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The story of houses in the grassfields: mobility, belonging and hierarchies in urbanising North-West Cameroon

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3. The Papiakum People in the Bamenda Grassfields Connections

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the ethnography of the Papiakum people in order to understand their material culture. The lack of basic ethnography made field experience both exciting and challenging going into the society without any pre-knowledge about the socio-political organisation of the Papiakum people. This oversight by previous researchers became a source of inspiration and gave the zeal to start the process of writing a basic ethnography of the Papiakum people as one of the goals of this thesis. It will act as a gateway into the materiality and changing socio-political landscape of the people and the society. The history of origin of Papiakum and the presentation of the village and the different hierarchies; and also an introduction of what material culture mean in the village and for the people in relation to material culture; what is home, emotions tied to it will be discussed. This rotates on the fabric of social relation amongst the Papiakum when they did settle in their present site.

The chapter does not only give us just a basic ethnography of the people but also connects us to the other peoples of the Grassfields. This connection goes to establish the links with other people as well as attest to the fact that they have been a mobile people. Through their mobility also light will be thrown into their sense of attachment/belonging. Although some writers have not given Africa and Africans, the agency it deserves as far as her role in global connections was concerned, it remains undisputed that African societies were part of these world currents especially as far as trade was concern. Writers such as Ferguson (2006); Thornton (1992); Eltis (1993); Wallerstein (1986; 2002); Cooper (2001) have shown how Africa had been part of the global processes with people and goods moving in both directions. Following that argument the chapter examines how Baba 1 was part of the global processes which included the mobility of people and goods. Connectivity here in terms of social change and relations is crucial for the development of the other chapters. The chapter is structured into the following sections: first, the location and migratory route of the people; and second, their socio-political and economical structure (link between their mobility, economy and trade) to bring out the emotions tied to home.

3.2 Location and History of the Papiakum People

Baba I is one of the thirteen villages that make up the Ndop plain of Ngoketunjia Division of the Bamenda Grassfields of the North West Region of Cameroon. The people here refer to themselves as the Papiakum people. Their settlement in this present area is recent as compared to the other ethnic groups of the Ndop plain (Chilver and Kaberry, 1967:20). Like most of the peoples of the Bamenda Grassfields, they claim a Tikar origin from Rifum (Nkwi, 2015; Chilver and Kaberry, 1967:2; Nkwi(1986:15; Nyamnjoh 2007:2). Fig 3.1 shows the situational map and a sketch of the different quarters of Baba I. Although the area has “modern state structures”, it has kept its traditional socio-political organisation centred on their chiefdoms with the Fons as paramount rulers. Today, the Fons are auxiliaries of state administration and still command authority among the people.

The topography of Baba 1 is rugged. It is made up of undulating hills, valleys and

plains. As one drives in on the Bamenda ring road towards Kumbo, the capital of Bui Division, the ring road splits the Baba I village into two parts (upper and lower). The upper parts to the North cover about 60% of its surface area where the palace, which is the seat of traditional authority, is situated. The lower section takes 40% and holds majority of its rice fields on the plain.

Cash crops were introduced in this region during the British colonial administration in the 1930s. Coffee was one of them and it became the main cash crop. Farmers cultivated and sold to the United African Company and used the money to pay their children’s school fees, health bills and above all improved their standards of living. The introduction of coffee can be justified on the mobility of Papiakum people out of Baba I. Generally coffee was introduced in the Bamenda Grassfields by traders who trekked to NKongsamba. It was in the trading activities that they brought in coffee. During the British colonial administration, the cultivation was encouraged and companies like the UAC with its head quarters in Bamenda specialised in the buying of the coffee.

Situational Map of Baba I

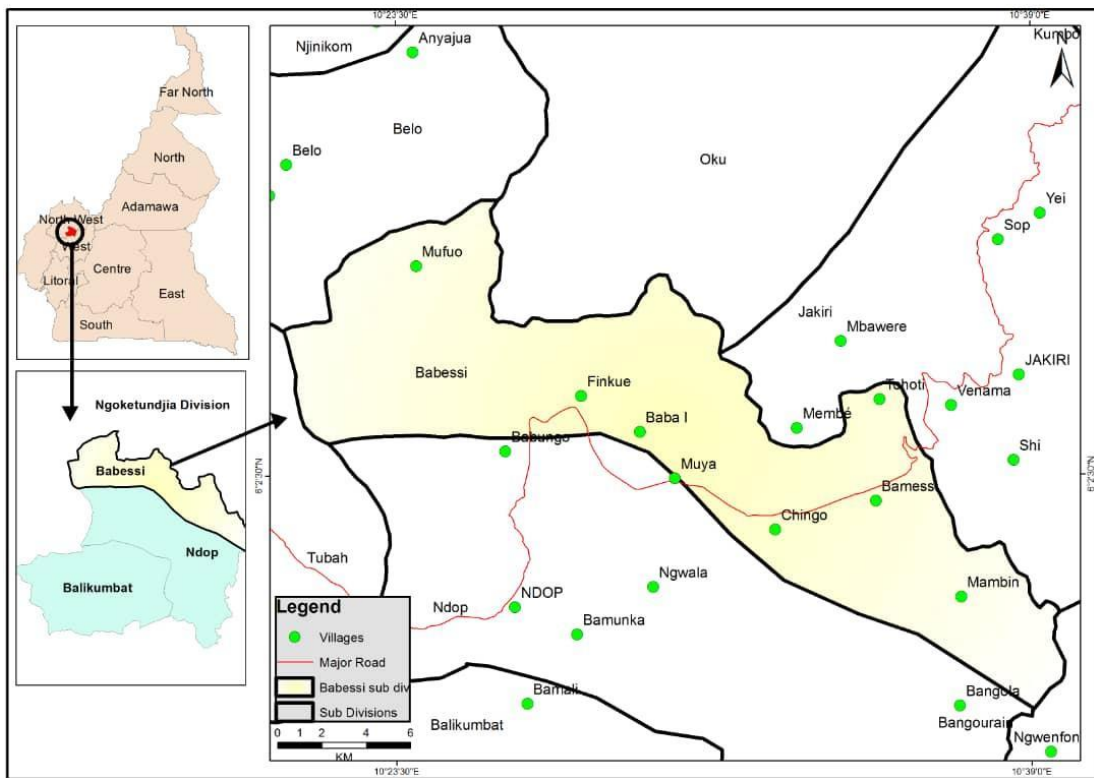


Figure 3.1: Map of Cameroon situating the region, the division and subdivision within which Baba I is located.

