920s to the second world war, the private sector's methods of expropriating and reinvesting an economic surplus had little resemblance to those of an idealized model of capitalist accumulation.

The actual course of economic change during the colonial period was characterized by the development of a form of state dependent capitalism. In the colonial private sector, profitable outcomes depended less on the efficiency of production than on the ability to manipulate the administrative controls of the state. In particular, European planters and merchants profited from the state's coercive apparatus which used force to provide them with cheap African labor. They also relied on state regulation to frustrate or prevent free market competition from indigenous African producers.

Mbembe sees the global economic crises of the French colonial period, especially the depression of the 1930s and World War Two, as situations which were manipulated politically by the colonial business community to promote, quite successfully a type of administrative capitalism which continually pressured the state to intervene in economic affairs in order to foster the interests of the colonial capitalist class. The effects of this history of state-capitalist relations, Mbembe suggests, are still strongly felt in post-colonial Cameroon. In his opinion, they go a long way toward explaining the problems of accumulation and the difficulties of capitalist growth in the contemporary period.

Bayart takes up similar state-private sector relations themes in this paper, but focuses his analysis on the question of the nature of the dominant class in Cameroon and on the recent history of its "process of formation". Beginning with a review of the political events surrounding the "transfer" of state power from Ahidjo to Biya from 1982 to 1984, Bayart demonstrates the limits of analyses focused entirely on the ethnic and regional aspects of recent political developments. His own more global analysis addresses the implications for

Cameroonian political economy of the relative maturation of the post-colonial economy, the rising influence of a younger, more internationally oriented Cameroonian capitalist class, and the continuing marginalization of the bulk of the population from the political process.

Bayart analyzes the differences in the political projects of the Ahidjo and Biya regimes, concluding that, much to the disappointment of those who had hoped that the Biya regime would provide an opening for the type of democratic nationalism associated with the pre-independence UPC party, we are not witnessing a thorough transformation of the state. Instead, Bayart argues, we are seeing a simple shift in the balance of forces in the ruling class which tends to favor somewhat less those whose power is based on traditional socio-political hierarchies and somewhat more those whose socio-political weight derives from their economic position as accumulators in capitalist or (more appropriately, considering Mbembe's thesis) quasi-capitalist, national or international markets.

Much of Bayart's analysis emphasizes the continuities between the Ahidjo and Biya periods in the process of formation of a dominant class. His paper demonstrates that the dominant class in Cameroon (not, I might add, unlike the dominant class in the United States) straddles both economic and political bases of power. Indeed, membership in this group often seems to require an ability to engage in such straddling.

Bayart argues, as Mbembe demonstrates for an earlier period, that the pursuit and consolidation of advantageous relationships with the state is still very much the key to economic success. He stresses, however, that the economic base of the dominant class is fragile and therefore highly threatened by the economic crisis pressing on Africa.

The continuing stagnation in world trade and the precipitous decline in international investment in Africa has seriously impinged on the ability of the dominant class to increase its income and profits and has accentuated the competition among various factions of the elite for access to state resources. The political antagonisms thrown up by these processes are expected to become even more acute until there is an improvement in the economic conjuncture.

Bayart implies that these pressures may turn back the process of political and economic liberalization which at one point seemed to be a central goal of the Biya regime. He does not, however, suggest that either international or internal economic pressure will result in substantial changes in the composition of the "dominant class in formation". What kind of international or internal situation could foster any *fundamental* change in the constellation of

political power in Cameroon is a topic not addressed in this paper. It is, perhaps, a subject for discussion.

BUREAUCRATIE ET FORCES MARCHANDES DANS LE CAMEROUN DE L'ENTRE-DEUX-GUERRES (1920-1938).

J.A. Mbembe.

L'Afrique noire s'offre à l'analyste comme le prototype d'une expérience historique dont l'une des caractéristiques est, quoique l'on dise, le *défaut d'accumulation*. Ce problème est, compte non tenu de quelques rares cas, antérieur à la pénétration des forces du marché. L'une des constantes des sociétés précoloniales fut, en effet, l'impossibilité objective dans laquelle les dominant se trouvèrent d'extraire des excédents suffisamment substantiels pour autoriser des formes d'organisation du travail, des structures de la propriété, bref une économie des échanges dont le ressort fut le marché en tant que tel. Certes, des modalités spécifiques de captation des surplus par les groupes dominants existèrent-elles. Elles ne furent pas suffisantes pour projeter ces sociétés sur une trajectoire au bout de laquelle, de par leurs dynamiques propres, elles auraient vu triompher le principe du marché. C'est l'une des raisons pour lesquelles le fait colonial leur posa, en termes très aigus, le problème du "passage au capitalisme". Or, en colonie, cette question s'avéra, très tôt, indissociable de celle de la production d'un Etat (state-making process). Prenant appui sur l'exemple du Cameroun, cette étude tente de faire apercevoir l'affrontement qui opposa dans l'entre-deux-guerres deux logiques participant pourtant du même système d'intervention: d'une part une logique de construction étatique (portée par la bureaucratie coloniale) et d'autre part une logique se réclamant du marché (et dont le colonnat se voulait le vecteur). La recherche de l'efficacité politique contraria celle de l'efficacité économique et vice-versa. La crise économique de 1929-30, la Deuxième Guerre mondiale et la cristallisation de la demande nationaliste accentuèrent l'état de crispation des deux démarches. L'étude suggère - sans pouvoir le démontrer - que l'Etat postcolonial au Cameroun est à comprendre à la lumière de cette tension historique. Il est lui-même le résultat d'un double "avortement": la violente défaite de la demande nationaliste lui a assuré un sursis politique qui laisse entier le problème de l'efficacité politique en tant que telle. Quant à la question du "passage au capitalisme" et du "défaut d'accumulation", elle reste inscrite à l'ordre du jour.

1. POPULATION ET ESPACES

En 1913, le Cameroun comptait 1871 Européens et 2,5 millions d'Africains. Le total de la population blanche se répartissait entre 1643 allemands, et 228 autres personnes de quatorze nationalités, dont 79 anglais et 60 américains. Si l'on excepte les femmes (au nombre de 230) et

les enfants de moins de quinze ans (au nombre de 81), la répartition de la population européenne par catégories socio-professionnelles était établie comme suit:

	1900		1907		1913	
Population blanche	528		1010		1871	
Nombre d'hommes adultes	470		867		1560	
Fonctionnaires						
et militaires	86	18,3%	225	26%	460	29,5%
Commerçants	182	38,7%	347	40%	614	39,4%
Planteurs	92	19,6%	86	9,9%	182	11,7%
Missionnaires	71	15,1%	91	10,5%	144	9,2%
Divers	39	8,3%	118	13,6%	160	10,2%

(Tableau 1: Répartition de la population européenne par catégories socio-professionnelles de 1900 à 1913).

Tout au long de la période allemande, le colonat s'accrut constamment, l'organisation de la domination reposant sur trois principaux groupes d'intérêt. Il s'agissait d'abord des commerçants, dont la surface d'influence ne cessa de s'agrandir. Véritable colonne vertébrale de la politique coloniale allemande, le "lobby" commerçant et industriel disposait de puissants relais en métropole (dont la Deutsche Kolonisationsgesellschaft, organisation regroupant, en 1913, 1120 firmes et corps constitués). Quant à la présence des commerçants eux-mêmes sur le terrain, elle était antérieure à la prise de possession même si elle se limitait alors à la côte. Le traité instituant le protectorat allemand sur le Cameroun en avait, au demeurant, constitué le point d'orgue. Il y avait ensuite les planteurs. Leur chiffre déclina entre 1900 et 1907, avant de se stabiliser à la veille de la Première Guerre mondiale. Au cours de la même période, la bureaucratisation de la colonie s'affirma, le nombre des fonctionnaires et des militaires passant de 86 en 1900 à 460 en 1913.

De 1884 (date de la prise de possession du territoire) jusqu'en 1890, l'interpénétration entre une logique militaro-bureaucratique et une logique d'accumulation (commerçants, planteurs, sociétés concessionnaires) fut telle qu'elles étaient toutes les deux, organiquement liées. Les groupes économiques étaient représentés au conseil du gouvernement du Cameroun et intervenaient directement dans la définition des politiques à entreprendre. L'administration s'efforçait de garantir la liberté des particuliers et de créer les conditions principes à une économie de marché: campagnes militaires et de "pacification", ouverture de l'arrière-pays, mise

en place des infrastructures (ports, rail, routes), octroi des concessions aux grandes firmes commerciales. Mais, peu à peu, les exigences de la production des biens et du profit d'une part, et d'autre part la production de l'ordre apparurent contradictoires. De 1890 à 1913, la bureaucratie entreprit de faire de l'Etat colonial un centre de domination autonome, doté d'un espace propre, et capable d'être un élément de rationalisation de la colonisation. D'où un élargissement de ses domaines d'intervention, dans le but d'ajuster les intérêts du marché avec ce qu'elle considérait comme les objectifs globaux et à longue échéance, desquels dépendait la reproduction de la société coloniale toute entière.

Bien que déchirés par d'intenses rivalités entre les commerçants et les planteurs, les milieux d'affaires priverent la bureaucratie de leur appui en vue de cette autonomisation. Le lent, mais constant accroissement de l'administration avait conduit cette dernière à développer ses propres initiatives grâce aux ressources propres provenant des douanes et des impôts. Alors que les intérêts privés poussaient l'Etat colonial à se soustraire du contrôle parlementaire et financier de la métropole, cette tendance fut stoppée dès 1892 lorsque le principe du contrôle, par le Reichstag, des projets de budgets locaux fut édicté. En 1901, cette mesure fut renforcée par l'obligation faite aux gouverneurs de soumettre leurs projets d'ordonnances au Kolonial Amt. En 1913, cependant, l'influente association privée, la Verein Westafrikanischer Kaufleute obtint que les projets économiques de l'administration lui fussent communiqués avant d'être soumis au gouverneur.

La confrontation des intérêts se fit aussi autour de la question de la main-d'oeuvre. La construction des chemins de fer constitua un enjeu stratégique de la plus haute importance pour l'Etat colonial. En 1913, le gouvernement envisageait de prolonger les deux lignes existantes, l'une vers Garoua et le Tchad, et l'autre vers la Sangha et, peut-être, l'Oubangui. Une troisième ligne se dirigeant vers le centre de la frontière orientale était également envisagée. Véritable Mittellandbahn, elle devait faciliter la "pacification" des régions insoumises du Sud-Est, diviser le Cameroun en deux parties presque égales et permettre d'atteindre les contrées de la savane, que l'on estimait alors fertiles. Il s'agissait, pour la colonie, de s'adjuger le commerce français de transit et, au besoin, de capter tout le commerce du bassin supérieur du Congo. A cet imaginaire ferroviaire faisait écho l'insistante réclamation des commerçants du Sud-Cameroun, d'une voie partant de Kribi et allant jusqu'à Ouesso. Or, la conduite des travaux antérieurs et de ceux qui étaient projetés exigeait la réquisition d'une main-d'oeuvre nombreuse. De ce fait, elle plaçait l'Etat en compétition directe avec les planteurs et les commerçants.

Ces deux derniers groupes étaient, en outre, soumis à une rude concurrence depuis 1896. La course aux travailleurs s'envenima. Dans le Sud-Cameroun, les commerçants entreprirent des

opérations d'enrôlement anarchique, maltraitant les populations et provoquant des troubles et des soulèvements parmi les indigènes. Le gouvernement autorisait les colons à enrôler des travailleurs, dans des districts et au sein de périmètres qu'il délimitait. Les planteurs exigeaient à présent le recrutement forcé. Von Puttkammer les y autorisa. Mais face aux abus des commissaires-recruteurs, l'administration esquaissa timidement une "politique indigène" dont l'objectif affiché était de protéger les travailleurs. Diverses ordonnances furent édictées. Elles venaient s'ajouter aux prescriptions sur le portage (violées sur le terrain par les commerçants). Une réforme générale organisant le service de recrutement et de contrôle était à l'ordre du jour. Le gouvernement envisageait désormais de se charger lui-même du recrutement des travailleurs. Mais une partie importante des milieux d'affaires exigeait que les ouvriers ainsi enrôlés soient répartis dans les divers secteurs de la vie économique par un agent indépendant et non par l'administration.

Aux origines sociales de l'Etat colonial au Cameroun se trouve par conséquent une combinatoire d'acteurs (bureaucrates, soldats, commerçants et planteurs) appartenant au même système d'intervention, mais cherchant, chacun, à accéder, par des voies propres, aux ressources porteuses de pouvoir. La simple expansion territoriale ne suffisait pas à assurer leur emprise sur les sociétés qu'ils dominaient. Encore fallait-il qu'ils contrôlent les mécanismes d'appropriation des "ressources flottantes", et disposent du monopole dans la définition des modes de leur redistribution. Très tôt, la bureaucratie et les milieux d'affaires coloniaux entrèrent en compétition pour la mobilisation des dites ressources, et divergèrent sur la façon d'organiser et d'articuler les intérêts des principaux groupes en présence. La brièveté de la domination allemande mit brutalement un terme au processus alors en cours de cristallisation du centre étatique (organisation plus élaborée et plus puissante, hiérarchisation des fonctions, gestion monopolistique des ressources coercitives...). Tout en continuant de se chevaucher en 1913, l'entrelacement entre la bureaucratie et les circuits marchands avait perdu de son caractère organique des débuts de la colonisation. En contredisant les milieux d'affaires sur la question de savoir quel volume de ressources coercitives mobiliser sans mettre en péril la finalité même de l'exploitation capitaliste, la bureaucratie tentait de convertir en ressources d'allocation" ce qu'elle détenait comme "ressources d'autorité". Lorsqu'éclata la Première Guerre mondiale, le processus d'affranchissement de la bureaucratie de la gangue marchande et la relative autonomisation de l'Etat colonial étaient encore problématiques.

Le colonnat

De 1913 à 1935, la population européenne était passée de 1871 à 2324 membres. Entre les deux périodes, il y avait eu la guerre, la défaite allemande, et le partage du territoire entre la France et

l'Angleterre. La mise de celui-ci sous le mandat de la Société des Nations en modifia le statut juridique. Mais peut-on affirmer qu'elle eut un effet déterminant sur les modalités de son exploitation, les rapports entre Etat et marché et les processus de constitution des groupes d'intérêts? Un regard sur la répartition du colonat par nationalités et par catégories socio-professionnelles permet de déceler certaines inflexions.

Nationalités	1912-1913	1934	1935
Allemands	1643	55	0
Français	18	1619	1761
Anglais	79	57	63
Américains	60	83	60
Grecs	-	82	103
Italiens	2	26	39
Portugais et			
Espagnols	6	20	16
Suédois et			
Norvégiens	5	20	26
Néerlandais	7	1	4
Autrichiens			
et Hongrois	14	3	12
Russes	3	1	2

(Tableau 2: Répartition comparée du colonat par nationalités à l'époque allemande et sous le mandat français (1912-1935))

Il était évident, en 1935, que les Français s'étaient substitués aux Allemands, tout en favorisant l'immigration venant d'autres pays dont l'une des caractéristiques était de ne posséder aucune colonie. Tel fut le cas des Grecs dont le nombre passa de 82 à 103 en l'espace d'une année (1934-1935), et celui des Suisses (dont le chiffre augmenta régulièrement). L'immigration anglaise et américaine restait fort importante. Si les Grecs se spécialisaient peu à peu dans le commerce, la plupart des Américains se trouvaient dans l'apostolat. Les fluctuations correspondirent, dans la plupart des cas, à la période de récession qui, à partir de 1930 frappa le pays. Alors que la période allemande fut marquée, sur le plan économique, par la prédominance des commerçants et des planteurs, le mandat français se caractérisa quant à lui par une bureaucratisation progressive de l'Etat. Le chiffre cumulé des planteurs et des commerçants s'élevait à 526 en 1935 alors qu'il était de 796 en 1913. Par contre, l'administration s'étoffa

considérablement. A l'administration centrale proprement dite vinrent s'ajouter une constellation de services: santé, agriculture, travaux publics, chemins de fer, tribunaux. Certes, à partir de 1935, le nombre de fonctionnaires amorça une légère décline. Cette dernière était due, en très grande partie, à l'instillation dans l'appareil d'Etat d'un auxiliaire indigène préposé aux fonctions subalternes autrefois occupées par des Européens. A la fin de l'année 1935, on se trouvait à la fin d'une phase de dépression économique et une reprise de l'activité s'amorçait timidement. Cette légère embellie fut mise à profit par un nombre assez réduit d'Européens pour se dessaisir des postes subalternes dans l'administration dans le but de se reconverter dans des circuits économiques plus rentables. Si le nombre des commerçants chuta de 1934 à 1935, passant de 314 à 301, celui des industriels et des directeurs de société était par contre, en augmentation. Le secteur bancaire se maintint et l'exploitation des mines n'en était qu'à ses débuts.