Source: By Author

In the early 1980s, world prices for coffee soured and consequently the price of coffee dropped drastically and forced the people to turn to rice farming. Very few shrubs of coffee trees can still be seen around some compounds today. Apart from rice which is today the main cash crop and cultivated mostly by men, there are hectares of corn farms, groundnut

and beans fields interspaced with cocoyam and sweet potatoes mostly carried out by women. Figure 3.4 depicts some of these farms.

In lower the section of the village, there is also a royal fish pond as well as the palace farm house where the Fon used to stay during farming and harvesting seasons (see Figure 3.2 a & b). This royal complex has a built in facility for smoking fish and drying of grains. When I got to the field, it stood as an abandoned ruin but months after, it was offered up to be used as a primary school building recently created for the village.



Figure 3.3: Old Palace farm house (a) above & Royal Fish pond below (b)

Source: Photo by Author



Figure 3.4: Different farmlands located on the landscape.

Source: Photo by Author

Most of the grazing activities also take place here (Figure 3.5). The limited arable land as well as grazing land always led to the grazier-farmers conflict. I was privileged to witness the resolution of the farmer-grazier conflicts. It is worth noting that one of such conflicts even resulted to loss of life as fire arms were used. This obliged the relocation of one of the family heads on the plain to Douala, the economic capital of the Littoral Region of Cameroon.



Figure 3.5: Cattle in paddock at Mbaghangha, one of the most busy farm areas.

Source: Photo by Author

Much ethnographic research has taken place in the Bamenda Grassfields (Chilver and Kabry, 1965, 1967, 1968 and 1970; Chilver, 1961 and 1963; Rowlands, 1979; Dillon 1973) Although with this volume of research done on Baba I in-depth studies detailing the stories around the houses and the mobility of Baba 1 people is missing. Mope Simo (1991:3) in commenting on the general ethnography of the Ndop Plain notes that despite its artistic endowment and material culture, Ndop Plain got less attention from international social scientists, maybe because of its language plurality. Nonetheless, the other villages have at least some basic ethnography written about them.

According to oral traditions collected during the fieldwork (in the various urban centres and Baba I), through interviews and participation in socio-cultural events, the Papiakum people consider themselves as Tikars, who migrated from Bankim in the Adamawa Region of Cameroon. Due to some chieftaincy struggle, they moved and settled peacefully alongside the Bamum in Koupa for a long time. This area is today known as Foumban, the capital of the Noun Division of the West Region of Cameroon. During that time, famine was a common phenomenon and strategies had to be developed to cope with the situation. Thus, there was a regular procedure every week that the Nchenterh or Nchindas (royal court servants) would go to the market and take a bit of every food item on sale from whosoever was selling.

On one fateful day, they took the food item that a renowned notable wanted to sell because his wife had put to birth. Knowing all about the procedure and also aware that as a notable he could go back to the palace and collect it, he let it go like every other person rather than argue with the Nchindas. This is an indication that where they were settled food shortage was an occurrence that they had to devise means to keep the palace alive and sustainable. The practice of taking foodstuff, big catch from hunting expeditions and prized

food from the harvest, to the palace still continues till date as I experienced while on the field.

However, when he later got to the palace, he sent one Nchinda, to the Fon who did not transmit his message. He rather came back and told him to go away and that the Fon said he should do what so ever he feels that he could do. Since this notable was the person leading the people in times of war, he got angry about the situation and decided he would no longer stay with them. This shows that access to the Fon is limited and there is the possibility of breakage in the transmission of information to and from the Fon. At times the Nchenterh would take advantage of this situation for their personal gratification. I experienced that some of the gifts (especially money) meant for the Fon never got to him in their entirety. This scenario is possible because according to traditional customs of the people of the grassfields, one cannot give anything to the Fon directly. It goes always through Nchenterh and because of the control mechanism to keep his divine nature lots of misunderstanding occurs which could lead to grave consequences.

This renowned notable therefore left the Papiakum people to settle among the Bamum where he was given a big farm and seven wives with houses and plenty of food. All these were in return for the Baba war strategy which the Bamum people had been trying to acquire for a long time in order to capture and dominate the Papiakum people or send them away to occupy more land for themselves. He later on sold out their secret by advising them that the only way to attack and defeat the Papiakum people was when the men had gone down to the farms leaving only nursing mothers and children at home. The Bamums therefore planned their attack accordingly and on this fateful day when the Papiakum people went to their farms as they would usually do, the Bamum warriors entered their settlement area at Koupa killing the women and children, burning down houses and taking some of the women and children captives to the Bamum settlement area.

Some of the men went back in search of their women and children while others took the Fon and moved westwards looking for where to settle without success. They then continued towards the Bamboutous Highlands and settled for a period of time in the Mbouda area at Mbapih and its environs. When they lost a number of people there, they left with the belief that the place was not conducive for them. So from there, they moved towards the Bamenda Highlands and tried settling around Bambili which was not easy because they had to fight for space with BaliKumbat. As a result of this, they lost a lot of Papiakum people and decided to migrate to Bafanji. At Bafanji, a Papiak Prince, Moh Ndzeran, was killed after a conflict which made them to leave for Bamunka.

While in Bamunka, they prepared themselves and went back to Bafanji to revenge the killing of the prince but telling the Bamunka people they were going to take a forgotten bag in Bafanji. When the Papiakum warriors got to Bafanji, before dawn they had taken bunches of palm nuts and tied them on dead-palms. On the following morning which was a market day; the Bafanji people gathered looking at the palm nuts on dead palm trees wondering about what could be happening that dead-palms were suddenly bearing palm nuts. The Papiakum warriors then took advantage of this situation and launched a surprising attack killing more than half of the population. They beheaded some important notables and took their heads and other palace belongings to Bamunka.