Fonctionnaires	1934	1935
Administration générale	124	181
Forces de police	52	44
Services de santé	75	71
Tribunaux	9	11
Enseignement	17	19
Agriculture	23	18
Travaux publics et chemins de fer	147	126
Services divers	84	43
Total	531	513

Autres professions	1934	1935
Avocats-défenseurs et agents d'affaires	2	3
Commerçants	314	301
Industriels et directeurs de sociétés	15	22
Exploitants forestiers	76	43
Planteurs	125	182
Missionnaires	158	164
Banque	8	11
Mines	-	16

Professions diverses	55	98
Total		
non fonctionnaires	753	840

(Tableau 3: Répartition de la population européenne par catégories socio-professionnelles en 1934-35)

Cette population extra-africaine (à laquelle il faut ajouter les Libano-Syriens dont le chiffre passa de 54 à 63 en 1934-35) était inégalement répartie sur le territoire. Le mouvement de concentration dans quelques grands centres urbains avait commencé dès les années 1924-25. Les zones rurales furent, quant à elles, investies par les agents missionnaires et quelques exploitants qui y séjournaient temporairement. Entre 1927 et 1930, la distribution spatiale se présentait comme suit:

	1927	1950
Douala	819	1000 (*)
Yaoundé	325	350
Kribi	97	50
Edéa	134	150
Yabassi	32	-
Ebolowa	109	30

(Tableau 4: Distribution de la population européenne dans 6 centres urbains du Sud-Cameroun, 1927-1930).

(*) Les chiffres de la deuxième colonne sont arrondis.

Des Européens étaient installés dans d'autres régions du territoire. Mais les principales concentrations recoupaient les centres urbains indiqués ci-dessus. De 1913 à 1930, l'afflux des Européens fut régulier. Il ne fut jamais spectaculaire. Entre 1927 et 1930, le chiffre des blancs dans les villes de Douala et de Yaoundé avait globalement progressé, les deux centres regroupant plus de la moitié du chiffre total. Par contre, ce n'était pas le cas de villes anciennes comme Kribi et Ebolowa alors en déclin, au profit de centres plus dynamiques ou en expansion (cas d'Edéa et de Nkongsamba). Ces mouvements de population n'étaient pas sans lien avec les mouvements économiques. Les pôles de croissance qu'avaient failli devenir Kribi, et par ricochet Ebolowa, sur la route vers l'Océan, du temps des Allemands, avaient commencé de décrocher au cours de la période 1920-1925. Sur la ceinture maritime, Edéa avait surclassé

Yabassi et gagné haut la main la sourde rivalité qui l'opposa, un temps, à Eséka. Yaoundé était entrain de "vider" l'arrière-pays tandis que la ruine de l'Est était sérieusement amorcée. L'incapacité de Dschang à "fixer" les populations des Hauts Plateaux de l'Ouest était déjà perceptible, tandis que Nkongsamba s'imposait de plus en plus comme une étape importante de leur "dispersion" et de leur maîtrise ultérieure des villes. Bref, la domination française organisait son espace en retrait des ambitions allemandes, et sur lesquelles il importe de s'attarder.

En effet, le projet allemand de colonisation du Cameroun reposait sur une construction spatiale ambitieuse et sophistiquée, où la cohérence interne (structures spatiales internes) n'avait de sens que par rapport à une logique géopolitique et économique plus vaste. Cette logique géopolitique recouvrait un important enjeu: à savoir, organiser la satellisation économique de l'Afrique centrale (dans son acception anglo-saxonne). Les pièces-maîtresses de ce dispositif étaient, d'une part le Cameroun (à partir du flanc ouest et du Golfe de Guinée), d'autre part le Sud-Ouest africain (actuelle Namibie) et le Tanganyika (à partir du flanc est). La stratégie allemande - sans laquelle on ne comprend rien aux modalités de construction de la société, de l'économie et de l'espace colonial au Cameroun - consistait à geler la compétition avec l'Angleterre sur la façade occidentale de l'Afrique tout en favorisant la mise en place des conditions d'un "condominium" économique (qui n'excluait pas les rivalités) sur les espaces réputés plus riches du *Mittelafrika* (desquels la France devait être exclue ou, en tout cas, réduite à un rôle mineur). C'est ce qui explique les projets ferroviaires mirobolants qui, partant du centre nerveux qu'était le Golfe de Guinée, devaient non seulement annexer les "pays du Lac Tchad" et aspirer les dynamiques commerciales du bassin du Congo, mais aussi servir d'axe de pénétration vers les savanes de l'Afrique centrale.

La notion de "terroir socio-économique" (fonds de population, ressources, systèmes d'utilisation du sol et écosystèmes, structures sociales) est sans doute la plus apte à rendre compte de la façon dont l'Etat colonial allemand entreprit de façonner les identités économiques constitutives du territoire. Il fallut d'abord définir le statut de la côte dans le dispositif d'aménagement de l'espace économique. Le couloir maritime recouvrait l'ensemble des trois sous-systèmes d'échanges qui avaient émergé au cours du XIX^e siècle. Ces trois sous-systèmes avaient été le théâtre d'une âpre compétition entre commerçants français, anglais et allemands. Ils étaient adossés, chacun, sur un arrière-pays d'où provenaient des esclaves et, à la suite de l'abolition, les produits tropicaux (huile de palme, ivoire, etc.). Le projet allemand confirmait Douala comme le centre de gravité de ce dispositif côtier, Edéa et Yabassi constituant les saillies les plus rapprochées, sur les fleuves Nkam et Sanaga. Plus à l'ouest, l'éclatement du pôle qu'avaient constitué les principautés de Bimbila (1833-1887) bénéficia provisoirement à Buéa, tandis que la baie d'Ambas devenait le point de fixation d'une intense colonisation

agricole, sur les flancs du Mont Cameroun. Au sud, Kribi centralisa les ressources qui avaient attiré autrefois les Européens dans la région de Big Batanga dont Ebolowa apparaissait désormais comme le contrefort le plus immédiat.

Dans la logique de l'Etat colonial allemand, l'enjeu sous-jacent à la consolidation du dispositif côtier était moins la maîtrise de l'espace maritime en tant que tel que la fondation d'une base de départ en vue de la satellisation économique et politique de l'intérieur. Partant de la côte, trois couloirs en dessinaient l'armature générale. Sur le couloir latéral sud, Kribi devait jouer un rôle-clé dans le contrôle des débouchés des "pays du Congo". Le couloir latéral ouest devait permettre la mise en valeur des Hauts Plateaux de l'Ouest tout en faisant contre-poids aux dispositifs anglais de l'Est et du Nord-Est du Nigéria. Partant de Douala, le couloir central désenclavait les "pays Yaoundé", étape capitale sur les routes du Nord. La clé de voûte de ce dispositif était le Plateau de l'Adamaoua, véritable épice centre du Cameroun. Le projet allemand voulait en faire un "grenier".

La défaite de 1914-1918 sonna le glas de toutes ces vastes ambitions. Elle se traduisit par un démembrement du territoire. Celui-ci fut réduit à sa plus petite portion, au profit des possessions françaises avoisinantes, mais surtout au profit de la colonie anglaise du Nigéria. La situation de relative égalité de puissance (superficies prévalant antérieurement à la guerre notamment) des deux entités (Cameroun allemand et Nigéria) avait permis le gel de la compétition germano-anglaise sur la façade occidentale de l'Afrique. La dislocation du complexe géographique camerounais constituait un corollaire indispensable à la mise en échec des ambitions allemandes à la *co-hégémonie* en Afrique centrale. Pièce-maîtresse de ce dispositif, le Cameroun subissait, de plein fouet, le contre-effet de l'échec de cette stratégie. L'occupation française de la partie orientale inaugura une autre manière de construire politiquement et de lire économiquement l'espace ainsi colonisé.

L'approche allemande de l'espace camerounais était avant tout géo-économique et suffisamment décentré pour provoquer un effet de maillage. Cette structuration en réseaux était partie constitutive d'un objectif plus global: la domination ou, en tout cas, la satellisation économique de l'Afrique centrale alors considérée comme l'une des régions les plus rentables du continent noir.

La régulation de l'inégalité

La construction spatio-économique française rompait avec cette vision où la cohérence interne n'avait de sens que par rapport à une stratégie générale, dépassant les limites du Cameroun

proprement dit. Vers 1930, on pouvait en déceler les principaux axes. Elles consistaient d'abord en une "aspiration" des mouvements économiques par la côte. Cette dernière, était, au demeurant, amputée de son poumon occidental (pôle constitué par la baie d'Ambas remis aux Anglais). Elle fut aussi caractérisée par le désengagement du pôle de Big Batanga et de son arrière-pays (prélude au déclin d'Ebolowa, important centre de commerce sous la période allemande). Le repli sur le "couloir central" (recoupant grosso modo les deux lignes du chemin de fer Douala-Nkongsamba et Douala-Yaoundé) et l'enclavement du territoire par rapport à son environnement sous-régional brisait net l'ambition allemande de lui faire jouer un rôle prépondérant dans le façonnement économique de la région. Au total, dans l'entre-deux-guerres, l'occupation française ne donna guère lieu à une approche géo-économique interne du territoire. Au contraire de la période allemande, sa lecture de l'espace colonisé n'était pas inscrite dans une perspective de longue durée. D'où une gestion par à-coups, reposant, pour l'essentiel, sur l'infrastructure laissée par les Allemands. Certes, y-eut-il le prolongement de la voie ferrée d'Eséka à Yaoundé. L'incertitude provoquée par la montée des tensions en Europe et les revendications allemandes visant à récupérer leurs anciennes colonies ne favorisèrent guère des investissements de grande envergure entre 1930 et 1939-45. Par contre, la mise en oeuvre d'une politique coloniale dominée par le rabattement sur le couloir central "périphérisa" de nombreux autres "terroirs socio-économiques", remodela la carte des échanges, modifia substantiellement la géographie des marchés et la carte des migrations. Il vaut la peine de s'attarder sur quelques indices de cette structuration inégalitaire des "terroirs socio-économiques" si on veut saisir la dynamique de l'Etat colonial, ses rapports avec le marché dans le Cameroun de l'entre-deux-guerres, et les traductions socio-politiques des conflits qui en découleront au lendemain de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale.

Le premier indice concerne l'appropriation des terres. Sans entrer dans les détails de la législation domaniale et foncière imposée par la France au Cameroun, il importe de rappeler que le décret d'août 1920 (qui étendait aux territoires du Togo et du Cameroun la législation conçue pour l'AOF en octobre 1904) faisait de l'Etat colonial le propriétaire attitré de toutes les terres considérées comme "vacantes et sans maîtres". Le même décret interdisait aux indigènes d'"aliéner" les terres dites collectives, sans autorisation de l'administration. Grâce à cette disposition juridique, d'importantes superficies furent allouées aux colons dans des régions rurales. C'est ainsi qu'entre 1922 et 1935, 77 concessions rurales avaient été attribuées à titre définitif. Elles couvraient une superficie totale de 21.969,8533 hectares. La colonisation européenne des terres atteignait quant à elle le chiffre global de 68.745,0118 hectares. Voici, pour le Sud-Cameroun, leur distribution régionale:

Régions	Superficies concédés en 1926	Total des surfaces concédées en 1935
Mungo	10.962,0200 ha	19.567,2417 ha
Nyong et Sanaga	272,4560 ha	5.713,1770 ha
Sanaga Maritime	2.786,3525 ha	21.134,1136 ha
Noun	-	13.516,7259 ha
Haut-Nyong	14,1500 ha	1.860,6300 ha
Kribi	187,1700 ha	1.953,1700 ha
N'tem	349 ha	1.428,6600 ha
Lom et Kadeï	7,7500 ha	350,2470 ha
N'kam	-	213,6007 ha
Wouri	-	305,8000 ha

(Tableau 5: Répartition par région des superficies accordées en concessions rurales, 1926-1935).

Une prise en compte de l'évolution année par année (de 1926 à 1935) montre que toutes les grandes superficies avaient été octroyées avant 1927. Quand survint la crise de 1930-1931, la colonisation européenne des terres marqua une pause, les années creuses se situant précisément entre 1930 et 1933. Elle amorça une légère reprise en 1934, mais suivit un cours erratique jusqu'en 1938. La répartition des superficies par région montre clairement l'option prioritaire pour le "couloir central", deux saillies émergeant l'une dans le Mungo et l'autre dans la Sanaga Maritime. Ces deux régions constituaient des verrous presque stratégiques du dispositif français d'exploitation du Cameroun. Elles jouaient simultanément le rôle de "réservoir" à la sortie immédiate de la côte (Douala) et d'important centre de transit en direction des deux extrémités du "couloir central" (le Noun et le Nyong et Sanaga) dont il fallait drainer les ressources vers la mer. Ainsi que le montre le tableaux ci-dessous, elles constituaient aussi les deux pôles moteurs de la colonisation agricole européenne, détenant à elles seules la moitié des superficies en hectares, cultivées en 1935. Elles disposaient du quasi-monopole de la culture du palmier et de la banane, la Sanaga Maritime venant en tête de la production de caoutchouc, loin devant Kribi et le Haut Nyong au sud-ouest et à l'est.

SUPERFICIES EN HECTARES, CULTIVEES EN

Régions	Palmier	Caféier	Cacaoyer	Banane	Caouchouc	(Total)
Noun	-	2.307	-	-	-	2.307
Mungo	2.920	2.059	50	1.725	80	6.834
Nyong et Sanaga	30	1.018	62	85	470	1.665
N'tem	-	308	104	-	424	836
Kribi	365	447	290	-	1.327	2.429
Sanaga Maritime	3.115	1.010	145	257	6.150	10.677
Haut Nyong	-	725	7	-	708	1.440
N'kam	-	25	-	30	-	55
Wouri	-	-	-	45	-	45
Bénoué	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lom et Kadeï	20	28	-	-	-	48

(Tableau 6: Répartition, par régions, des superficies en hectares, cultivées en palmiers, caféiers, cacaoyers, bananiers, caoutchouc, 1935).