Back in Bamunka, when the Fon saw the number of heads they brought from Bafanji, he realised that the Papiakum people could be troublesome. He asked if these heads represented the bag that they had forgotten in Bafanji. Thereafter, he started negotiating with them in order to live in peaceful co-existence. The Fon of Bamunka decided that they

should make a peace agreement never to go to war taking an oath which they buried in the river bed of Bamunka. This meant that they became brothers and no one could attack each other and between them there was no boundary. Space soon became an issue again and since they had a peace agreement, the Papiakum people decided to go out of the area in search of a conducive and an unoccupied territory.

Led by Fue Shanghamangieh, they left and went towards Babungo and started war with the Babungo people in quest for land. They killed a lot of Babungo people in this struggle. The Babungo people however, killed an important Nchinda called Nyamamegah. The fighting pushed them up to Ngwingong where they thought they could settle but soon found out that it was very exposed to wind, neighbouring peoples like Babungo, Bamunka, Babessi and Bangolan. Taking all these into consideration, the Papiakum people returned once more to Bamunka after having located at the current site Vemngang which was hidden, beside water and protected from wind as it was surrounded by hills where a few of those who were in the quest for a new settlement were left. When the Papiakum people lost Fue Shanghamangieh (their Fon/leader) in a raffia bush upon their return to Bamunka, they took it as a bad omen and decided to leave and join the others left behind in Vemngang.

When Fue Nkanggaper was then enthroned as his successor (Fon), after some time the Papiakum people migrated to their present site taking along with them just the skull of Fue Shanghamangieh. They buried their Fon around Mbanka quarter. It was only after their settlement here that a group led by Moh Mbanka that had separated and gone towards Nso' when they left Rifum was sort after and brought back because he had one of the palace bags in his keeping. Always eager to expand their land further after having set up their socio-political unit, the palace and its court, they started off by stealing at the homes of Babessi people closed and forcing them to move away abandoning the land. At the farmland below where a palace farm house was built so that the Fon could live comfortably and cultivate the land, they fought away the Bangolan and Bambalang people who left for their various present villages giving the Baba people more land. They also pushed Babungo to where they are now thus creating new boundaries with the different neighbouring peoples. All these villages pushed out have quarters named after them, which are areas where their respective village borders had once been. Fue Shangamagia and Nkanggaper are hailed in oral traditions for their relentless spirits in the quest for independence as well as acclaimed and acknowledged as the founding fathers of the Papiakum people.

This oral tradition brings to light the workings of the community. I realised that this society is hierarchical and access to the Fon is limited and controlled to uphold the fact that he is not ordinary but divine. Due to this control, there is bound to be misunderstanding and misinterpretation if care is not taken that could cause enormous tension if not handled properly and on time. The story also reveals that the people at some point in time experienced some sort of famine and had to device ways to keep the palace running. It further goes to show that there were tensions all the time amongst the different ethnic groups wherever they settled and the stronger group would always want to usurp powers from the weaker group. Thus developing defence mechanisms to keep the 'others' at arm's length was very crucial to maintain control over people and land. Land was and still remains one of the highly sort after natural resources in most Grassfield areas. It is also the most disputed commodity among the Grasslanders. Its quest has led to many farmer-grazer conflicts, interethnic skirmishes and the migration histories of the different peoples, some of which were peaceful and others brutal as lives were lost.

3.3 The Socio-Political Economy of the Papiakum People

Indigenous African knowledge systems have, for a very long time, suffered from Eurocentric biases. The Papiakum people have an eight day week calendar. Menteh, is a 'small country Sunday', a day of obligation dedicated for cleaning around the house and was also a market day before, that is no more the case now. No burial or death celebration takes place on this day. However, on this day, the Tindafue (Senior Nchenterh), Ngwifue (Fon's wives) and Princesses meet parallel. The Tindafue, are those working closely with the Fue, Fon, taking care of the royal insignias, serving as palace regulators and they are the ones to settle disputes among the Ngwifue. That's why they work simultaneously with them so that if there is any case they can trash it at once or look further to resolve in consequent meetings. The Tindafue meeting place is in Nda Nterh Pie (meeting house of royal page) while the women meet at any chosen spot within their quarters, either at Feumendzem, to the north or Mbandze, to the south of the Nda Mo'o, meeting house/hall to discuss on their general wellbeing; Funteh is the main market day. At the market square, all and sundry meet within this symbolic performing art space where lots of other social activities apart from buying and selling take place like courting, exchange of information and gifts amongst others.

Mbeh is the day the traditional council, Junior Nchenterh and Manjong, age groups, hold their meetings. The traditional council hold their meeting in Nda Mo'o while the Nchenterh in Nda Nterh Pie (house of royal servants) and Manjong in their different meeting places at the quarters. The traditional council handles all cases except those linked to witchcraft and poisoning. The Nchenterh which has limited access to the Ntoh are schooled on this day by a Tindafue; Sap is the main country Sunday where no use of either hoes/cutlasses is allowed. This is the day all the different Mwarngang or Ngomba meet at Ntoh Mwarngang. The highlight at this meeting is the handling of the cases concerning witch craft and poisoning and the Fon must be present for any verdict to be given. It was observed that during this day in the village, places are generally quiet even though most people are at home. No burial or any form of celebration takes place on this day; Ntatie another Mwarngang, Meniyah (meeting of the Big Men or main decision makers) at Ntoh Mwarngang. They are usually seven members with the Fue and a junior Nchenterh who stay outside but are only called in if there is an errand to be run; Kemleh meeting day at Ngirri, of the esoteric society of the royal family made of Pier (Princes); Ntengieh another Mwarngang, Mensueshi meet at Ntoh Mwarngang. This group of able bodied young men take care of the difficult missions and their activities are nocturnal, which could be violent and Gham is the meeting of Pier, princes who have moved and settled out of the palace as heads of compounds. These however, do not include the brothers of the current Fue, on the throne, because their main libation ground is at the palace, Ntoh. Most of these meetings take place from 3-6pm after other activities of the day with the exception of Ntengieh whose meeting time is much later.

This is a demonstration of how structured this society is with different organs put in place for management and control. Though the Fons are auxiliaries to the state, they are given their due respect as they are the managers of the people at the grass root level. For instance, the land constitutional board is made of the Divisional Officer (DO), Fon, Surveyors and two other members from the community. Therefore, though the Fon is answerable to the DO as per state hierarchy, the DO cannot unilaterally take decisions about the people without consulting the Fon. This oversight could lead to great tensions as I experienced in a case where the DO went ahead to plant pillars on a piece of land without consulting the Fon. As my research partners will reiterate, the state is the state and tradition is tradition. The different structures work hand in glove for the enhancement of the society.