Or le voit bien, au cours de la période de l'entre-deux-guerres, l'Etat colonial renforça les privilèges du "couloir central". C'est ici que se concentrèrent ses choix en matière d'"aménagement du territoire", le Nord étant relégué à un rôle périphérique. A l'Est, les seules véritables transactions commerciales étaient subordonnées à la production du caoutchouc. Or, à la faveur de la crise de 1931, ce produit était, de toutes les matières premières, celui dont les cours avaient subi la plus forte baisse. Les caoutchoucs camerounais éprouvaient, en outre, des difficultés pour trouver une clientèle élargie, cette dernière leur préférant celui des plantations d'Extrême-Orient. Suite à l'effritement des cours, de nombreux commerçants abandonnèrent la région. De manière générale, la pénétration capitaliste consolidait les réseaux de rivalité et d'alliances qui prévalaient entre les différents "terroirs socio-économiques" avant l'implantation coloniale. Mais en même temps, elle était à l'origine de nouveaux clivages: entre les groupes situés sur la route commerciale centrale et les autres, situés en marge des grands circuits de circulation des biens et des produits. L'identité économique des différents "terroirs" se modifia également. Sur les grands axes de trafic émergèrent des bourgs dont le rôle devint important pour le commerce de transit vers l'intérieur. En tout cas, les différenciations régionales s'accrochèrent. Les nouveaux clivages, d'ordre économique, venaient désormais se greffer à d'autres, enracinés dans l'histoire et les conflits antérieurs des sociétés locales. On peut ainsi affirmer que tout se noua dans la période de l'entre-deux-guerres, le marché et l'Etat pénétrant, à des profondeurs très inégales les différentes sociétés constitutives du Cameroun et le contrôle

des effets sociaux de la circulation des biens donnant lieu à des stratégies différentes selon les "terroirs". La "réception" de l'idée "nationaliste" dans la période de l'après-guerre ne s'explique, elle-même, qu'en référence à l'interaction entre l'histoire propre de chacun des "terroirs", sa position sur la carte des échanges antérieurement à la pénétration capitaliste puis au sein de la nouvelle géo-économie issue du jeu combiné de l'Etat colonial, du marché et des stratégies internes aux groupes d'intérêts indigènes.

Le deuxième indice concerne les deux exigences concurrentes qu'étaient, d'une part, l'extraction des surplus et d'autre part, la nécessité de doter l'Etat colonial d'une base sociale allant au-delà de la seule alliance entre bureaucrates et les forces marchandes. Cet enracinement social de l'Etat dépendait lui-même de deux conditions: l'émergence d'un *auxiliarat économique* indigène et le redéploiement du système d'allocation des ressources coercitives alors aux mains de la bureaucratie coloniale (mesures prédatrices et administratives, affectation autoritaire de la force de travail, prestations diverses). La stabilisation des mécanismes de l'exploitation coloniale dépendait désormais de la "régulation élargie" d'un système économique qui ne cessait point d'être constitutivement violent. Deux facteurs décisifs rendaient ce passage particulièrement délicat. Le premier avait trait à la genèse et à la reproduction du modèle étatique français au Cameroun. Cette genèse ne fut pas liée à une activité marchande, mais à un fait de conquête militaire qui assurait, d'emblée, une position prééminente à la bureaucratie, au sein du système de régulation politique et économique de la colonie. C'est à partir de cette position dominante que la bureaucratie entendait réaménager les rapports entre les forces marchandes et l'Etat. Le deuxième était lié à une conjoncture de crise. A partir des années 1920, des capitaux avaient afflué dans le territoire. Ils avaient été investis en presque totalité dans les affaires commerciales. Il en avait résulté un encombrement extrême et une âpre concurrence dont l'effet fut de limiter la rémunération des capitaux. L'année 1928 s'était achevée par une crise commerciale, des faillites et le rachat de plusieurs entreprises commerciales autonomes par des groupes financiers. Au début de l'année 1929, on assista à de nombreuses reconversions, un grand nombre d'agents commerciaux demandant des concessions de quelques centaines d'hectares pour la culture du cacao et du café. Mais de manière générale, le Cameroun fut, dans l'empire colonial français, l'un des derniers pays à être touché par les effets de la crise. La relative autonomie administrative et financière dont il jouissait lui avait permis de clore ses budgets avec des excédents de recettes et d'effectuer quelques grands travaux sans contracter de lourdes dettes. Il n'en demeurait pas moins qu'au début de 1930, les prix à l'exportation avaient chuté. Il en était de même des volumes. La dépréciation des produits du crû et la réduction du pouvoir d'achat des indigènes avait achevé de plonger les affaires dans un profond marasme. Le budget du territoire était, lui-même, à bout. C'est à la lumière de ces deux facteurs qu'il nous faut examiner, à partir de quelques exemples précis, comment le projet de la bureaucratie de

produire l'Etat et de le traduire dans la société vint se heurter, tout au long de l'entre-deux-guerres, à une logique d'accumulation portée par les milieux marchands, et dont la mise en oeuvre se solda, en septembre 1945, par l'affrontement

2. PRODUIRE L'ETAT OU EXTRAIRE DES SURPLUS

Le premier exemple concerne les grands travaux et les emprunts. L'un des axes de la politique économique définie par l'administration depuis les années vingt était de faciliter le transport et la production. C'est dans cette perspective qu'avait été prolongée d'Eséka à Yaoundé la ligne de chemin de fer construite à l'époque allemande. L'administration avait cependant choisi de surseoir à la construction de nouvelles lignes dès que le rail atteignit Yaoundé en 1926. Sa priorité était désormais d'étendre le réseau routier et de diffuser la circulation automobile. Le réseau routier totalisait 5000 kilomètres en 1930. Le Gouverneur Marchand, approuvé en cela par le Ministre des Colonies, décida de geler les travaux ferroviaires jusqu'en 1939. Il n'excluait cependant pas que des travaux de détail soient effectués sur le réseau (cas du remplacement de la voie de 0,60m entre Mbalmayo et Otélé par une voie de 1 m). Ce projet (ainsi que celui concernant l'équipement routier) nécessitait des emprunts. L'administration en avait envisagé un, de 100 millions, à réaliser par tranches successives devant être émises au fur et à mesure des besoins et selon les moyens de couverture disponibles. Quant aux raisons du gel de l'entreprise ferroviaire, elles étaient de deux ordres. D'une part, l'administration jugeait que l'établissement de la voie ferrée Eséka-Yaoundé avait exigé la mobilisation d'une main-d'oeuvre considérable. Il était indispensable de laisser reposer la population, car elle n'était pas prête à admettre d'être à nouveau réquisitionnée et obligée à de nouveaux efforts. D'autre part, la ponction de cette main-d'oeuvre (destinée aux chantiers ferroviaires, forestiers, agricoles, et routiers, et au portage) avait surtout affecté le Sud. Selon les projections de l'administration, il fallait un répit de dix ans pour que le renouvellement des générations s'opère et qu'une nouvelle parvienne à l'âge adulte. On était en 1927. A ces considérations liées à l'équilibre démographique du territoire s'en ajoutaient une autre de taille. Depuis quelques années, la prospection des régions où sévissait la maladie du sommeil avait révélé l'importance des foyers d'infection. Les services sanitaires jugeaient que la mise au repos des populations et des travailleurs vivant à proximité des régions contaminées s'imposait. Tel était aussi le désir des chefs indigènes. L'administration prit par conséquent le parti de "garder des bras à l'agriculture" et d'éviter tout nouveau recrutement de main-d'oeuvre pour le réseau ferré avant 1939. Elle estimait que dans une zone au peuplement déficient comme le Sud Cameroun, il était impossible d'avoir, à la fois, des travailleurs pour la voie ferrée et pour les plantations. A ses yeux, l'expérience des chantiers sur la voie Douala-Yaoundé avait eu pour conséquence inattendue un ralentissement du relèvement démographique.

Or, les choix de l'administration en matière de grands travaux et d'emprunts suscitaient une ferme opposition des milieux d'affaires. Ces derniers étaient sensibles à la lecture allemande de l'espace économique du territoire et souscrivaient à l'idée du prolongement de la voie ferrée vers le Nord. Un tel prolongement devait, à leurs yeux, donner accès à l'Adamawa, pays de pâturages où l'on pourrait développer des cultures vivrières et industrielles. La préférence des milieux marchands pour un programme plus lourd de travaux publics incluant la construction de nouvelles voies ferrées à l'intérieur du Cameroun s'expliquait aussi par l'ambition - déjà formulée du temps des Allemands - de "satelliser" l'économie de l'AEF (Afrique Equatoriale Française). C'est la raison pour laquelle ils préconisaient des embranchements vers l'Est, en direction de Bangui. Les milieux d'affaires coloniaux estimaient en outre que, par la faute de l'administration, le Cameroun n'avait pas encore atteint la cadence d'exploitation qu'il méritait, et que l'une des raisons de cette situation était son sous-équipement. Pour le surmonter, ils jugeaient que le moment était favorable pour demander de gros crédits. A cet égard, les projets d'emprunt envisagés par l'administration (115 millions en 1930) paraissaient insuffisants et sous-estimaient la capacité économique du territoire à absorber un volume important de crédits. En outre, ils permettaient difficilement de mener à bien le plan d'outillage des ports. Quant à l'utilisation de la main-d'oeuvre indigène, n'y voyaient que du bien: elle devait ouvrir aux autochtones la possibilité de se procurer de salaires au moment où la crise risquait de priver la plupart d'entre eux de leurs moyens d'existence.

Pour mieux rendre compte de la nature des affrontements et des négociations et arrangements permanents entre la bureaucratie et les milieux marchands, peut-être faut-il procéder à quelques études de cas. La plupart de ces arrangements étaient noués autour de domaines tels que: les tarifs de location des terrains domaniaux, les taux de patente, les taxes et droits de sortie, les primes à l'exportation, les taxes de circulation ... Nous tenterons de suivre ces conflits et la façon dont ils furent négociés. Nous prendrons appui sur deux exemples: la "querelle du caoutchouc" et l'enjeu de la culture du café.

La "querelle du caoutchouc"

En 1931, le caoutchouc était, de tous les produits, celui dont les cours avaient subi la plus forte baisse. Sur le plan international, le caoutchouc africain ne trouvait, en outre, qu'une clientèle réduite. Il présentait un très faible intérêt pour la plupart des consommateurs européens qui, aux cours en vigueur à l'époque, lui préféraient celui des plantations d'Extrême-Orient. Dès 1930, les commerçants impliqués dans son exploitation dans l'Est-Cameroun subirent de lourdes pertes sur leurs exportations. L'effritement continu des cours mondiaux avait fait baisser

progressivement le prix d'achat à l'indigène. Face à cette morosité, l'administration se désintéressa de ce produit. Dans certaines localités, elle en vint même à défendre aux autochtones de prendre part aux récoltes. Celles-ci étaient réglementées et interdites par arrêté pendant près de six mois au cours de l'année. La production se réduisit par conséquent, tandis que les frais généraux des sociétés qui n'avaient pas déserté la région restaient les mêmes, notamment en ce qui concernait les charges en location de terrains et en patentes. A partir du 1 janvier 1930, le tarif de location des terrains dans les centres non-lotis avait d'ailleurs augmenté, passant de 0,50 f. le mètre carré à 1 f. dans les centres d'achat de Bomba, Batouri et Bertoua, et à 0,75 f. dans tous les autres postes.¹

S'agissant des patentes, la taxe pour les postes de brousse s'élevait à l'époque à mille francs par an. Les commerçants étaient obligés de s'installer, lors des périodes actives, en de nombreux points, par suite de la dissémination des villages sur des superficies considérables. Lorsque survint la crise, les milieux d'affaires coloniaux voulurent obliger l'administration à abaisser les taux de location des terrains et les taux de patente. Ils estimaient qu'à la limite, les centres d'achat devaient être classés par catégories dont la patente varierait suivant l'importance, entre cinq cents et mille francs par an. Le Gouverneur Marchand était prêt à réduire les loyers par voie d'avenant en les ramenant à la somme de 0,40 f. par mètre carré au lieu de 1 f. Mais il jugeait inutile d'opérer une baisse généralisée des taux de patente, proposant que les maisons de commerce limitent d'un commun accord leurs installations de brousse à quelques points indispensables. L'administration ne tenait pas à fixer d'autorité le nombre de ces petits points bien que l'arsenal réglementaire dont elle disposait lui eût permis de donner congé des locations devenues inutiles. Elle poussait plutôt les négociants à examiner des éléments du prix de revient où des compressions étaient possibles (cas du coût des manutentions lors des ruptures de charge et cas du fret). Marchand savait bien qu'une telle proposition avait peu de chance d'être retenue. Les commerçants étaient divisés entre eux, et de telles ententes étaient difficiles à réaliser à cause de la concurrence. Faute de s'entendre, les milieux d'affaires étaient, quant à eux, favorable à une solution réglementaire, où la distinction entre les centres dont la disparition était désirable et ceux qu'il importait de maintenir aurait résulté du mode d'imposition, une patente plus lourde devant frapper les premiers et épargner les seconds.

¹ Il faut rappeler que le traitement du caoutchouc nécessitait la construction de grands séchoirs. Le produit devait y séjourner pendant au moins trois mois avant de pouvoir être exporté. Les séchoirs devaient être suffisamment éloignés les uns des autres d'une part, et des magasins et habitations de l'autre, l'aération étant indispensable à la dessiccation du produit. Il y allait aussi des mesures de sécurité, cette distanciation permettant d'atténuer l'importance des sinistres en cas d'incendie. Il s'ensuivait que chaque poste nécessitait l'occupation d'une superficie proportionnelle à la production, difficilement réductible en période de crise, mais dont la charge devenait alors onéreuse.

Les commerçants eurent finalement gain de cause et obligèrent l'administration à abaisser ses tarifs de location. Mais le conflit n'était pas pour autant apaisé. En réalité, deux approches de la sortie de la crise s'opposaient. L'administration préconisait la réduction de la production jusqu'au relèvement des cours mondiaux, tandis que les milieux économiques coloniaux jouaient sur une abolition complète de toutes les taxes. Aussi, à peine eurent-ils obtenu l'abaissement des tarifs de location qu'ils engagèrent la bataille de la suppression des droits de sortie du caoutchouc. D'après les calculs faits par l'"Union Coloniale" à l'époque, l'administration continuait de percevoir, en droits de sortie, environ 10% du prix de vente en Europe pour un produit pour lequel les négociants affirmaient ne réaliser que des pertes. Leur ardeur était d'autant plus grande que le Cameroun n'avait pris aucune disposition en ce qui concernait l'octroi des primes à la production du caoutchouc. Or, de telles mesures étaient en vigueur en Indochine et elles allaient bientôt être étendues aux récolteurs et exportateurs de l'Afrique Equatoriale Française.

Au terme d'une série d'interventions auprès du Gouverneur Marchand, le droit de sortie fut abaissé en deux temps, de 0,35 f. à 0,32 f., puis, à partir de 1931, de 0,32 f. à 0,22 f. pour le caoutchouc sylvestre. Au demeurant, Marchand expliquait que c'était la seule mesure qu'il était en son pouvoir de prendre avec effet immédiat. De fait, toute autre mesure de nature à épouser les demandes des milieux d'affaires exigeait une autorisation ministérielle. L'abaissement de la taxe sur les sorties devait faire perdre une recette de 110,000 francs au Territoire. Aussi, Marchand tint-il à refuser toute discussion sur les autres tarifications. Ce refus était d'autant plus argumenté qu'au cours de la même année, le tarif des chemins de fer avait été réduit de 10 à 25%. L'administration envisageait, en outre, un abaissement de la taxe de circulation sur le cacao (de 150 à 50 francs par tonne). Elle jugeait de ce fait qu'elle ne pouvait aller plus loin dans cette voie sans compromettre l'ensemble des intérêts dont elle avait la charge. Au demeurant, le prix d'achat à l'indigène n'avait cessé de décroître au cours de la même période. L'administration avait demandé en vain aux acheteurs européens de les augmenter en contrepartie des diverses réductions des taxes. Ces derniers arguaient de l'effondrement des cours mondiaux, de la diminution de la production et des charges dûs aux frais généraux pour justifier leur refus. Mieux (ou pis), les milieux d'affaires coloniaux s'arc-boutaient et demandaient à l'administration de consentir des sacrifices financiers plus substantiels pour arrêter le déclin de la production du caoutchouc. A leurs yeux, le dégrèvement du droit de sortie devait aller de pair avec des mesures d'allocation de primes. Ils insistaient sur le fait que cette suppression était la seule mesure susceptible de bénéficier effectivement à l'indigène. L'administration n'était pas prête à s'y résoudre. Elle avait elle-même besoin d'argent et elle craignait en outre que les commerçants ne réclament cette même mesure pour d'autres produits. Elle finit pourtant par consentir de nouveaux abaissements en 1932, puis, par octroyer une

prime à l'exportation (d'une valeur de 2 f.). Les milieux d'affaires n'en continuèrent pas moins de militer pour la suppression intégrale des droits de sortie et pour le relèvement de la prime de 2 à 3 f. Pour sortir de ce cercle vicieux (plus l'administration consentait des réductions, plus les milieux marchands en demandaient davantage, moins les allègements obtenus bénéficiaient au producteur indigène, et plus le territoire était privé d'une partie des recettes qui conditionnaient le développement de l'outillage économique), le Gouverneur Bonnacarrère (qui avait remplacé Marchand) ouvrit, dans le projet d'emprunt pour le Cameroun, un crédit destiné à doter la caisse de compensation (créé un an plutôt, en 1931) de ressources lui permettant de rendre efficace les mesures de sauvegarde de la production. En 1933, la prime à l'exportation fut portée à 2 f. par kilogramme pour le caoutchouc de plantation et à 1,50 f. par kilogramme pour le caoutchouc de cueillette. La distinction ainsi faite défavorisait l'indigène. Elle accentuait la ruine économique de l'Est-Cameroun. Au demeurant, ce déclin était déjà assez avancé. Les grandes plantations avaient déjà arrêté leur exploitation et se contentaient de simples travaux de conservation. Les exportations de caoutchouc de plantation avaient virtuellement cessé. Les exportations de caoutchouc de cueillette étaient, quant à elles, en voie de disparition. Les chiffres globaux, qui avaient atteint 945 tonnes en 1929 et 440 tonnes en 1930 étaient tombés aux environs de 20 tonnes en 1931.