If the main market day is Tuesday the next will be on Wednesday. I noticed that when these fall on a Saturday or Sunday, the activities were more vibrant and the turn out of the populace bigger. Traders also came in from neighbouring villages and some as far off as Bamenda. The market square which lies below the ring road serves an arena for health and political campaigns. There two health centres, one owned by the state and the other by the Catholic mission who were the first to open a primary school in Baba I in 1947. Today the numbers of schools have increased significantly. My research partners who went to school in the village, and were mostly aged over 40, hold the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) School, Kengang with fond memories. The population form a religious web with Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (ATR).

3.4 Pulling the Tikar Strings

In making corrections and adding comments to Koelle's *Polyglotta Africana* on the Cameroons Highland, Chilver and Kaberry (1965:118) made references to Tessmann (1932) who had identified 'Koelle's Papiah with Baba, the Munggaka term for Papiakum. This is a small chiefdom fairly recently settled in the hills on the northern side of the Ndop Plain in the Bamenda Prefecture. It derives its dynasty from Papia, a submerged but once important chiefdom conquered by the Bamum'. From these sentences in reference to the Papiakum people there was definitely a contact point in their migratory history with the Bali Nyonga people. According to Chilver and Kaberry (1970:251) when Gawolbe was killed and his army defeated near Dschang, there was a split in the army. The section under the leadership of Nyongpasi, settled in western Bamum at Kuti also known as Kupare, establishing relations with the remaining independent chiefdoms of Bamum before being chased out by Mbwombwo of Bamum.

According to the above Papiakum oral tradition, Koupa where they settled could be the same place as Kupare which will therefore mean they came in contact with Nyongpasi's group who then referred to them as Papiah in Munggaka as noted by Chilver and Kaberry (1965:118). If this is the case, then there is no doubt that these people crossed paths or came in contact with each other. This had always been a point of curiosity for me since the first day I stepped my feet into Baba I listening to their language. When asked how and if they were related to Bali Nyonga, there was no clear answer apart from the fact that both palaces had had close relations that later turned sour. Interestingly, as informed, there is a quarter in Bali Nyonga called Papia. Getting into the naming of this quarter might give more information on their previous contact and relations.

According to Chilver and Kaberry (1967:23) 'Mbwembwe's attack on the substantial Bamum chiefdom of Papia led to the crossing of the River Nun by its unconquered portion, under the leadership of Shangamagia. From a vantage point across the Nun, near Bagam, his son Nkanggaper, after depositing his treasure in Nso launched a counter-attack against Bamum and failed. His following must have been considerable since part of it remained in Bali-Kumbat whereas the other after seeking refuge with Bamunka finally moved off to establish an independent chiefdom on a spur in the northern part of the Ndop Plain to the east of Babungo. From here in the face of severe Fulani raid c. 1850, a refugee group found its way to Kom where it founded the Mbeba clan. Despite its small size, its identity as a Bamum-speaking successor state with a military reputation gave it greater influence than its size would seem to warrant. With its neighbour, the kingdom of Nso, it had traditions of friendship dating from its period in Bamum when its chief Shangamagia had given refuge to Sembum I of Nso following the second sack of Kovifem'.

Intrigued by the unannounced visit of Fon Mbinglo I of Nso to Baba I while on the field in 2011 before the onset of the rains to the Nikwa shrine, more questions were asked. Nikwa is the main shrine in Baba I where major sacrifices are made like praying for fertility, good harvest and protection of the land during Mei'nyi, the major cultural festival. Going to Nikwa during Mei'nyi is one of the high points during this festival. The Fon of Nso had also come to make sacrifices before the rain to bless his land in this same shrine. The strings could not be pulled together then why Baba I though previously informed that both palaces had close ties and these two fondoms were brotherly princes from Rifum. Also among the wives of the Fons in the palace of Baba I, those from Bamum and Nso formed the highest number from other ethnic groups. Moh Mbanka, the chief priest of this shrine, had left the main group to settle somewhere close to Nso before being brought back to the fold when the Baba I people finally settled at their current site. The above text more clearly brings to light the type of relationship both groups entertained for Sembum I of Nso who had sought refuge with Mbwombwo of Bamum from mounted raiders from the north and was refused. He subsequently received assistance from the ruler of Papiakum who was himself later driven out by Mbwombwo. This ruler was Shanghamagia, the father of Nkanggaper, who became the founder of the successor state of Papiakum in the Ndop Plain, south of Nso', Chilver and Kaberry (1970: 254-255). This relationship between the Chiefdoms brings to mind Nkwi (1986:41-63) who maintains that there was in precolonial times a network of peaceful alliances and diplomatic ties among chiefdoms in the Grassfields. He elaborated on how the peoples of the western Grassfields were in daily communion with each other in the 19th century. They traded mutually, exchanged women, gifts and visits. These peaceful activities he explained were carried out against a background of competition, mutual distrust and open warfare. No Chief could therefore guarantee peace, harmony and protection to his subjects unless peace pacts with neighbours were signed.

According to Papiakum tradition, there had apparently been threats from Bamum to attack, conquer or chase them away due to the treatment given their warring lord. Maybe the Papiakum people were simply becoming a threat to the Bamums and they wanted them out. To have given assistance to Sembum I of Nso said much about the importance and military might of Shanghamagia's chiefdom of Papiakum, Chilver and Kaberry (1965:118 and 1967:21). Their need to remain an independent chiefdom explains to an extent why they rather moved away and eventually settled in the Ndop Plain instead of staying captives of Bamum.