L'enjeu du café

La "querelle" autour du café posait d'autres types de problèmes et concernait, au premier chef, l'Ouest-Cameroun. Elle s'envenima au sujet des primes. D'après un arrêté du 7 septembre 1931, le producteur ne pouvait bénéficier de la prime que s'il faisait constater par l'autorité administrative du lieu de l'exploitation la quantité de café qu'il destinait à l'exportation. Un certificat lui était alors délivré et la prime ne pouvait être encaissée qu'au vu de cette attestation elle-même visée par le service des douanes. La prime en question était supposée, à l'origine, encourager la production. Or, l'arrêté de septembre 1931 favorisait l'exportation alors même que toute la production achetée à l'indigène n'était pas toujours exportée. Mais en réalité, le différend sur la nature des primes cachait un affrontement plus net, qui avait marqué les rapports entre la bureaucratie et les milieux marchands pendant toute la période de l'entre-deux-guerres: à savoir la place de l'indigène dans la dynamique d'accumulation. L'administration nourrissait le projet de développer la culture du caféier par les indigènes dans la circonscription de Dschang. Selon les estimations faites à l'époque, la production devait passer progressivement de 10 à 20 tonnes en 1931. Elle devait atteindre 100 tonnes environ en 1932, et 300 tonnes environ aux cours des années suivantes. Ces projections concernaient uniquement l'espèce "arabica". Il était prévu de construire une usine destinée à déporcher le café vert à Fouban.

L'option en faveur de la production indigène déplut aux planteurs européens, et leur réaction s'organisa autour de deux axes. Ils firent valoir le fait que l'administration poussait l'indigène à produire sans, au préalable, l'éduquer aux techniques de la récolte, de la préparation et de l'expédition du produit. S'appuyant sur le précédent du cacao, ils expliquaient que l'indigène avait créé des cacaoyères, répondant ainsi aux pressions administratives. Mais que, faute d'une éducation appropriée, il n'était parvenue qu'à produire du cacao de qualité médiocre. En "libéralisant" la culture du café, le risque de déprécier le produit camerounais sur le marché mondial était donc grand. Sur un autre plan, les milieux d'affaires coloniaux critiquaient le choix de Foumban pour la construction d'une usine de traitement du café. Sa position excentrée aurait, en effet, obligé les indigènes à des transports aussi longs que fatigants, le poids du café en cerise représentant 7 à 8 fois le poids du café en grains. La profession des milieux d'affaires coloniaux fut si importante qu'en avril 1933, l'administration dut réglementer la culture du caféier sur le territoire. Cette nouvelle réglementation visait en particulier les cultures déjà établies ou à établir dans la circonscription de Dschang, sur des terrains n'ayant pas été attribués en concession, c'est-à-dire sur les terres indigènes. Les plantations à créer devaient désormais faire l'objet d'une déclaration fournissant des précisions sur la situation du terrain, la surface plantée, le nombre, la variété et l'âge des plants. Aucune semence, aucun plant de café ne pouvaient être mis en terre sans l'autorisation du chef de circonscription, après examen d'un certificat délivré par un représentant des services agricoles. Ces dispositions furent approuvées par le colonnat qui les avait souhaité à maintes reprises. Ce dernier entendait cependant réduire davantage le projet de "libéralisation" de la culture du café. C'est pourquoi des démarches furent entreprises avec insistance auprès du Gouverneur Bonnacarrère afin qu'il renforce les mesures de vérification des cafés récoltés au Cameroun et qu'une action administrative impose aux producteurs la livraison d'un produit conditionné et de qualité homogène. L'"Union Coloniale" voulait que la vérification ait lieu aussi près que possible des lieux de production.

L'insistance sur la vérification visait à pénaliser la production indigène et à atténuer la concurrence à laquelle elle n'aurait pas manqué d'acculer les planteurs européens. Mais elle s'expliquait aussi par des raisons liées aux fluctuations d'un marché sur lequel le colonnat lui-même avait peu de prise réelle. En effet, la baisse des cours mondiaux survenait dans un contexte marqué par l'augmentation des quantités exportées par les autres colonies françaises. Or, à l'époque, la consommation française n'était que de 175,000 tonnes. Par une intervention administrative plus sévère, notamment au niveau de la production et de la vérification, le colonnat espérait sauver l'essentiel de ses profits en dépit d'une conjoncture défavorable. L'appel à l'Etat pour arbitrer les déficiences du marché montra très vite ses limites.

La vérification fonctionnait à deux niveaux. D'abord à l'intérieur, dans les centres de production où elle était assurée par les chefs de subdivision, les chefs de circonscription, les chefs de postes, les commissaires de police et des agents habilités des services de l'agriculture. Ensuite à la sortie des produits du territoire, à Douala, par les agents européens du service de vérification des produits de la Chambre de Commerce. Les cafés refusés par l'expertise étaient renvoyés à leur région de provenance. L'absence de compétences techniques, la faiblesse des services agricoles et la rareté de praticiens performants rendirent aléatoire la vérification sur les lieux de production.

Aux deux "querelles" à propos du caoutchouc et du café s'en ajoutaient d'autres (réduction de la taxe de circulation des cacaos, vérifications en vue du relèvement de leur qualité, prix à l'indigène, abaissement des droits de sortie pour l'huile de palme et les palmistes, etc.). Il advint souvent que l'administration fut confrontée à une réelle nécessité de dégrèvement fiscal. Elle y consentait alors, mais à la condition de le compenser par une recette équivalente lui permettant de maintenir l'équilibre d'un budget dont les dépenses s'avéraient chaque fois difficilement compressibles. Généralement, elle s'efforçait de répercuter ce manque à gagner en augmentant les droits d'enregistrement et de timbre, les droits de douane, etc.

Dans la pratique, chaque modification apportée au tarif douanier avait pour effet d'augmenter les charges supportées par le commerce, et, par contre-coup, par l'indigène. Dans les cas où des allègements fiscaux étaient néanmoins obtenus, leur incidence sur le producteur demeurait relative, l'essentiel tombant entre les mains des intermédiaires. C'est pour sortir de cette impasse que de nouvelles initiatives devaient être prises (création du crédit colonial, projets d'emprunts...). Le problème central de la politique économique coloniale n'en cessait pas moins d'être le rôle de l'indigène dans la production et l'organisation du travail. Les difficultés de recrutement de la main-d'oeuvre s'aggravèrent au fur et à mesure que l'option en faveur de la petite production domestique (création d'un *auxiliarat économique*) se concrétisait, ainsi que le montre le tableau ci-dessous:

Régions	Café	Cacao	Palmiste	Huile de palme	Arachide	Caoutchouc
Kribi	8	600	330	57	25	-
Lom et Kadéï	3	2	6	-	25	300
Mungo	108	4200	6000	950	-	-
N'kam	-	1397	3359	482	6	14
Noun	92	74	5593	-	1267	-
Nyong et Sanaga	295	4500	16224	1255	2120	-
Haut-Nyong	14	98	2000	-	617	186
N'tem	65	8590	173	-	550	-
Sanaga Maritime	-	1400	7000	4000	-	-
Wouri	-	5	200	100	-	-

(Tableau 7: Etat de la production indigène destinée à l'exportation en 1935, en tonnes).

Aux produits indiqués ci-dessus il importe d'ajouter la banane (490 tonnes provenant, en totalité, des régions du Mungo et du N'kam) et le coton, dont le Nord Cameroun s'était fait la spécialité (544 tonnes).

L'irruption progressive des indigènes dans la production posa des difficultés aiguës aux entreprises européennes en manque de main-d'oeuvre indispensable pour la durée des récoltes. Les planteurs européens jugeaient qu'il était du devoir de l'administration de leur en procurer, en même temps qu'il devenait impérieux, à leurs yeux, de réglementer le travail saisonnier. Ils accrurent également leurs pressions en vue de modifier les règles de recrutement d'un cercle à l'autre. En effet, les besoins de recrutement n'étaient pas les mêmes dans toutes les circonscriptions. Les chefs de subdivision, pour être assurés de percevoir l'impôt des indigènes sous leur administration, avaient tendance à s'opposer à la migration - même saisonnière - de leurs administrés. Il était donc reproché à l'administration de protéger l'indigène et de l'empêcher de travailler, au lieu de favoriser la prospérité des entreprises. Un anti-étatisme rampant se développait au sein des milieux marchands. La nervosité était grande en 1936, et elle se cristallisa autour de la question des sociétés coopératives indigènes, dont le rôle était de soutenir, d'encourager et d'assister la production africaine. Les milieux d'affaires coloniaux admettaient le droit des indigènes d'entreprendre individuellement ou en groupe. Ils exigeaient cependant que cela se fit à "leurs risques et périls, sans l'aide administrative" sous forme pécuniaire ou sous toute autre forme. Ils estimaient que le niveau de la concurrence était déjà fort élevé et, qu'au lieu d'intervenir en faveur de la production indigène, l'administration devait plutôt s'efforcer de diminuer les dépenses publiques et d'abaisser les droits d'entrée des

marchandises de consommation courante (farines, vins, conserves, lait, huiles). Cet anti-étatisme se consolida à la faveur de la relative autonomie économique que connut le territoire au moment de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale.

La fin de la guerre et la prise de conscience par la Métropole de réguler l'émergence d'un auxiliaire politico-économique autochtone et conséquent, tout en gardant la capacité de contrôle des transformations sociales et des tensions qui en découleraient (Conférence de Brazzaville) achevèrent d'exaspérer le colonnat. Les velléités "autonomistes" connurent leur point d'orgue avec la Conférence des Etats Généraux de la Colonisation Française à Douala le 2 septembre 1945. Les "émeutes" qui ensanglantèrent Douala à partir du 20 septembre participaient autant du mécontentement populaire que de la conclusion brutale d'une longue période d'affrontement entre l'Etat colonial et les milieux marchands.

CONCLUSION

A la différence du Kenya ou du Zimbabwe, la singularité du mouvement anticolonialiste au Cameroun fut son échec à transformer sa domination symbolique des sociétés locales en une prise du pouvoir tout court. Cet "avortement", ainsi que la genèse même de la contestation de l'ordre colonial ont partie liée avec la façon dont l'interaction entre le processus de production de l'Etat (*state-making process*) et les modalités de l'accumulation capitaliste s'y produisirent. Tout au long de la période de l'entre-deux-guerres, les tentatives de l'administration visant à inscrire la domination dans la durée grâce à l'incorporation organique à l'Etat colonial d'un *auxiliaire* bureaucratique-économique autochtone se heurtèrent à une logique du refus de la part des milieux marchands européens.

De 1920 à 1939 se consolida un modèle de captation du surplus qui était, loin d'être le vecteur d'une véritable accumulation. Progressivement se mit en place un capitalisme de type particulier, dont le ressort ne résidait pas dans le jeu des mécanismes de production en tant que tels, mais dans la manipulation des leviers administratifs et de l'appareil réglementaire et coercitif de l'Etat. Cette dérive s'accrut à la faveur d'un environnement international marqué par deux crises d'ampleur mondiale (la crise de 1929-30 et la guerre de 1939-45). Ainsi naîtra un capitalisme administratif, dans lequel les forces marchandes harcelèrent constamment l'Etat, poussant ce dernier à intervenir, par des mesures administratives et bureaucratiques, pour réguler le marché ou fausser la concurrence, au gré de leurs intérêts. Paradoxalement, ces interventions affaiblirent ses capacités en tant qu'acteur et en tant qu'institution au lieu d'accroître le pouvoir auquel il prétendait: la domination de l'espace politique et de la surface économique de la société coloniale. C'est au coeur de cette "dynamique cannibale" (l'Etat se dressant comme un obstacle à l'accumulation et le modèle de captation des surplus porté par les forces marchandes ne pouvant se concrétiser qu'au prix d'une "phagocytose" de l'Etat lui-

même) que se cristallisera, dès 1948, la revendication dite nationaliste. La deuxième période économique qui s'ouvre au Cameroun après la guerre (afflux des capitaux, réouverture de grands chantiers) ouvrira la voie à une réconciliation entre l'Etat et les milieux marchands et à l'esquisse d'une alliance entre eux et *l'auxiliarat* bureaucratique-économique autochtone. La violence de la défaite du mouvement anticolonialiste assura la victoire - in extremis - de cette combinatoire d'acteurs en quête d'hégémonie et de légitimation.

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LES FONDEMENTS SOCIAUX DE L'ETAT AU CAMEROUN (1982-1988)

Jean-François Bayart¹

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Le 4 novembre 1982, M. Ahidjo, à la tête de l'exécutif depuis 1958, se retirait soudainement en faveur de son successeur constitutionnel, Le Premier ministre, M. Paul Biya. Bien qu'il eût à plusieurs reprises laissé percer son intention de ne pas s'éterniser au pouvoir et que l'altération de sa condition physique fût patente depuis plusieurs mois - son élocution, sa démarche étaient devenues difficiles - il prenait de court l'opinion publique aussi bien que les observateurs étrangers. Sur le moment, la transition fut jugée exemplaire et la presse ne tarit pas d'éloges pour la comparer au retrait de M. Senghor. Comme le Cameroun voyait en même temps sa réputation consacrée sur la scène économique internationale, l'image de sa "stabilité" et de sa "modération" légendaires connaissait son apothéose. Image idéologique et excessive, à n'en pas douter, tout comme le fut sa dégradation brutale une fois que les difficultés commencèrent à s'accumuler. Dès le 18 juin 1983, un remaniement ministériel inopiné, par lequel M. Biya congédiait quatre "barons" du régime, MM. Sadou Daoudou, Eboua, Ayissi Mvodo et Bwele, faisait apparaître au grand jour ce que Radio-Trottoir et sa consœur cravatée, Radio-Couloir, susurraient depuis plusieurs mois: la rupture était consommée entre l'ancien président de la république et son successeur. Le film des événements, dès lors, s'accéléra. Le 22 août, M. Biya annonçait solennellement au pays la découverte d'un complot. Quelques jours plus tard, M. Ahidjo, installé en France depuis le mois de juillet, engageait une virulente polémique sur les ondes de Radio France Internationale. Entre temps, un mouvement sinon populaire, du moins étudiant et "élitaire", avait apporté son soutien au chef de l'Etat et le pressait de se porter candidat à la présidence de l'Union nationale camerounaise, que M. Ahidjo avait conservée et dont il dut démissionner afin d'éviter l'humiliation d'un limogeage.