This show of might is also brought out in their oral tradition through the wars and skirmishes in which the Papiakum people were involved in within the plain before settling at their present site. These wars and skirmishes also show that Papiakum was a late-comer in the plain and had to find the means of imposing itself amongst other groups that had long been settled. Chilver and Kaberry term Papiakum and Bali-Kumbad as 'intrusive groups' of the Ndop Plain. Njoya's *Histoire et coutumes de Bamum, Nso and Bali Nyonga traditions* is an excellent missive in the understanding of events prior to their current settlement. In a salient way, this display of military might is today done during major traditional festivals like Mei'nyi and Samba which brings all and sundry related to Papiakum home. Having and owning a gun is also seen as an essential element into the process of manhood amongst the Papiakum people. Guns in reference here are largely known as Dane guns whose origin is from Denmark. It must be noted here that Denmark has not been studied in Cameroon history as a European power that had influence in Cameroon before the Germans. Nkwi (1986) and Warnier (1980) narrated how these guns reached the heart of the Grassfields. The guns arrived in the Grassfields through the Bight of Biafra as a result of the slave trade and

legitimate trade. Nkwi (1986:117-118) sketches out the routes which these guns passed through to enter this region. Figure 3.6 shows guns on display during a celebration.



Figure 3.6: Showing off of guns while dancing, an attestation of belonging to a social class, during Fue Kemshi's 25th anniversary of ascension to the throne.

Source: Photo by Author

Information on the exact number of rulers the Papiakum people have had before Shangamagia is lacking. However, from Shangamagia, the genealogy is recounted according to the Papiakum tradition though without dates. There are a few hints as to the chronology of when some of these events might have taken place acknowledging though the limitation of her sources. Some of these events tie with the Papiakum traditions while others do not either by deliberate omission or due to a lack of emphasis that have gradually eroded them. Nonetheless, Chilver (1981:464-472) brings us closer in time frame to follow some key events. In the 18th Century, Papiakum and Pati were in central Bamum. Mbwembwe of Bamum ascended the throne c. 1820-1825. Shangamagia granted refuge to Sembum I of Nso c. 1825-1830. Mbwembwe raided the surrounding chiefdoms like Papiakum c. 1830-1835. An unsuccessful revenge attack was launched by Nkanggaper. Nkemshi succeeded Nkanggaper and Papiakum was raided forcing Kemshi to take refuge in Nso before settling on Nso-Oku foothills c.1850-1880. During Zintgraff's passage through the Ndop Plain in 1889, Kemshi III was still on the throne. Menkaki who was very unpopular ascended the throne after Kemshi. Thereafter, it has been Nkanggaper III, Shangamagia IV and presently Kemshi IV who was enthroned in 1989, Muafue-Mbarem (2012:69).

This list if established might go a long way to also indicate clearly where there are pockets of Papiakum people which the oral tradition leaves out and maybe reasons why they are where they are. Those in Bamum, Bali-Kumbad and Kom for instance, could bring us closer to a concise ethno-history of Papiakum. Kaberry (1962:288) and Chilver and Kaberry (1967:23) mentioned some treaties of friendship held by some of these groups. A critical look into long established friendship treaties could be another important source of information as some are today maintained while others have turned sour. There is an umbrella association of the North West Fons, NOWEFO which meet annually rotationally in the various palaces. Also there is that of the thirteen Fons of Ngoketunjia. They meet monthly rotationally in the various palaces. It was also observed that during conflict situations arising from misunderstanding between two Fons, a meeting is called up and the current chair is the Fon of Bamunka.

3.5 Succession Process

Baba I is not very different from the other Grassfield fondoms as mentioned earlier with 'a sacred kingship, a distinction between royals, commoners, tributaries and slaves, certain titles reserved for princes and princesses, constituted privy councils, a closed regulatory society, and , lastly, princes' fraternities – only indirectly political. The Ntoh remains the focal point of religious and ceremonial life and the headquarters of the principal association', (Kaberry 1962:286).

Succession to the throne is patrilineal with all the sons of the Fon gotten after succeeding the throne eligible. The mother however must be of Papiakum parentage. This has been the case though the palace has a history of marrying wives from friendly fondoms as well as elsewhere. At the family level, sons will mostly succeed their fathers. There is no strict rule on how the successor is chosen amongst a man's son. Where they are no sons, a daughter takes charge and will eventually be inherited by her son. This daughter is not married off whether a lone child or chosen amongst the daughters but expected to bear children who will be considered as her siblings.

This brings to mind the story of Anastasia, a lone child of her parent. She is a mother of seven (five girls and two boys) and had this to say about her peculiar situation. 'I'm a lone child of my parents. I did not get married. According to Baba tradition if your father marries a wife and you are an only child, a girl, you will not be given out for marriage. To clear this according to tradition, they have to go back and pay the dowry where they were supposed to. According to traditional customs, being an only girl child, dowry had to be given to my mother's compound because it is their first food' (Anastasia, personal communication, April 15, 2011).

Following the Papiakum customs she was married off to her father in a sense as he paid her bride price to the mother's family. In her case her mother actually did make provision for this symbolic marriage to take place as her father had passed away. This is to ensure the continuity of her father's name since all her children will be considered her siblings and the man who fathered them can lay no claim on them. Taking about her current situation she said, 'I am the only one managing with them (her children) because the man I begged the children from died in a motor accident. For me I don't know how to be jumping around and not especially now that there is illness outside'. Since she has this status of a female lone child, she controls and manages all her father's land and these properties are seen and considered as hers. Eventually, all these properties will be handed over to her two sons (brothers) and one of them will become the successor of her father. For the time being everyone knows they are her properties and she has no problem thus far concerning land. In a way the society sees her as a man as the circumstances of her life condition has positioned her within men's sphere of dominance and control (Anastasia, personal communication, April 15, 2011).

While on the field, I witnessed a number of family feuds caused by succession process. For some families the member even broke away from their main family settlement area to an entirely new site. Others, siblings barely tolerated each other and could be very casual in their relations as if they were not related at all. There were a few cases of women who either returned to their father's compound or negotiated and got land to construct on a neutral land where they settled with or without their children. These contestations were not reserved only for polygamous homes/families but for all.

The above historical background goes to confirm that the Papiakum are a mobile people. This mobility did not however stop when they gained a permanent settlement on the

Ndop Plain. After the Papiakum adopted a site for their final settlement, Baba I, after wandering, the people continue to witness waves of migration to different parts of Cameroon and beyond for various reasons amongst which were: Trade and Education. Through these different means their migration and mobilities with materiality would connect them to the other peoples of the Grassfields of Cameroon. This will elucidate how these different modes of migration/mobility influence the material culture of the people.