Congrès extraordinaire de l'UNC à Yaoundé le 14 septembre, élection présidentielle anticipée en janvier 1984, procès, condamnation à mort et grâce de M. Ahidjo et de deux de ses collaborateurs impliqués dans le complot en février-mars - jusqu'au drame des 6 et 7 avril, dates auxquelles un soulèvement de la Garde présidentielle dut être noyé dans le sang: la succession modèle tournait au cauchemar. Pour en rendre compte, les observateurs n'étaient pas avares d'explications: M Biya aurait manqué de "reconnaissance" à l'égard de son prédécesseur; il serait indécis et mal conseillé par son entourage; il aurait, par son esprit revanchard, acculé le

¹Une version antérieure de ce texte en anglais a été présentée à la conférence sur "West African States", SOAS, Londres, juin 1987. Ce texte fait l'objet d'un chapitre dans un livre sur le thème édité par D. Cruise O'Brien, R. Rathbone & J. Dunn, actuellement sous presse chez Cambridge U.P.

Nord à la révolte. Ces interprétations frappent par leur incapacité à penser la société camerounaise comme politique et historique, en la rapetissant à une dimension personnelle, "tribaliste" ou régionaliste.³

Sans doute est-il prématuré de tenter une analyse exhaustive de la crise de "succession", tant les points d'ombre demeurent nombreux. Il importe néanmoins de commencer à rendre compte de la transition des années 1976-1987 à la lumière de l'historicité propre de l'Etat au Cameroun. La question essentielle qui se pose alors a trait au devenir de la "vaste alliance regroupant les différents segments régionaux, politiques, économiques et culturels de l'élite sociale", à laquelle avait présidé M. Ahidjo, et dont "le parti unique est comme le signifiant".⁴ L'échéance de la succession était d'autant plus préoccupante de ce point de vue que la coercition avait paru constituer le principal ressort du travail de rassemblement poursuivi depuis plus de vingt ans, au point que l'on pouvait douter qu'il s'agit véritablement d'une "recherche hégémonique", au sens gramscien de ce concept.

DU PRÉSIDENT-FONDATEUR AU PRÉSIDENT-SUCCESSEUR: UN CONFLIT INSTITUTIONNEL, POLITIQUE ET ÉCONOMIQUE

Il est certes possible de retrouver dans la trame des événements, de 1982 à 1984, des faits d'ordre psychologique, ethnique ou régional.

Une fois retiré d'une vie politique à laquelle il avait consacré les trente-cinq dernières années de son existence, M. Ahidjo, qui ne disposait pas des ressources d'un Senghor, aura pu se sentir désemparé, et d'autant plus désireux d'entrer à nouveau en lice que le rétablissement de sa santé se confirmait, après quelques semaines de repos. On peut tout aussi bien concevoir que M. Biya, l'un de ses principaux collaborateurs depuis 1967, s'était forgé une idée particulière de son action, et peut-être plus encore de ses méthodes. Pareillement l'enjeu régional pesait sur la perception, au moins potentielle du conflit. Si les Camerounais réagirent si vivement à

³Ce chapitre repose avant tout sur une documentation rassemblée au cours de plusieurs missions réalisées à intervalles réguliers, de mai 1984 à mai 1987, et plus particulièrement sur de nombreux entretiens avec la classe politique camerounaise. Pour une analyse plus chronologique et précise de la période 1982-1986, je me permets de renvoyer à mes articles parus dans *Marchés tropicaux et méditerranéens*: "Un printemps camerounais", 23 septembre 1983, 2250-2251; "Une trop belle élection?", 20 janvier 1984, 11-12; "De la stupeur au soulagement", 23 mars 1984, 671-672; "La rentrée politique du président Biya", 11 janvier 1985, 69-71; "Les premiers pas du Rassemblement démocratique du peuple camerounais", 21 juin 1985, 1543-1544; "Démocratisation du parti et réforme de l'Etat", 16 mai 1986, 1328-1330; ainsi qu'à "La société politique camerounaise 1982-1986", *Politique Africaine* 22 (1986), 5-35.

H. Bandolo propose un récit bien informé, émaillé de témoignages inédits mais politiquement engagé, de la crise de 1982-1984: *La flamme et la fumée*, (Yaoundé, 1985). J.P. Biyiti bi Essam donne des indications sur le vécu de cette période et en particulier sur le rôle des rumeurs: *Cameroun: complots et bruits de bottes* (Paris, 1984).

⁴J.F. Bayart, *L'Etat au Cameroun* (Paris, 1979), p. 138.

l'encontre des journaux français qui développaient cette ligne d'analyse, n'était-ce pas justement parce qu'ils souhaitaient conjurer un danger dont ils savaient qu'il les menaçait en filigrane et que confirme, d'une certaine manière, le regain de la problématique ethnique depuis 1986?

Dès 1975, le problème de la succession s'était posé en de tels termes puisque la rumeur avait circulé, probablement infondée, selon laquelle M. Ahidjo, désireux de se retirer au profit de M. Sadou Daoudou, son ministre de la Défense originaire du Nord, s'était heurté à l'opposition des membres "sudistes" du Bureau politique.⁵ Plus sérieusement, la transition organisée à l'avantage de M. Biya, en novembre 1982, est apparue dès le mois de décembre comme un leurre, destiné à apaiser le Centre Sud. L'entourage du nouveau président de la République a vite acquis la certitude, très certainement justifiée, que tout serait fait pour qu'il échoue et qu'il ait à céder la place à son Premier ministre musulman, M. Bello Bouba Maïgari, le véritable "dauphin" de M. Ahidjo.⁶ Par ailleurs, la deuxième moitié des années soixante-dix avait abrité la montée en puissance de milieux d'affaires musulmans assez peu regardants quant aux moyens de leur enrichissement et marqués régionalement autant que religieusement, par l'opinion, en tant que *aladji* ou *haoussa*. Le brusque départ de M. Ahidjo précipitait ceux-ci dans le désarroi en les privant de leurs soutiens politiques et des ressources du "chevauchement" (*straddling*).

La coloration régionaliste de la crise de succession devenait donc à peu près inévitable. L'ancien président de la République prit la responsabilité d'y contribuer en cherchant à obtenir la démission des seuls ministres natifs du "Nord" le 18 juin 1983, conformément à la manoeuvre qui lui avait si bien réussie deux décennies auparavant, à l'encontre du Premier ministre André Marie Mbida, et nonobstant le fait qu'il ne manquait pas de soutiens dans le reste du pays. Comme M. Biya s'était interdit de restructurer la Garde présidentielle, précisément pour ne pas être taxé de "tribalisme", la liste des personnes inquiétées au lendemain de son soulèvement n'était que trop suggestive par la proportion d'originaires des départements du Nord qu'elle comprenait. En soulignant ce fait - "Tous les mutins étaient du Nord" -, le ministre des Forces armées, M. Andze Tsoungui, et le général Semengue parlaient de corde dans la maison d'un pendu et se firent vertement rabrouer.⁷ Ne disait-on pas également que les commerçants musulmans du quartier de la Briqueterie, à Yaoundé, avaient prévenu leur clientèle de l'imminence du drame à la veille de son déchaînement, et en étaient donc complices?

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 138. Des entretiens ultérieurs ne m'ont pas permis de valider le sérieux de cette hypothèse.

⁶Pour être officieuse, cette hypothèse n'est pas forcément erronée. Divers entretiens et des sources politiquement adverses autorisent à la confirmer.

⁷*Le Monde*, 17 avril 1984.

Parallèlement, les groupes ethniques du "Sud" - au sens large - ou tout au moins des "élites" qui parlent en leur nom, n'ont cessé d'affirmer positivement leur identité et de percevoir selon cette aune de mesure les échéances du changement politique. Cela est vrai des anglophones, dont l'autonomie originelle a été confisquée au gré d'une centralisation croissante et qui n'ont pas manqué de laisser percer de diverses manières leurs attentes, puis leur mécontentement depuis 1982.⁸ Cela est vrai également des Bamiléké dont les milieux d'affaires affichent un beau "dynamisme", quelque peu expansionniste, à l'échelle du pays, et des Bassa, qui rappellent volontiers qu'ils ont été les victimes de leur engagement dans la lutte nationaliste au cours des années cinquante, pour justifier leur progression dans le secteur public. Cela l'est peut-être plus encore des Beti et des Bulu qui, forts de leur prospérité et de la scolarisation massive de leurs enfants, prétendaient à la direction politique du Cameroun et ont toujours vécu l'éviction d'André-Marie Mbida par M. Ahidjo en février 1958, comme une usurpation. Ainsi, l'un des premiers actes de M. Biya, en tant que président de la République, fut d'avoir à éconduire une délégation bulu venue le féliciter de son accession à la magistrature suprême. Ce geste pédagogique, néanmoins, n'a nullement dissuadé certains milieux de voir dans la succession l'opportunité d'une revanche au détriment du Nord mais aussi de ce qu'un intellectuel proche du nouveau régime n'a pas hésité à qualifier d'"ethnofascisme", à savoir "le dynamisme bamiléké".⁹

Aucun secteur de la société n'a échappé à cette résurgence de la problématique ethnique, que l'autoritarisme de M. Ahidjo, puis la mobilisation populaire en faveur du "Renouveau" avaient occultée. Jusqu'à l'Eglise catholique, que divise une virulente polémique relative à un plan de "bamilékisation" du clergé, imputé à Mgr. Ndongmo.¹⁰ En ce sens, la dernière décennie a soumis "l'alliance hégémonique" à de sévères pressions centrifuges dont on ne peut plus exclure, dans un contexte de crise économique, qu'elles conduisent à une rupture politique grave.

Il serait cependant erroné de ramener les clivages des dernières années à l'entrechoquement d'identités ethno-régionales. Rappelons tout d'abord que l'ethnie, au moins telle qu'on se la représente couramment, sous la forme d'une entité donnée, homogène et correspondant à un terroir délimité, n'existe pas. La démonstration en a été apportée à propos du Cameroun, en

⁸Voir en particulier *Open letter to all English-speaking parents of Cameroon from the English speaking students of the North-West and South-West provinces* (Bamenda 20 août 1985) et *Memorandum presented to the Head of State and chairman of the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement by a joint committee of the elite of the North-West and South-West provinces resident in Littoral province* (Douala, 7 mai 1985).

⁹Mono Ndjana, *De l'ethno-fascisme dans la littérature politique camerounaise* (Yaoundé, 11 mars 1987).

¹⁰Memorandum *Un éclairage nouveau*, signé par "des prêtres autochtones de l'archidiocèse de Douala (Douala, 16 mars 1987).

marge même des grands débats qui ont parcouru l'anthropologie.¹¹ A l'instar de toutes les identifications culturelles, la conscience ethnique est contextuelle et n'est nullement exclusive d'identifications complémentaires ou concurrentes. Elle véhicule ainsi des intérêts politiques, religieux et économiques, tout en contribuant à les dissimuler au regard de l'observateur. En outre, phénomène complexe et relatif, l'ethnicité n'est pas une structure statique et a-temporelle. Les rapports interethniques sont des produits de l'histoire et non une combinatoire stable d'invariants. Or, les commentateurs de l'actualité camerounaise se rabattirent sur un type d'explication encore plus grossier, privilégiant des dichotomies entre "le Nord" et "le Sud", ou entre "le Sud" et "l'Ouest", sans voir qu'aucun des termes de ces binômes n'était homogène.

Le Nord, en particulier, est parcouru de clivages sociétaux dont M. Biya a su jouer avec habileté. La colonisation, d'une façon patente du temps des Allemands, d'une manière plus nuancée à l'époque des Français, s'est appuyée sur un bloc au pouvoir ethniquement composite, dirigé par les grandes familles peules et cimenté par l'*islamic way of life*.¹² Bien qu'il eût assuré son ascension contre le gré des principaux lamidats de la région, qu'il eût imposé la création d'un parti politique de conception occidentale et qu'il eût restreint leurs prérogatives dès les premières années de son régime, M. Ahidjo avait poursuivi bon an mal an cette stratégie jusqu'au moment de sa démission, abandonnant même peut-être dans un deuxième temps le terrain gagné sur les chefferies. Ses intentions étaient limpides, et finalement assez similaires à celles du Sardauna au Nigeria, en dépit de leurs différences d'origine sociale. Parvenu au pouvoir en 1958 parce qu'il paraissait le mieux à même de conjurer le spectre de la sécession caressé par l'aristocratie foulbé, il opposa au morcellement politique du "Sud" la construction arbitraire d'un "Nord" unitaire et immense, contrôlé par un gouverneur inamovible, M. Ousmane Mey. Cette base arrière ne cessa de représenter pour lui une ressource politique majeure, garante de la permanence de sa position.

C'est ce faux monolithe que M. Biya s'est employé à démanteler à partir de 1983, en usant des frustrations qu'il engendrait. Frustration de Maroua et de Ngaoundéré dont les lamibé avaient été frappés de plein fouet en 1958-1963 pour s'être opposés à l'ascension de M. Ahidjo et qui s'étaient vu systématiquement préférer Garoua. Colère rentrée de la masse paysanne païenne ou christianisée surexploitée par une chefferie de canton islamisée et intégrée au bloc social dominant la région. Irritation des Eglises chrétiennes, et principalement de l'Eglise catholique, engagées dans un travail de développement des campagnes, mais sournoisement persécutées par la chefferie, peu soucieuse de voir sa paysannerie relever la tête. Frustrations, enfin, d'une

¹¹ C. Tardits, ed. *Contribution de la recherche ethnologique à l'histoire des civilisations du Cameroun* (Paris, 1981); J. Boutrais et al., *Le Nord du Cameroun. Des hommes, une région* (Paris, 1984).

¹² J. Boutrais et al., *ibid.*; V. Azarya, *Dominance and change in North Cameroun: the Fulbe aristocracy* (Beverly Hills, 1976).

fraction non négligeable de l'élite intégrée à la hiérarchie sociale régionale mais qui en connaissait trop bien les perversions et le malthusianisme économique pour ne pas la juger condamnée. Toute une série de mesures ont été prises pour répondre à ces attentes: rappel par M. Biya de la laïcité de l'Etat lors de sa visite à Garoua, en mai 1983; démantèlement de l'ancienne province du Nord en trois unités administratives et création de nouveaux départements avec pour conséquence l'érection de Maroua et de Ngaoundéré en chefs-lieux de province; nomination dans la région de hauts fonctionnaires originaires du Sud; investissements sociaux et économiques, en particulier à Maroua.. Mais Yaoundé, probablement obsédé par le précédent tchadien, s'est bien gardé d'attaquer de front le bloc foulbé au pouvoir et sa pierre angulaire, la chefferie de canton, se contentant d'en endiguer les abus. Les lamibé continuent d'être choyés et, vraisemblablement, financés par les autorités centrales qui jouent ainsi une partie subtile et serrée, à l'image de la complexité des réalités sociales qu'elles affrontent.

La moitié méridionale du pays ne présente pas une configuration plus simple. Les Camerounais anglophones sont divisés entre le Sud-Ouest et le Nord-Ouest, les Bassa entre le Nyong et Kellé et la Sanaga-maritime (qui comporte elle-même une minorité bakoko), les Bamiléké entre chefferies historiquement rivales, les Beti entre familles selon l'ethos de l'émulation lignagère ... Mais à quoi bon multiplier les exemples? C'est en définitive la notion de terroir qui doit prévaloir au Cameroun comme dans le reste de l'Afrique, si l'on veut comprendre l'historicité de l'Etat et du politique. Nul exotisme dans ce constat. Après tout, l'insistance que F. Braudel apporte à l'évocation des "pays" constitutifs de la nation française, paradoxalement célébrée pour son "unité", illustre l'universalité de cet impératif analytique au regard de la sociologie politique.¹³

Tout en occultant ce foisonnement des situations historiques qui fournissent au politique contemporain sa trame, les interprétations en termes de "régionalisme" et de "tribalisme" de la crise de 1983-1984 en évacuaient d'autres dimensions cruciales. Le conflit entre M. Biya et M. Ahidjo était avant tout politique et a été vécu comme tel par les Camerounais. Il portait en premier lieu sur l'ordre institutionnel et la répartition des compétences qu'il prévoyait entre le parti, d'une part, l'Etat, de l'autre. Annonçant sa démission le 4 novembre 1982, M. Ahidjo fut pressé par une délégation du Comité central, comprenant d'ailleurs M. Biya, de conserver la présidence nationale de l'UNC.¹⁴ Par-delà le pathos affectif derrière lequel ils se camouflèrent, les "barons" qui prirent l'initiative de cette démarche poursuivaient un objectif précis: limiter le

¹³F. Braudel, *L'identité de la France. Espace et histoire* (Paris, 1986), chapitre I. Sur la multiplicité des terroirs camerounais, cf. *Atlas linguistique du Cameroun. Inventaire préliminaire* (Paris, 1983) et A. Beauvilain, J.L. Dongmo et al., *Atlas aérien du Cameroun. Campagnes et villes*. (Yaoundé, 1983).

¹⁴S. Diallo, "Les secrets du départ d'Ahidjo", *Jeune Afrique*, 17 novembre 1982, p. 37-38.

pouvoir du nouveau président, le priver du contrôle du parti et garder "ouverte" l'investiture par celui-ci du candidat à l'élection présidentielle de 1985.

Quoi qu'il en fût, l'ancien président de la République, sorti par la grande porte, donna vite l'impression de vouloir rentrer par la fenêtre du parti. Sous prétexte de vouloir conforter l'autorité de son successeur et de contrer les menées factionnelles de son ancien compagnon, M. Moussa Yaya, exclu de l'UNC le 10 janvier 1983, M. Ahidjo entama une tournée des provinces au cours de laquelle il fut reçu - à son corps défendant, protesta-t-il - comme un véritable chef d'Etat, alors même qu M. Biya n'avait pas encore effectué de voyage officiel dans le pays. Dans la première interview qu'il accorda après sa démission, interrogé sur l'existence d'un 'bicéphalisme', il insistait lourdement sur la confiance qu'il mettait en M. Biya dans laquelle il voyait apparemment la seule source de légitimité de son pouvoir. Surtout, il rétorquait benoîtement: "Je demeure naturellement président national de l'UNC (...). Il n'y a cependant pas dualisme ou bicéphalisme dans l'exercice du pouvoir. Le parti et le gouvernement ont chacun un domaine de responsabilité bien défini et distinct. Le parti (...) définit les orientations de la politique nationale. Le gouvernement applique celles-ci compte tenu de nos possibilités et des aménagements qu'appellent les réalités concrètes et les circonstances. Si chacun joue loyalement son rôle dans le cadre de la collaboration qu'implique notre régime de démocratie gouvernante, il ne saurait y avoir d'équivoque". Il ajoutait enfin, pour que les choses soient définitivement claires: "Le malentendu proviendrait du fait que certains souhaiteraient ne plus me voir à Yaoundé. Il faut cependant qu'ils s'accommodent de ma présence et se résignent à me voir. En effet, en tant qu'ancien président de la République, j'ai droit à un logement et à des bureaux à Yaoundé où, en outre, je continuerai à présider au siège de l'UNC les réunions des instances supérieures du parti à chaque fois que ce sera nécessaire. Je suis pour mapart vacciné et immunisé depuis longtemps contre les calomnies. Je crois également le président Biya suffisamment intelligent pour éviter de tels pièges grossiers".¹⁵ "Qui gouverne au Cameroun?", pouvait se demander l'opinion publique, assurant ainsi un beau succès de librairie à un ouvrage qui ne répondait nullement à cette question d'actualité.¹⁶ L'inquiétude était à son comble. La primauté du parti, qu'entendait maintenant affirmer M. Ahidjo, aurait bouleversé la configuration de la construction politique que lui-même avait échafaudée et qui, depuis le congrès d'Ebolowa de 1962, garantissait, du double point de vue de la Constitution et de la pratique gouvernementale, la prééminence de l'Etat.¹⁷

¹⁵Cameroon Tribune, 30-31 janvier 1983.

¹⁶P.F. Ngayap, *Qui gouverne au Cameroun?* (Paris, 1983). Cet ouvrage fit l'objet d'une longue polémique dans Cameroon Tribune en juillet 1983.

¹⁷J.F. Bayart, *L'Etat au Cameroun*, op. cit., p. 163-164.

De querelles de préséance en remaniements ministériels, de petites phrases en rumeurs de complots, le conflit s'envenima et atteignit un point de non retour, d'abord lorsque M. Ahidjo parvint à s'assurer du contrôle de l'investiture des candidats aux élections législatives, en mai, ensuite lorsqu'il s'efforça au prix d'un véritable coup de force, de faire voter une loi institutionnalisant le parti unique, manoeuvre que M. Biya déjoua brutalement par le remaniement inopiné du 18 juin. L'ancien chef de l'Etat ayant perdu la partie - y compris militairement, durant la nuit dramatique du 18 au 19, à la veille de la visite officielle de M. Mitterrand - la voie était ouverte pour que son successeur prît la tête de l'UNC, en septembre, et reçût l'onction du suffrage universel, en janvier de l'année suivante. Bien que sa pratique personnelle fût souvent différente, M. Ahidjo avait plaidé sans relâche, pendant vingt-trois ans, en faveur d'un Etat fort et institutionnalisé. La crise de 1983 a montré que le Verbe s'était fait finalement chair. Lorsque M. Ahidjo voulut reprendre le contrôle de sa créature, celle-ci lui échappa, par référence explicite à la légitimité constitutionnelle et à la "légalité républicaine". Présentés sur un mode catastrophiste, ces événements ont en fait contribué à la maturation du tissu politique camerounais et délimitent désormais le champ du possible. Dans l'épure actuelle, la place du parti est vouée à rester seconde. En outre, cette ligne de structuration idéologique a empêché que les identifications ethniques ou régionalistes, dont nous avons pressenti la force, ne l'emportent sur les identifications proprement politiques; elle a également pesé en faveur de la réserve de l'armée, malgré la part décisive que celle-ci prit dans les tensions de juin 1983 et d'avril 1984.

Néanmoins, l'âpreté du conflit entre M. Biya et M. Ahidjo ne se bornait pas au domaine constitutionnel. Elle renvoyait à l'entrechoquement de deux projets politiques. Tout au long de ses mandats successifs, M. Ahidjo avait été plus craint qu'aimé, quelle que fût la fierté que l'on tirait des réalisations de son régime. A dire vrai, il ne fut jamais aussi populaire que le jour de sa démission, grâce à la leçon de civisme qu'il semblait donner à l'Afrique entière. Encore faut-il préciser que nombre de Camerounais vécurent ce vendredi dans la hantise que le chef de l'Etat ne revînt sur sa décision avant la cérémonie de passation des pouvoirs.¹⁸ Le régime reposait trop sur l'intimidation et l'auto-censure pour emporter l'adhésion d'un pays en pleine vigueur culturelle et économique, grisé par l'expansion pétrolière depuis la moitié des années soixante-dix. "Les Africains, qu'ils soient Guinéens, Camerounais ou autres, demandent simplement à leurs chefs historiques de penser que, d'une part, même "à vie", ils ne sont pas éternels, que, d'autre part, un peuple est comme un enfant qui grandit: à vingt-cinq ans, sauf infirmité, il ne peut plus porter la même culotte qu'à douze mois", écrira plus tard l'éditorialiste du *Messenger*.¹⁹ La grande intelligence politique de M. Biya fut de comprendre cette attente

¹⁸Sources: entretiens.

¹⁹*Le Messenger*, 20 mai 1984, p. 3.

d'ouverture et d'aller à sa rencontre au cours de ses tournées provinciales de 1983, par autant d'allusions bien ajustées à ses auditoires, qu'il rendait de plus en plus explicites au gré de l'altération de ses rapports avec son prédécesseur.²⁰ Les Camerounais avaient saisi à demi-mot et ne lui ménagèrent pas leur soutien lorsque la rupture éclata, en juillet-août 1983. Vraisemblablement pour la première fois depuis l'indépendance, une mobilisation se déclenchait spontanément en faveur du pouvoir en place.

En quoi consistait ce projet de M. Biya? Au moins dans un premier temps, essentiellement peut-être dans un style, celui d'un homme simple et réputé intègre.²¹ Par-delà s'esquissait un programme plus précis dont on ne peut exclure qu'il prêta à malentendu entre le président de la République et sa "base". L'objectif revendiqué était la construction d'un "nouvel ordre social fondé sur la démocratisation réaliste de l'Etat et du Parti": "En un mot, c'est en dernière analyse à un changement profond de la vie nationale que l'histoire nous appelle depuis le 6 novembre 1982, un changement à conduire résolument et en étroite collaboration avec le peuple, certes, mais aussi à conduire dans un esprit de responsabilité, de réalisme et de méthode en vue de donner progressivement naissance à une démocratie plus authentique et à une société plus ouverte"²² D'ores et déjà, en cette fin de saison des pluies 1983, la nomination de nouveaux ministres, la libéralisation de l'expression, et plus particulièrement la multiplication d'organes de presse privés rendaient tangible cette mutation de la vie politique. Mais, d'un façon inévitable, le chef de l'Etat se trouva écartelé entre les attentes de ceux qui voulaient presser le pas du "renouveau" et les appréhensions des tenants de l'ordre ancien. Certains auraient par exemple souhaité la création par M. Biya d'un nouveau parti, en lieu et place de l'UNC ou contrant celle-ci. Sans doute désireux d'éviter tout vide politique, ou connaissant la force réelle de ses adversaires, le président de la République préféra prendre la tête de la formation existante, quitte à en annoncer une démocratisation interne. Ce faisant, il déçut une fraction de sa base. De même, il libéralisa, d'une manière platonique dans l'immédiat mais prometteuse pour l'avenir, les conditions de candidature à l'élection présidentielle, tout en jugeant prématuré le rétablissement du multipartisme, démentant ainsi implicitement les propos que *Le Monde* avait prêtés à l'un de ses ministres.²³ Le cours médian de M. Biya ne tarda pas à engendrer un malaise similaire dans le domaine économique et dans celui du recrutement du personnel politique. Avidé de bouleversements, l'opinion avait beau jeu d'opposer la progression de la corruption ou le maintien en place de ministres soupçonnés de concussion au mot d'ordre de la "rigueur", une rigueur dont on disait en blaguant qu'elle coûtait cher. Enfin, les déclarations qui

²⁰ *Cameroon Tribune*, janvier-juin, 1983.

²¹ Voir "Paul Biya: l'appel du destin", *ESSTI* spécial, décembre 1983 et le *renouveau camerounais: certitudes et défis* (Yaoundé, 1983).

²² Discours de clôture de S.E. Paul Biya", *L'Unité* 661 (1983), p. 34 et 36.

²³ *Cameroon Tribune*, 1er décembre 1983.

M. Biya avait faites à l'endroit des exilés politiques, lors de sa visite officielle en France, en février 1983, et qui avaient certainement effrayé les partisans de M. Ahidjo, voire celui-ci, tardaient à se concrétiser et n'étaient évidemment pas vouées à déboucher sur la législation de l'UPC, comme cette dernière affectait de le penser.²⁴ Mais ce fut à l'occasion du procès de M. Ahidjo et de ses collaborateurs que s'exacerba le divorce entre le chef de l'Etat et sa base. En portant sur la place publique l'affrontement, sous la forme de la découverte d'un complot, M. Biya s'était condamné, si l'on peut dire, à suivre une procédure judiciaire régulière. Les autorités de Yaoundé instruisirent assez mal un dossier qui ne leur était pourtant pas défavorable.²⁵ Le chef de l'Etat, dont l'image venait d'être altérée par la trop belle élection que lui avaient concoctée les caciques du parti, puis par un remaniement ministériel mal reçu de l'opinion, heurta cell-ci de plein fouet en grâçant son prédécesseur et ses co-accusés. Parallèlement, il en avait déjà trop fait pour ne pas avoir acculé ses adversaires à jouer leur va-tout. Le soulèvement de la Garde présidentielle éclata dans une indifférence assez générale, au moins jusqu'à ce que la déclaration radiodiffusée des mutins ne lui confère sa tonalité véritable: celle d'un "putsch de fils à Papa", passablement irresponsables et incompetents, soucieux de rétablir leurs privilèges. Les retombées de l'épisode allaient achever d'entamer la crédibilité du projet présidentiel pour de longs mois.

En réalité, la brouille entre M. Biya et l'opinion publique camerounaise procédait d'une conception éthérée de la politique et de la méconnaissance d'une autre dimension du conflit de la succession. L'enjeu de celui-ci ne résidait pas seulement en une "bonne" démocratisation ou une "mauvaise" perpétuation du passé, mais aussi en la répartition des fruits de l'accumulation économique dont on sait qu'en Afrique elle est indissociable du contrôle du pouvoir.²⁶ Ni au Cameroun, ni à l'étranger il n'a été suffisamment compris que le président de la République était tributaire d'un rapport de forces qui n'était pas toujours à son avantage et dont les ressources étaient aussi financières. Le mot d'ordre de la "rigueur" cher à M. Biya prend ici toute sa signification. Il s'agissait certes de moraliser une économie pervertie par les dernières années du régime de M. Ahidjo et qui avait emprunté une pente suicidaire. Il s'agissait également, en fermant les entrepôts fictifs du port de Douala, en multipliant les opérations de contrôle douanier ou en enjoignant aux commerçants musulmans de rembourser les prêts de complaisance qu'on leur avait libéralement consentis, de rééquilibrer la trop grande influence de certains segments de milieux d'affaires nationaux au profit d'autres réseaux.

²⁴UPC, *Appel de l'UPC et du MANIDEM au peuple kamerunais, aux travailleurs des villes, aux jeunes et aux femmes du Kamerun* (Paris, 1983).

²⁵République du Cameroun, Ministère de l'Information et de la Culture, *Pour comprendre l'affaire Ahmadou Ahidjo* (Yaoundé, 1984).

²⁶G. Balandier, *Anthropologie politique* (Paris, 1967), p. 197-198. R.L. Sklar, "The nature of class domination in Africa", *Journal of Modern African Studies* 17, 4 (1979), p. 531-552 et *Nigerian political parties. Power in an emergent African nation* (Princeton, 1963).

Adressée à M. Biya, la motion de la "communauté des hommes d'affaires camerounais", réunie à la Chambre de commerce, d'industrie et des mines à Douala, peu après le 22 août 1983, et au sein de laquelle les intérêts bamiléké sont influents, est explicite à cet égard:

"Considérant le désordre qui régnait dans l'économie camerounaise au moment de votre accession à la magistrature suprême, désordre caractérisé par: 1) un favoritisme scandaleux dans la réglementation des importations des biens et services consommés au Cameroun; 2) un oubli volontaire des vrais hommes d'affaires au profit d'aventuriers sans patentes ni autres titres réglementaires, aventuriers ayant perturbé profondément les circuits commerciaux et donnant ainsi à notre pays l'apparence d'une économie saine (sic); 3) un octroi complaisant des crédits bancaires sans garanties ni possibilités de remboursement; 4) une tolérance, voire un encouragement d'une fraude douanière organisée; 5) une généralisation des contrebandes par terre, mer et air; 6) une libre circulation sur notre territoire national d'une monnaie n'ayant pas cours dans nos banques (J.-F. B.: en clair le naïra nigérian) (...) approuvons votre politique de moralisation de la société camerounaise, politique génératrice de la paix sociale, indispensable à la vie des affaires".²⁷

Néanmoins cette politique de "rigueur", dans la mesure où elle commença à les atteindre, ne tarda pas à décevoir ceux qui y voyaient une simple machine de guerre braquée contre leurs concurrents du Nord, simultanément affaiblis par la démonétisation du naïra et par la fermeture de la frontière nigériane. A un point tel qu'il fut beaucoup question d'une collusion des milieux d'affaires bamiléké et musulmans, sous-jacente à la tentative de coup d'Etat de 1984, hypothèse qu'avaient paru suggérer divers indices, comme des pénuries de produits de première nécessité ou quelques arrestations. Ces ramifications socio-économiques de la conjuration semblent en tout cas avoir été plus importantes que les ramifications régionalistes sur lesquelles la presse étrangère a insisté. C'était bel et bien le problème de l'accumulation, du rapport de l'Etat à celle-ci et de sa capacité à transcender les dynamiques patrimonialistes des années soixante-dix qui se posait dramatiquement. Conscients des soupçons qui pesaient sur eux, des entrepreneurs de l'Ouest, menés par M. Kadji, demandèrent à être reçus par le président de la République lors de sa visite officielle à Douala, en décembre 1984, afin de protester de leur loyauté; le fastueux banquet qu'il tinrent à offrir au congrès de Bamenda avait une signification similaire. Mais ces témoignages de bonne volonté se heurtèrent à la suspicion de la classe politique originaire du Centre et du Sud qui entendait tirer le meilleur parti de ses positions de pouvoir. D'une façon révélatrice de cette sourde concurrence entre l'Ouest et les milieux beti, le processus de

²⁷ *Cameroon Tribune*, 26 août 1983.

clarification entre le chef de l'Etat et les entrepreneurs bamiléké, mené après le soulèvement de la Garde présidentielle par M. Nkuete, secrétaire général adjoint de la Présidence, et par M. Fofe, ministre du Travail, aurait été un moment contrarié par les agissements de certaines personnalités politiques.