3.6 Papiakum in Trade and Trade Routes in the Grassfields

Nkwi (1986:112) outlined the different types of trade that characterised the West African markets and sited the two that took place in the western Grassfields as the relay and network trade. The relay trade was made up of several traders who passed on their goods through a chain of person till it reached its final destination or a single merchant exchanging his goods along a designated trade route. The relay trade consisted of a number of traders who worked as middlemen in the distribution of a specific scarce commodity such as salt, cloths and guns from the northern markets or Hausa traders. The network trade on the other hand was operated by merchants who controlled the supply chain of goods from its acquisition to its final deposition. Here the patrons had keen interest and monopoly over certain goods. Both relay and network trade covered long distances and demands at terminal units.

Trading took the Papiakum people to Nigeria. The people of Baba I like other peoples of the Grassfields were not spared of the trading activities that were taking place in the middle of the 19th Century where there were already specialised production and trade centres linking various peoples. Citing Warnier 1975, Nkwi continued to elaborate on the different trade routes and alliances formed in the Grassfields between chiefdoms to maintain their hegemony over smaller or weaker chiefdoms. These trade routes were usually means through 'which commercial, religious and cultural contacts were established.

Trade networks were formed with the Fon and notables acting as patrons who had young bodily able men who either served as carriers or distributors in the supply chain. From Baba I, carrier boys moved their merchandise to Nigeria via Nso or Oku which was an established trade centre or from Nigeria via Nso to Baba I. These traders and their carrier boys eventually created connections and friendships in the trade centres or terminal points where some Papiakum people would finally settle. These persons on their part will develop networks which will serve their people during their trade activities. For these migrants, their new found home would serve as new terminals or stopovers for those coming from home. Those who had settled outside depended on the mobile traders to maintain their communication and connection between those left behind and at home. Special friendship bonds were therefore created, nurtured and sustained through various means to maintain connection with those at home as Nkwi (2011) recounts among the Kom people of the grassfield.

Women like Rose Namanyi 'Big Mami' were used for example to maintain these friendship ties as they were ferried away to marry men who had settled in far away land. Big Mami, as she is fondly called, was one of the privileged princesses of the Baba 1 palace to have had the opportunity to attend the Native Authority School in Ndop in the 1940s. She was actually the first grandchild of Fue Kanhapere, the grandfather to the current Fon, Fue Kemshi II. As she narrated, she had come home from Ndop to ask for Empire Day uniform but was instead whisked off for marriage to a man the Fon had promised a wife. After spending just 2 years at the Native Authority school she was ferried to an unknown land, Mamfe, at the tender age of 14 on board a council lorry that was on its way to Lagos for the

Chiefs meeting to a man she hardly knew anything about. Entering a lorry for the first time to embark on this life changing journey, she never even knew she was actually being escorted to marriage by her uncle, Moh Fessame until they got to their destination in November 1947 as she was just following the instruction from the Fon. In Mamfe, a neighbouring town on the Cameroonian Nigerian borders, Big Mami was sent off by Peter Mallama, her prospective husband, to stay at the mission in Okonyong with Reverend Sisters to learn the Catholic doctrine for baptism and later on marriage in 1948. After much resistance in a foreign land she knew not she finally caved in to the consummation of their marriage and had to learn to be an officer's wife. Their first child, Joakim was born in 1950.

According to Fue Kemshi IV, Moh Fessame and Moh Kong the different trading activities saw the coming of new goods: cigarettes, Dane guns, gun powder, cloth (ndop cloth, loin cloth and fairly used clothes or second hand clothes), shoes, cars, zinc, nails and household utensils) and services (labourers like builders and carpenters) that will gradually change the landscape of the place. The above research partners (Fue Kemshi IV, Moh Fessame and Moh Kong) are successors of their fathers who were key persons or patrons in the Baba I trade routes. Unfortunately it was noted during field work that all the lead persons within the Papiakum trade routes had passed on. Fue Kemshi IV noted that the first car (lorry) into the village was bought by Moh Nisome and the second by Moh Fessame. This lorry was called 'nzebomeiyini' (this world is for God). In concordance with Fue Kemshi IV, Moh Fessame will proudly inform me in his Kumba residence how his father was the first person in Baba I to construct a stone house roofed with zinc. Moh Kong will emphasise how he is jealously keeping the set of wooden chairs on display in the sitting room in the village. One of my informants (Yoyo) would even be named after one of these material objects brought back. Yoyo narrated how in the late 1940s when the fabric which later became known as Yoyo was in vogue amongst the women in Baba I from Nigeria, a princess (his mother) gave birth and declared her son to be her Yoyo as she could not afford this piece of cloth. This go to indicate that people either got nicknames from the goods they were supplying or children were actually named after ostentatious goods just like Yoyo.

It is worth noting that these patrons refused their children to part take in the trade activities as carriers but recruited and employed other young able men. Fue Kemshi IV talked of how he went on an adventure with a group of carriers without prior knowledge of his father. There was an embargo on young princes not to follow the trade caravan. Two of his friends joined him for the expedition to Nigeria through Oku following a group of young carriers at the age of 17. As they set out for the journey they just their food (garri and koli-koli-dried groundnut paste shaped and baked in forms of little sticks) and depended on wild fruits spring water as well. He says, 'we had to use our 'Dschang (rubber) shoes' as bowls to soak our garri to eat with our fingers'. He describes how after two days of trekking they started regretting their decision as they realised it was a journey of over a 1000km. Since the trio could not return either they were encouraged by the senior carriers to preserve. On the return lag they were each given a load to carry which they could not manage midway. These were taken and they had only their personal stuff they had bought (biscuit, red savon (tablets of washing soap) and 7/60, a popular antibiotic medication). Though he could not carry much he was glad for the opportunity which has remained a great source of inspiration for him as he ascended the throne and continued trading.

Upon return, he had to face the wrath of his father who had warned that none of them should participate in the treacherous journey. He made sure he stayed away from the gaze of his father for a long time after he returned. By staying from his father whom he had

disobeyed goes to confirm what Nkwi (2011:47) noted among the Kom people that it was 'certain merchants do not take their children own for short or long distance trade'. During this period he stayed with one of his elder brothers down towards the market square and only returned to the palace when he deemed it was safe. He continues that amongst their peers they treated as little heroes for braving the hazardous trip. Not long this he moved entirely out of the palace and got a room around the market where he stayed until he was rounded up and brought back into the palace as successor to the throne.