En filigrane, la méfiance semble persister entre le gouvernement et les hommes d'affaires de l'Ouest, accusés de préférer les réseaux financiers informels des "tontines" aux institutions bancaires et de se livrer à une contrebande effrénée, aussi bien qu'à l'exode des capitaux. L'objectif du ministre du Commerce et de l'Industrie, M. Nomo Ongolo, originaire du Centre-Sud et marié à une fille de M. Foncha paraît être double: d'une part, il entend opposer aux intérêts de l'Ouest la montée en puissance d'opérateurs économiques natifs du Sud; de l'autre, il souhaite rogner l'influence des intérêts français en favorisant la diversification des relations extérieures du pays et en développant les échanges avec des partenaires canadiens, américains, allemands, asiatiques. Vouée à heurter de plein fouet des situations acquises, cette stratégie a d'autant moins convaincu jusqu'à présent qu'elle a été appliquée sans subtilité excessive, qu'elle a tendu à sacrifier le secteur industriel à l'activité commerciale et qu'elle s'est appuyée sur des outsiders plus enclins à la consommation ostentatoire qu'à l'investissement productif.

Quoi qu'il en soit, la compétition en vue de l'accumulation de pouvoirs et de richesses se fait plus vive, en particulier dans le secteur bancaire, les entreprises publiques, et même l'Université.²⁸ La manifestation patente de cette concurrence est le développement de la corruption chez les fonctionnaires qui demandent de plus en plus fréquemment à être "motivés". "Hier les chèvres étaient attachées et elles broutaient. Aujourd'hui, les chèvres sont attachées et elles broutent. Demain les chèvres seront attachées et elles brouteront!" s'exclamait ainsi, plutôt crûment, un participant à une réunion d'information du nouveau parti, le Rassemblement démocratique du peuple camerounais, en 1986.

Il serait cependant à nouveau erroné d'exagérer la connotation proprement régionaliste de ces tensions. Ce sont des réseaux, presque nécessairement pluriethniques, d'intérêts politiques et économiques qui s'affrontent, sans pour autant remettre en cause l'unité nationale, ni même donner lieu à une mobilisation populaire importante (bien que la répartition clientéliste des fruits de l'accumulation s'opère, elle selon des critères largement ethniques). Au sein de chaque ensemble régional, la compétition n'est pas moins vive qu'à l'échelle nationale. Par exemple, les "milieux d'affaires bamiléké", dont on parle volontiers comme d'une entité homogène et menaçante sont en réalité associés à des opérateurs non-bamiléké, ne serait-ce que par

²⁸Sources: *la Gazette* et *Le Messager*, 1983-1987.

l'intermédiaire du Crédit mutuel du Cameroun fondé par M. Tchanque, et sont eux-mêmes divisés par des clivages aigus. Le plus aisé à détecter est celui, qui divise deux générations, d'une part celle de M. Kadji, par exemple, à l'origine favorisée par M. Ahidjo afin de contrer la rébellion upéciste, composée de *self-made men* quasiment illettrés, se caractérisant par la polyactivité,²⁹ et, d'autre part, celle de M. Tchanque, plus diplômée et moderniste. En l'occurrence, cette contradiction se répercute au plan politique: en janvier-mars 1986, lors du renouvellement des organes de base du RDPC, MM. Kadji et Koloko ont sans doute soutenu la candidature de M. Kuoh Tobie, et M. Tchanque, celle de M. Ekindi.³⁰

L'on voit bien l'avantage que le chef de l'Etat peut tirer de ces rivalités entre réseaux dès lors que ceux-ci lui font acte d'allégeance. Il s'installe en position d'arbitre, veillant à ce qu'aucun groupe ne distance trop les autres, contribuant à la montée en puissance d'une génération d'entrepreneurs qui lui soient acquis, notamment en les faisant coopter au sein des instances dirigeantes du parti au Congrès de Bamenda, et assurant ainsi sa propre autonomie par rapport à une classe politique structurée, y compris économiquement, par vingt-sept ans d'indépendance. Le projet du "Renouveau" apparaît alors sous un autre jour. Certes, M. Biya a donné suffisamment de preuves de sa sincérité et de sa tolérance - de la libéralisation relative des élections et de la presse à l'endiguement des fureurs de la répression au lendemain du 6 avril 1984 - pour qu'on ne les mette pas en doute. Mais par ces moyens, dont on ne remarquera jamais assez qu'il les a préférés à d'autres, à l'inverse, par exemple d'un Daniel arap Moi au Kenya, il a cherché aussi à asseoir son autorité au détriment de l'influence des "barons" du régime qui dissimulaient parfois mal leurs propres convoitises. Cet aspect des choses est d'autant plus important que la succession présidentielle était, malgré les apparences, très ouverte et que le Congrès de Bamenda aurait pu conduire à une redistribution des cartes. A cet égard, et *mutatis mutandis*, la démocratisation partielle du système politique camerounais est assez comparable à celle des régimes ivoirien, sénégalais ou sierra-léonais; elle équivaut à une stratégie de maximisation du pouvoir du chef de l'Etat, un objectif que l'on avait jadis poursuivi dans ces pays par le biais du contrôle autoritaire et qui est aujourd'hui atteint en partie grâce aux vertus corrosives du suffrage universel.

²⁹J.L. Dongmo, *Le dynamisme bamiléké (Cameroun). Tome 2. La maîtrise de l'espace urbain* (Yaoundé, 1981), p. 173 et suiv.

³⁰H. Manga, "Dans le Wouri, le meilleur a gagné", *Le Messager*, 18 mars 1986, p. 12.

LA POURSUITE DE L'ASSIMILATION RÉCIPROQUE DES SEGMENTS DE L'ÉLITE

La dynamique de l'autonomisation du pouvoir présidentiel, les conflits dont elle s'est accompagnée n'ont pas, jusqu'à présent, véritablement contrarié le processus d'assimilation réciproque des segments de l'élite avec lequel s'est confondue la construction de l'Etat au Cameroun, depuis plusieurs décennies. Il convient, bien sûr, de nous défier d'une interprétation téléologique de l'Histoire, qu'implique peu ou prou l'idée d'une classe dominante en formation.³¹ Force est de reconnaître pourtant, que les épisodes hautement conflictuels de la transition se sont soldés *in fine* par des compromis et une fusion sans doute accrue des segments de l'élite sociale. Vus sous cet angle, les antagonismes économiques et politiques ne sont souvent que les expressions de ce processus intermédiaire et moléculaire, surtout lorsque de détenteur du pouvoir suprême érige la demi-teinte en art de gouvernement.

La cristallisation, à la faveur de la libéralisation, d'une société civile plus autonome qu'auparavant par rapport à l'Etat est de nature à favoriser l'assimilation réciproque des segments de l'élite. La constitution de puissants réseaux financiers hors du système bancaire, le rôle accru du tissu associatif (dont la double fronde des architectes et des avocats, en 1986, a fourni un témoignage intéressant) sont des étapes importantes de cette évolution. Mais c'est encore au sein de l'Etat que les vrais arrangements se concluent, fût-ce de manière traumatique. Ainsi, la mutation du parti et la cooptation d'un nouveau comité central en 1985, la tenue d'élections compétitives (renouvellement des organes de base du parti en 1986, municipales en 1987, législatives en 1988), la répartition des postes au sein du gouvernement, de la haute administration et du secteur public se sont caractérisées par une double tendance faussement paradoxale, et à ce titre mal comprise de l'opinion.

D'une part, les "hommes du Renouveau" se sont avérés être des "hommes nouveaux", pour reprendre la terminologie en vogue au Cameroun en 1984-1985. A l'issue du Congrès de Bamenda, la composition du Comité central s'est trouvée profondément modifiée: 40 membres titulaires sur 65 et 15 membres suppléants sur 20 n'appartenaient pas à celui de l'UNC. De même, les taux de renouvellement des cadres du RDPC et de son organisation féminine, en 1986, ont été respectivement de 54,30% et de 53,06%. Un an plus tard, en octobre 1987, les élections municipales ont confirmé la percée du nouveau personnel politique en enregistrant la victoire de ses deux porte-parole les plus en flèche, M. Ekindi à Douala et M. Melone à Edea. Bien que ceux-ci incarnent d'une certaine manière l'héritage de l'Union des populations du

³¹J.S. Saul, *The State and Revolution in Eastern Africa* (Londres, 1979).

Cameroun, ce serait certainement trop dire que de conclure à la cicatrisation du grand schisme qui a déchiré le pays entre 1950 et 1964, et que l'autoritarisme soupçonneux de M. Ahidjo n'avait nullement aidé à cautériser. Néanmoins, le régime se réconcilie lentement avec le passé nationaliste du pays, par petits gestes symboliques (le baptême des promotions d'officiers des noms de Rudolph Douala Manga Bell et de Martin Paul Samba; la nomination à la tête d'un organisme public d'un ancien ministre, Victor Kanga, emprisonné par M. Ahidjo; le retour au Cameroun de Mgr. Ndongmo accusé de complot en 1970). Simultanément, la résurgence de la conscience nationaliste, dont la principale cible est, comme il se doit, la France, se conjugue avec une fièvre de l'argent et de la consommation qui rend assez vaines les chimères du militantisme clandestin auxquelles continuent d'adhérer certains upécistes exilés à l'étranger. En quelques années, le spectre politique du pays s'est de la sorte resserré, à défaut d'être véritablement apaisé.

D'autre part cette ouverture et cet élargissement de l'élite politique ne se sont pas soldés par l'élimination du personnel qui avait géré l'Etat du temps de M. Ahidjo. Tel est le cas, naturellement, de M. Biya lui-même, secrétaire-général de la Présidence de la République, puis Premier ministre de 1967 à 1982. Mais de surcroît, il a confié quelques uns des postes clef du régime à d'autres "barons" émérites, quitte à écorner la crédibilité de son projet de libéralisation aux yeux de ceux qui pensaient qu' "on ne saurait mettre du vin nouveau dans de vieilles outres sans courir le risque de le perdre".³² En dépit des signes tangibles d'ouverture que recelait le discours de politique générale de M. Biya, l'impression première qui se dégagait du Congrès de Bamenda fut ainsi celle d'une victoire des "anciens" ou tout au moins d'une défaite des "novateurs". Le secrétariat politique et le secrétariat à l'organisation du RDP restaient notamment entre les mains de vieux routiers, MM. Sengat-Kuoh, Doumba et Mengueme, alors que des personnalités comme M. Ngango, Labarang et Njoh Mouelle, marquées du sceau du changement, n'accédaient au Comité central que comme suppléants. Les "barons" tenus pour hostiles au "Renouveau" - parfois, d'ailleurs, d'une façon excessive - ne transformèrent pas toujours l'essai en termes ministériels. Il n'empêche qu'ils n'ont cessé de tenir quelques portefeuilles cruciaux, comme celui de l'Administration territoriale. Et de manière encore plus choquante pour l'opinion, dans la mesure où certains d'entre eux étaient réputés pour leurs malversations ou pour leur étroite collaboration avec M. Ahidjo, des hommes comme MM. Ayissi Mvodo, Youssoufa Daouda, Eboua, Sadou Daoudou, Yadjé Abdoulaye, Sadi, se sont vus confier des fonctions plus ou moins importantes ou honorifiques.

³²L'expression du ministre Georges Ngango qui visait de la sorte M. Sengat-Kuoh, secrétaire politique du parti (*La Gazette*, 23 août 1984; *Le Messenger*, 27 septembre 1984).

Faux dilemme que celui qui oppose systématiquement le changement et la continuité. La stratégie des petits pas, poursuivie par M. Biya au grand dam de ses partisans initiaux, répond à cette logique fondamentale de la "recherche hégémonique" qui veut qu'aucune fraction notable des catégories dirigeantes ne soit rejetée hors du système. D'une façon révélatrice, *Le Messager*, d'habitude pressé de pousser à la roue du changement, soulignait au lendemain du renouvellement des organes de base, qu'il était désormais "urgent d'attendre" si le régime voulait éviter "de se retrouver face à une armée incontrôlable d'adversaires affolés".³³ Comme dans les décennies antérieures, la dynamique propre de la vie politique, avec ce qu'elle comprend de conflit, a été un vecteur privilégié de ce processus d'assimilation réciproque.

Reste à mieux saisir les contours de cette "classe dominante en formation" qui en est l'enjeu. A l'époque de M. Ahidjo, c'était clairement la relation à l'Etat qui conférait aux acteurs la capacité de s'enrichir et de dominer le champ social; le profil de la "recherche hégémonique" était d'une connotation nettement bureaucratique et s'organisait autour des positions de pouvoir.³⁴ Certains en ont déduit le caractère patrimonial de l'Etat au Cameroun.³⁵ Ce label, pourtant, fait bon marché de toute une série de logiques irréductibles au modèle wébérien du "sultanisme". En outre, les positions de pouvoir n'absorbent pas au Cameroun la totalité des canaux d'accumulation au sens où elles tendent à y parvenir en Union soviétique ou en Chine populaire. De ce point de vue, l'appropriation étatique de nombreux moyens de production et d'échange ne doit pas frapper au-delà du raisonnable. Elle n'est pas de même nature que dans une économie socialiste ou mixte, bien que la médiation de l'Etat y soit plus forte et spécifique qu'au Kenya, au Nigeria ou a fortiori en Ouganda, et bien que l'activité des entreprises privées dépende toujours étroitement du pouvoir dans la mesure où elle repose sur des autorisations administratives (licences d'importation, agréments industriels, homologation des prix) et sur des dérogations à la loi (fraudes douanières et fiscales). Elle manifeste plutôt la volonté du Prince, sinon de truster les échanges commerciaux comme dans l'Asante ancien.³⁶ du moins de brider l'autonomie que d'aucuns pourraient en tirer à l'égard de son pouvoir. Or, seuls en définitive les gangstérismes politiques d'une famille Touré en Guinée ou d'une famille Nguema en Guinée équatoriale ont pu s'approcher d'une confiscation *de facto* des moyens d'enrichissement, sans toutefois y parvenir. Partout ailleurs, une couche plus ou moins consistante d'entrepreneurs est parvenue à se différencier, y compris dans les régimes hautement patrimonialistes de MM. Mobutu et Houphouët-Boigny.³⁷ Au Cameroun, ce

³³*Le Messager*, 31 mars 1986, p. 6

³⁴J.F. Bayart, *L'Etat au Cameroun*, op. cit.

³⁵J.F. Medard, "L'Etat sous-développé au Cameroun", *Année africaine* 1977 (1978), pp. 35-84.