However, from the carriers who undertook these trip they eventually recruited young boys who learnt the trade by following along. This likely gave rise to the boy-boy relationship still being practiced among patrons and their apprentices. This practice is not limited only to the traders but also to other spheres of life in the society where young boys went into training like Nchindas in the palace. Interestingly this is not unique to the Grassfields nor to Africa as Vickerstaff (2007) pointed out in her article as she looked on apprenticeships and youth transitions more widely by reflecting back upon the historical experience of the apprenticeship model in Great Britain between 1944–1982. Her discussion focused upon the socialisation aspects of apprenticeship and concluded that a key feature of good apprenticeships in the post-war period was that they offered a sheltered and extended period in which the young person was able to grow up and become job-ready.

3.7 Education

Trading also provoked another wave of migration, this time geared towards education. Before 1950, there was hardly any school in this area. The nearest place where people could go to school was to the coastal region of Cameroon or neighbouring Nigeria. Due to established connections the later was preferred as the choice place to pursue education. Nkwi (2011) states how the first school to standard six was created by 1928 making Kom an educational centre for the region. He will show how the people from Kom got their education from Nigeria and returned as professionals in fields like photography, secretaries, Nurses, Teachers etc. By this time schools were being opened by the colonial administrators and missionaries in the Grassfields region. The location of these schools also caused another wave of internal migration of a certain class of people. This would continue until after independent when the distances covered by young men especially interested in formal education was reduced.

However as most of my informants (Mama, Ma Rose, Magdalene, Sylvester, Victor and Yoyo) would recount, it was only in the 70s that Baba I got its first primary school established by the Catholic missionaries. This implies that before this time, the Papiakum people who had been exposed to schools through trade could only go or send their children to distant villages like Kumbo and Bamuka, Ndop for 'whiteman education'. Nso and Ndop represented the centres of formal education closest where both primary and secondary schools had been created. In this part of the Grassfields the creation of mission schools preceded that of the colonial administration.

Education pursuit therefore kept this population mobile because most of my informants who had attempted secondary education and above had to go to other centres. There, they either stayed with relatives or friends of their parents depending on the established connection previously made especially through trade routes. As the number of young men especially in pursuit of education increased as well as the creation of more schools by the government after independent, other means of accommodation had to be sorted. Kumbo, Ndop, Bambui, Bamenda and Mbangwi were the major educational centres for most of my informants. In these areas there were also possibilities of renting in private

home as few of the schools had hostel facilities which were even limited in number.

For the women, migration for education purpose was a very slow process. Ma Rose recounts how very few of them were permitted to attend the Native Authority (NA) school in Ndop which was the closest. She insisted marriage was the primordial thing that took young girls away from home. Their education most often than not ended at the elementary stage, primary school, if they were lucky to finished. Most often than not as was with her case, she was ferried off to the border town of Ekok for an arranged marriage between her father and his friend.

3.7.1 University/Professional Training

For those who wanted to continue with their university studies or other professional training after Secondary or High School were obliged to travel to other parts of the country. Before 1992, there was just one state owned university in the country and was also the lone university situated in the political capital of Cameroon, Yaounde. So the young people from Baba I who could not travel out of the country migrated to Yaounde to continue with their studies as well as other professional schools that was mostly located in this part of the country. After these training and courses, there was the gradual development of another social class of people known as civil servants like service men and teachers. These persons were posted to work in different parts of the country where they settled and started their families. For most of these families they had other relatives coming to stay with them either to seek for petite jobs or continue their education. For most of these Papiakum people like the other peoples of the Grassfields, their houses or homes became like some sort of centres of recruitment or served as springboards for others to establish themselves out there.

These families who settled outside also gave birth to another class of migrants. Their children were exposed to other opportunities different from those born at home. De Bruijn (2014) deals with one of the concrete examples from Baba I. She tracks the activities of one of such families from Baba I showing how their tentacles eventually spread at home and abroad but they stayed connected virtually mostly through mobile phones. Most of my research partners had similar experiences with their family members spread out across the country and abroad. There is hardly any family that is not affected as such.

3.8 ‘Greener Pastures’

Stories of those who had settled or working out and were doing well fairly well in their new occupations filtered back to the village. These feedbacks came from those who had visited them or from the material objects they themselves brought home or sent. These therefore made these new places attractive for the young people who wanted to travel. These places apparently were greener pastures as they believed where they could search for better and brighter future. This migration tendency gave rise to the bushfalling metaphor propagated by Nyamnjuh (2009) and later followed up by Alpes (2012) and Atekmangoh (2017). These authors actually placed their focus on Bushfallers outside the country. A concept which I have however here expanded to include urban centres in Cameroon based on empirical evidences from the field. The drive remained same whether at home or abroad for these Papiakum young people leaving home in search of greener pastures. Two motives stood out distinctively, education and trade, which cumulated into seeking for greener pastures. As Nyamnjuh (2009), Alpes (2012) and Atekmangoh (2017) would argue the home village remain the place to return at the end of the day, with a smile on the face or with sadness. This wish or action illustrate the emotional attachment these persons have with home. To ensure and insure means investing in one's home village materially and through

relationships. Landed investments stand out as the strongest physical evidence which have gone a long way to affect access to land of the Papiakum.

3.9 Conclusion

The Tikar origin of the Papiakum people who had a late entry onto the Ndop plain has been established through the various writers of the Grassfields. Through their migratory history they came in contact with the Bamum, Nso and Bamunka groups before their final settlement. This however did not stop their mobility for like most of the other ethnic groups in the Grassfields; they actively participated in the trading activities that were taking place in this part of the country. By their participation in these trading routes, the community started experiencing social changes brought about by the traders. In concordance with Nkwi (2011) these traders returned home with new ideas and things that will gradually usher changes which were accelerated with the coming of church and schools.