³⁶I. Wilks, *Asante in the nineteenth century. The structure and evolution of a political order* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 195-196, 267 et suiv., 699 et suiv.

³⁷J. Mac Gaffey, *Entrepreneurs and parasites. The struggle for indigenous capitalism in Zaïre* (Cambridge 1987).

développement est d'autant plus marqué que de solides traditions marchandes ont préexisté à l'Etat dans l'Ouest et dans le Nord.³⁸ Il est donc assez tenant de discerner dans le projet de M. Biya une volonté de représentation de cette "bourgeoisie d'affaires" et d'édulcoration de la teneur bureaucratique du régime. Au Congrès de Bamenda, des patrons éminents - tels MM. Kondo, Tchanque, Sack, Onobiono - sont de fait entrés au Comité central du RDPC, et le souci de diversification de ses partenaires économiques extérieurs qu'affiche la diplomatie camerounaise paraît devoir étayer ce rééquilibrage.

A la regarder de plus près, la réalité se nuance et tout compte fait l'on saisit mal l'altérité radicale qui discriminerait nettement "la bourgeoisie d'affaires" de la "bourgeoisie politico-administrative", qui ferait de celles-ci "deux ensembles distincts" dont le "conflit" serait "potentiel mais (...) encore masqué".³⁹ Certes, le cursus d'un Monkam, d'un Kadji, d'un Kondo est différent de celui d'un ministre ou d'un haut fonctionnaire, encore que cela soit déjà moins vrai d'un Tchanque, secrétaire général de l'Union douanière et économique d'Afrique centrale avant de fonder les brasseries Nobra. En outre, les grands commerçants, et surtout les industriels ont des préoccupations propres qui les amènent à critiquer l'emprise de l'administration sur la vie des entreprises, l'orientation de la politique économique du gouvernement ou la multiplication des importations concurrentes des produits nationaux. *Last but not least*, Paul Soppo Priso, le milliardaire, non pas rouge mais nationaliste, de Douala, incarnait une philosophie politique authentiquement libérale, aux antipodes de l'autoritarisme étatiste de M. Ahidjo, avant qu'il ne soit battu par celui-ci aux élections présidentielles de 1960 et qu'il ne se retire de la lutte pour le pouvoir. Mais, en définitive, "bourgeois" et "bureaucrates" roulent dans les mêmes Mercedes, boivent le même champagne, fument les mêmes cigares et se retrouvent dans les salons d'honneur des aéroports. Les clivages entre les deux activités, économique et politico-administrative, existent et se projettent en partie sous la forme de rivalités personnelles. Néanmoins, ils traduisent des antagonismes de rôles, plus que de statuts ou de classes. Ils ne sont pas forcément plus aigus que les affrontements factionnels qui divisent la classe politique, les conflits de compétence qui paralysent les administrations, ou les contradictions qui opposent entre eux les grands hommes d'affaires.

En d'autres termes, les ordres privés et étatiques de l'accumulation participent assez largement d'un même ethos de l'enrichissement personnel et de la munificence. Et à l'inverse rien n'indique qu'ils s'articulent à partir d'un rapport d'extériorité. Peu importe, en fin de course, que les fortunes de M. Ahidjo et de M. Moussa Yaya se soient amassées sous le couvert de

³⁸J.P. Warnier, *Echanges, développement et hiérarchies dans le Bamenda pré-colonial (Cameroun)* (Stuttgart, 1985).

³⁹J. Champaud, *Villes et campagnes du Cameroun de l'Ouest* (Paris, 1983), p. 286.

leurs responsabilités politiques, que celles de M. Soppo Priso, de M. Kuoh Tobie ou de feu André Fouda remontent pour le principal aux décennies de l'époque coloniale, que celle de M. Kondo repose sur une véritable activité industrielle. Il n'est pas non plus crucial que M. Kadji ait longtemps bénéficié de la myopie délibérée d'un régime désireux d'opposer à la rébellion "upéciste" des hommes d'affaires bamiléké et que de grands négociants du Nord aient ensuite profité d'un calcul similaire, ni que M. Monkam travaille dans le sillage d'une brasserie étrangère et que M. Fotso confie la gestion de ses sociétés à des cadres expatriés là où d'autres rêvent d'en découdre avec les investissements français, ni enfin que les uns optent pour la gestion quand d'autres pensent que "débrouiller n'est pas voler". Pour l'heure, le maelstrom des discordes et des alliances ô combien changeantes qui les emporte tous renvoie à un champ d'intérêts intimement mêlés au fil des années, des contrats, des crédits, des acquisitions, des mariages. Dans ce tourbillon, les opérateurs privés et les opérateurs étatiques agissent complémentirement, quand ils ne se confondent pas purement et simplement, en se contentant de changer de casquette selon les circonstances.

Comme au Kenya⁴⁰, la place centrale de mécanismes de "chevauchement" (*straddling*) entre les emplois salariés - ceux notamment de la fonction publique - et les investissements privés entrent pour beaucoup dans l'unification progressive de la sphère de domination. J. Iliffe soupçonne que ces lignes de "chevauchement" sont moins saillantes et systématiques en Afrique occidentale qu'en Afrique orientale.⁴¹ Cela n'est point évident en ce qui concerne le Cameroun. Malgré l'ancienneté des réseaux commerciaux dans l'Ouest, la biographie des négociants bamiléké contemporains montre que pour eux aussi le salariat a été "le point de passage obligé" de la formation de leur capital.⁴² Ce à quoi il faut ajouter d'autres modalités d'interrelation entre les canaux privés et publics d'accumulation. Nous savons déjà que la plupart de ces entrepreneurs originaires des Grassfields, à l'instar de leurs confrères musulmans, ont à un moment ou à un autre été l'objet de la sollicitude et de l'indulgence, en particulier bancaires, du pouvoir. Par-delà, certains d'entre eux ont été vraisemblablement, et demeurent, les associés directs de membres éminents de la classe politique dont ils concourent à recycler les prébendes engrangées. Comme dans le reste du continent, circuits marchands et circuits politiques se confortent mutuellement et font système.⁴³ Plutôt qu'un rapport d'exclusion ou de concurrence,

⁴⁰ M.P. Cowen, K. Kinyanjui, "Some problems of capital and classes in Kenya" (Nairobi, 1977); G. Kitching, *Class and economic change in Kenya. The making of an African petite-bourgeoisie* (New Haven, 1980).

⁴¹ J. Iliffe, *The emergence of African capitalism* (Londres, 1983), p. 30-31 et 65 et suiv.

⁴² J. Champaud, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

⁴³ D.B. Cruise O'Brien, *Saints and politicians; Essays in the organisation of a Senegalese peasant society* (Cambridge, 1975).

il y a une relation de complémentarité et d'hybridation entre le capital privé et le capital public, entre la "bourgeoisie d'affaires" et la "bourgeoisie bureaucratique".⁴⁴

Pour conceptualiser cette classe dominante dans son unité virtuelle, autant que dans sa plasticité, la plupart des auteurs retiennent la notion de "bourgeoisie nationale".⁴⁵ Dans le cas du Cameroun, l'épithète "nationale" est singulièrement mal venue, quelle que soit par ailleurs l'acrimonie "nationaliste" des hommes d'affaires à l'égard de l'étranger et, particulièrement, des entreprises françaises. Non que cette "bourgeoisie" soit divisée selon des clivages ethniques, comme on le rabâche volontiers: nous avons au contraire vu que les réseaux d'accumulation transcendaient presque nécessairement les particularismes régionaux. Mais le qualificatif suppose une contradiction irréductible entre les milieux d'affaires autochtones et le capital étranger, là où s'affirment fréquemment des rapports d'association et d'imbrication. Ces liens d'interdépendance n'excluent naturellement pas les conflits d'intérêts ou de stratégies, inhérents au monde des affaires. Rien pourtant, n'autorise à lire ceux-ci en termes téléologiques. Les affrontements peuvent conduire à une plus grande intégration du capital autochtone et du capital étranger, qui serait le fruit non pas d'une défaite de la "bourgeoisie nationale" mais d'un choix délibéré de sa part. Et de ce point de vue, rien ne permet non plus de distinguer au Cameroun une bourgeoisie "nationale" de sa soeur traîtresse et "compradore". G. Kitching le remarque à juste titre: tout homme d'affaires, tout bureaucrate relève tantôt de l'une de ces catégories, tantôt de l'autre, selon les activités que l'on prend en considération et leurs motivations, selon l'alliance conjoncturelle dans laquelle il se trouve momentanément inséré en fonction d'un enjeu précis.⁴⁶ La plupart des entrepreneurs camerounais traitent quotidiennement avec des opérateurs occidentaux, nigériens et, de plus en plus, "asiatiques" ou israéliens. Le montant élevé des "dépôts bancaires extra-territoriaux du secteur non bancaire" en provenance du pays suggèrent qu'ils considèrent l'économie-monde occidentale comme leur champ naturel d'expansion et d'accumulation, bien au-delà des étroites frontières nationales.⁴⁷

En outre - et l'objection est encore plus fondamentale car elle porte sur le concept même de bourgeoisie - ce groupe dominant qui se cherche et se rassemble sous le couvert de l'Etat ne préside pas aux destinées d'une économie productive, reposant sur une véritable exploitation de classe, au sens marxien du concept. Quelle que soit la prégnance des dynamiques de la

⁴⁴M.P. Cowen, "The British State. State enterprise and an indigenous bourgeoisie in Kenya after 1945" (Dakar, 1980), p. 34. J.F. Bayart, *L'invention du politique en Afrique noire* (Paris, forthcoming), chapitre III; J.S. Saul, *op. cit.*

⁴⁵R.A. Joseph, "Theories of the African bourgeoisie: an exploration" (Dakar, 1980), pp. 17 et suiv.; M.G. Schatzberg, *Politics and class in Zaïre. Bureaucracy, business and beer in Lisala* (New York, 1980).

⁴⁶G. Kitching, "Politics, method and evidence in the 'Kenya debate'", in H. Bernstein, B.K. Campbell, eds., *Contradictions of accumulation in Africa. Studies in economy and state* (Beverly Hills, 1985), p. 131.

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reproduction sociale des années trente à aujourd'hui, l'échafaudage de la stratification reste instable, et sans doute assez proche du tableau que S. Berry dresse du pays Yoruba.⁴⁸ Le tissu agricole et industriel camerounais était fragile et peu compétitif avant même la grave crise qui s'est déclenchée en 1985, avec un temps de retard sur le reste de l'Afrique.⁴⁹ Dans le processus d'accumulation domestique, les diverses rentes et les pratiques de prédation l'emportent; elles n'ont pas grand chose à voir avec "l'esprit du capitalisme" ni avec son nécessaire vecteur institutionnel, l'Etat bureaucratique.⁵⁰

CONCLUSION

Autant reconnaître que ce processus de formation d'une classe dominante dont témoigne la trajectoire historique de l'Etat au Cameroun demeure toujours aussi incertain. Il n'a rien d'exceptionnel à l'aune ouest-africaine. Il correspond peu ou prou à la "fusion des élites" que R.L. Sklar repérait au Nigeria, ou au "reciprocity model of African politics" que M. Kilson énonçait à partir du cas du Sierra Leone. Il trouve ses équivalents en Côte-d'Ivoire, au Sénégal, au Niger et même au Liberia, depuis la politique d'"unification" du président Tubman, au lendemain de la Seconde Guerre mondiale.⁵¹ En soi, ce cours moyen, à mi-chemin de la modernisation conservatrice et de la révolution sociale, semble devoir constituer la règle, que confirment un nombre restreint d'exceptions, sur les modes de la continuité sociale (Mauritanie) ou de la rupture (Guinée, Zanzibar, Rwanda). C'est que le changement d'échelle colonial a rendu à peu près inévitables les multiples compromis dont il est tissé, en entraînant la différenciation des fondements sociaux de l'Etat d'une région à l'autre.⁵² Tout au plus peut-on dire que le Cameroun, pendant trente ans, a au mieux exemplifié ce scénario fondamental de l'assimilation réciproque des élites grâce à sa stabilité institutionnelle et à sa relative prospérité économique.

⁴⁸S. Berry, *Fathers work for their sons. Accumulation, mobility and class formation in an extended yoruba community* (Berkeley, 1985).

⁴⁹P. Dessouane, P. Verre, "Cameroun: du développement autocentré au national-libéralisme", *Politique africaine* 22 (1986), pp. 111-119; J.C. Willame, Cameroun: les avatars d'un libéralisme planifié", *ibid.*, 18 (1985), pp. 44-70; G. Courade, "Des complexes qui coûtent cher", *ibid.*, 14 (1984), pp. 75-91.

⁵⁰M. Weber, *L'éthique protestante et l'esprit du capitalisme* (Paris, 1985), p. 71 et R. Collins, "Weber's last theory of capitalism: a systematization" *American sociological review* 45, 6 (1980), p. 931-932.

⁵¹R.L. Sklar, *Nigerian political parties*, op.cit.; M. Kilson, *Political change in a West African state. A study of the modernization process in Sierra Leone* (Harvard, 1966); Y.A. Fauré, J.F. Médard eds, *Etat et bourgeoisie en Côte-d'Ivoire* (Paris, 1982); J.P. Olivier de Sardan, *Les sociétés songhay-zarma (Niger-Mali). Chefs guerriers, esclaves, paysans..* (Paris, 1984). D.B. Cruise O'Brien, *Saints and politicians*, op. cit.; C. Clapham, *Liberia and Sierra Leone. An essay in comparative politics* (Cambridge, 1976); T.P. Wrubel, "Liberia: the dynamics of continuity", *Journal of Modern African Studies* 9 (2), août 1971, pp. 189-204; M. Lowenkopf, "Political modernization in Liberia: a conservative model". *The western political quarterly* XXV (I), March 1972, pp. 94-108.

⁵²J.F. Bayart, *L'Etat au Cameroun*, op. cit. et *L'Etat en Afrique*, op. cit.

Mais cette époque semble, sinon révolue, du moins soumise à des dynamiques divergentes. Plongé dans une crise structurelle qu'aggraveront à terme l'amenuisement de la rente pétrolière, la dévalorisation durable du café robusta et la redoutable concurrence du cacao malaisien, aspiré chaque jour davantage dans le champ d'attraction du géant nigérian, en proie à des luttes factionnelles délétères qu'exacerbent les aléas d'une libéralisation parfois contradictoire, paralysé par l'hypertrophie de la fonction présidentielle et de l'administration, le pays entre dans la zone des tempêtes. Cette dernière ne sera pas forcément fatale à la recherche hégémonique. Elle en rendra néanmoins l'issue plus hasardeuse. Pour conceptualiser le compromis historique entre les divers sédiments de la hiérarchie sociale à l'ombre de l'Etat postcolonial et les procédures de cooptation, par celui-ci, des contre-élites susceptibles de conduire une mobilisation populaire conséquente, la notion gramscienne de "révolution passive" s'impose à l'esprit.⁵³ Or, sans l'exclure absolument, ce scénario ne constituait pas, aux yeux du théoricien italien, la voie royale qui menait à l'instauration d'une véritable hégémonie. De l'épisode du Risorgimento, au XIXe siècle, à l'Etat "bâtard" et fasciste du XXe siècle, le cheminement de la péninsule suggère au contraire que deux traits majeurs de la "révolution passive" - le maintien de l'influence des strates dominantes anciennes et la dissymétrie spatiale de l'inégalité - prédisposent plutôt à la crispation autoritaire. Seul l'avenir nous dira si le projet de classe dominante au Cameroun est ainsi voué à l'inachèvement et à la compensation coercitive.

⁵³J.F. Bayart, *L'Etat en Afrique*, op. cit., chapitre VII. Sur le concept de "révolution passive", voir, outre l'oeuvre de A. Gramsci, son commentaire in J.A. Davis, ed., *Gramsci and Italy's passive revolution* (London, 1979); C. Mouffe, ed. *Gramsci and Marxist theory* (London 1979); C. Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci et l'Etat. Pour une théorie matérialiste de la philosophie* (Paris, 1975).

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