Mami Magdalene Fanwi Dzefemewoh's story will be used to connect the discussion of this chapter to the key themes of this study: the relation between mobility, material culture and access to land. As De Bruijn and Van Dijk (2003) posit, in mobility people go along and around with different baggage, known and unknown. This baggage is seen here as the material culture which is tangible and intangible which are valued and revaluated during the course of their journey in relation in connection with people. Their actions which have visual dimensions will illustrate how people are engaged in producing visible objects, reflexively constructing their visual environment and communicating by visual means. These visual worlds reflect different ways of seeing and appreciating persons within their community. As Zittoun (2015) notes that social relations unfold between people, in specific societies yet these social relations are never immediate, or naked and they appear as always mediated. In effect, people's relationships are made through exchanges of words and objects, filtered by beliefs and expectations. Objects are therefore rarely inert; not only do most objects experience peripatetic lives before arriving at a destination, many kinds of objects continue to be moved, repositioned, or displaced throughout their existence. One might go so far as to say that mobility is an inherent property, or even a defining element, of material culture.

Mami Magdalene Fanwi Dzefemewoh (chairperson of Parish Council, St Mark Quasi Parish) was born in Baba I opposite the catholic school. At the age of seven she went across the street to the lone school in 1955. By then Catholic Primary School ended at Standard 4. She had to leave home to stay with her father's Godfather at Babanki Tungo where she completed her primary studies in 1962 successfully earning a standard six certificate. Her father's follower, Pa Patrick Meto, who had done his study in Nigeria, took her to Onitsha. Her educational path therefore took her away from home through the following itinerary; Babanki Tungo for two years to complete her primary school, Onitsha – Nigerian for the first year of her Secondary School and Okoyong – Mamfe the last four years at secondary school. Unlike Mami Rose Mallam whose education was abruptly ended, she was the only female in Baba I above 55 whose education was not interrupted for marriage until the end and actually started working. As Martin (2004) posits the mobility of women affects the roles of both female and male migrants, families left behind in the migration process, and source and destination communities and countries of migrants. This could explain the reaction from her family members against her going to school and her role in sponsoring her siblings.

Through her educational path, one experienced physical and social mobility. The fact that she schooled outside meant also her perspective of how she viewed things were different. She insisted to her husband for instance that they should build a house after they got married to avoid any inconveniences. For her, her husband and she were in a social class given their education that they had to leave their imprints within their community. Even though this couple had spent a good number of years out of the village for educational purpose, Magdalene did not forget about the material indicator of one's' belonging on the Papiakum landscape. By convincing her husband for them to construct a big house, she was sort of sparing him from the ridicule he might have received from his peers and society at large. It is interesting to note the type of house she wanted, a big house (Figure 3.7). I will argue due to her travel and education, her mentality of what a house should be was different. She did not just want them to have just a roof over their, 'a kitchen not a house' as proposed by her husband but a spacious house at a time that it was not a common sight.



Figure 3.7: Mami Magdalene Fanwi's home at Mbanka Quarter Baba I

Source: Photo by Author

Her story takes us back to the Papiakum trading route to Nigeria. By being recognized by traders at the Onitsha market confirms that this community being a mobile society had a lot of movement of people and goods. This means that the society was introduced to new goods at various points in time by these traders. This goes to corroborate the story of Yoyo's being named after a trending cloth at the time. The movement of these things into the society is reassessed. As they are being reassessed so too does it affect the socio- cultural and political hierarchy of the community. This brings to mind Kopytoff (1986) on how objects go through different phases of valuations as they change context. Through these traders, building materials and other household equipment started slipping into the community and thus gradually changing their perspective on houses. The type of building material used in these houses created a sort of social class. Looking at the objects as such connectivity is established as the consequences of contact is reflected in the society. As Hahn and Weiss (2013) will point out 'it is not always use value, but in some moments of an object's life also a mnemonic value or a personal value, which is attached to the object. Whereas the new object may appear on someone's horizon as a commodity with a fixed or negotiable price, in later stages of the biography there may be moments when the very same object becomes an unalienable personal object'.

As a career woman she did not lost touch with home as she travelled to her different posts. She started off with the council in Ndop, Bamenda and then to Kumba after marriage.

While in Kumba she joined the Department of Agriculture working with the community development section. Then back to Bamenda from Kumba, to Ndop and Bamenda where she went on retirement. During this period she was a pillar for her siblings and parents as she assisted in their education and upkeep. She pointed out that it is very important for a girl child to go to school 'before even getting married because they will help the husband, and help the family and the children more than any other person'. This is seen clearly in the way she managed her family after the death of her husband after barely 12 years of marriage. Through her career she experienced physical mobility by her different postings as well as social mobility via marriage and her obligations towards her family. The community also held her in high esteem and I met her as the chair person of the parish council. From her dressing and the way she carried herself it could be immediately observed that she had been a career woman who worked and lived outside the village for a long time.

Building at home was something she was very conscious of when she got married. She was aware of its social implication for her husband who had lived most of his life abroad. Without a house of theirs in the village the husband would have lost respect among his kin and friends. His time abroad and professional career would have been considered useless without a roof over their head. The act of encouraging her husband to construct something at home qualifies her as a good woman within the Papiakum philosophy. This would be re-emphasised when she built this new house and moved in after her retirement. Though she is the brain behind it, the house will always be termed her husband's.

Looking closely at Mami Magdalene's story within the Papiakum context the fact that objects are not static, neither are their users and viewers is reiterated. According to Edwards (2010: 153). The three-dimensionality of objects enhances this effect. Objects have different sides and may have multiple parts and interiors as well as exteriors. Even when an object is stationary in a museum, a visitor may walk around it and perceive it from different perspectives, and it may change its meaning in juxtaposition with nearby objects that slide in and out of view. Mobile viewers and users thus have access to different interpretations of a single object, challenging the tendency to privilege a particular viewpoint. The manner in which she engaged in the construction of her house brought out the different views of the society on persons and things. She was especially scrutinized for being a woman and widower. Having lived outside due to her educational and career she definitely had a different perspective of viewing and appreciating things.

Mami Magdalene's story goes further to show that making a home often involves large amounts of 'symbolic labour' expended on the house over a lengthy period of time. Thus investing in a home is not just an idea or a space but an active cultural process in which home-making practices are all those by means of which dwellers ground personal and social meanings in the new residence Ariztia (2012). She like most of the researchers took pride in their houses. Investing in these infrastructures could not be made possible without the access to land. Land therefore becomes a crucial element that will be delved into in the next chapter. This will go to elucidate further how the mobility and investments of these urbanites are constantly affecting the socio-cultural fabrics and hierarchies of their community.