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

Tegomoh Ngwaelung, E.

5. Mobility as Vector in Atesting Belonging at Home Community

5.1 Introduction

The culture and philosophy of a people are sometimes better understood through an examination of their existing mindset. There is, indeed, abundant literature to show that one thing may be perceived much differently based on differences in the philosophical underpinnings of various societies. Here, I examine what it takes to imprint into the mindset of the ordinary people what should be done that will serve as a sign post to be counted as belonging to the home soil or the village. How membership in this community is gained, maintained or lost in their mobility is the kernel of this chapter. Through their itinerary of mobility I will elucidate how the urbanites strive to enact their sense of belonging. This chapter therefore also handles the core questions on mobility focusing on the ligature on migration and mobility. The history of mobility from and in Papiakum in relation to literatures on the Grassfields will be further delved into. Through this I will elaborate on the dire need of most migrants to remain connected with those left behind in their various mobilities.

Mobility and belonging which are intrinsically interwoven will be seen in relation to investments and changes in the socio-cultural and political sphere. This will open up the vein on the discussion on sons and daughters of Baba I, their connections in belonging and how they merge rural-urban knowledge. At the urban centre what they do to stay connected will be brought to light through the formation of elite association. How these urbanites engage in the process of gaining and/or maintaining identity and losing and/or loss identity in their mobilities will be elucidated through empirical examples. By so doing I will be answering the questions on the necessity for migration and mobility and what new mobility patterns from and to the Grassfields in Cameroon as well as looking into the impacts of mobility on the community in relation to the hierarchies.

This is studied through case studies of certain individuals whose activities, achievements or contributions have stood out as important landmarks that personify the prevailing philosophy of the Papiakum people. This chapter has been structured into seven parts to deal with the mobilities of persons in the process of attesting one's belonging and to the rejection of a person as not belonging to the community. Mbare's life history opens up the veins of our discussions. Excerpts from a very long and engaging interview with him will be used expressively for his voice to be heard and appreciated in the course of this chapter. The rest of the chapter is structured as follows: Mobility from and in Baba I; Sons and Daughters of Baba I; Connections in Belonging; Merging Rural-Urban Knowledge; The Formation of an Elite Association; Gaining and/or Maintaining Identity and Losing and/or Loss Identity.

> Mbare
>
> 'It is advisable that before anyone leaves town for the village, he should prepare himself very well, especially at retirement, because in this way, you will know how to manage your farms and home when you are back in the village. As such, you would not have to be a parasite on other people' (I. Mbare, personal communication, June 23, 2011).

Mbare was born and bred partly in Nkongsamba in the Littoral Region of Cameroon in 1965 where his father, Yokyuh Awudou, had moved to settle after retiring from his business trips to Nigeria with his brothers. His father after some years got into misfortune with his

businesses and life became very difficult for the family. He had to return home with his family but for Mbare who stayed behind to continue with his education in the French system that was drawing to an end at the primary level. His father relied so much on his brothers who were managing his investments in the village. Upon his return, he realised that his brothers had misappropriated all he had. This meant that as a mature man with two wives, he had to return to his father's compound. Coping in the village was very difficult for his family and Mbare's father had been turned into a laughing stock. After losing one of his daughters blamed on witchcraft organized by Mbare's uncle and aunt, his father started contemplating on returning to Nkongsamba to start life afresh. Through Mbare mother's persuasion, the family moved to Bamali and settled with a maternal aunt who was married there.

While in Bamali, Mbare joined them. He narrates his experiences: 'Out of loneliness. I was not feeling fine and I had to leave Nkongsamba where I lived with strangers back to my roots, and where I could find out what to do with my life. It is unfortunate that when we came back, we did not settle in the village, but I learnt a lot, even from the neighbouring village'(Mbare, 2011). He successfully completed his primary education in Bamali which was not easy as he had to switch over from the French to the English system of education. As any young boy then, he had the dream to continue his education and had made mental selection of the college he would like to attend but as he said,

> 'my family was poor and I did not see any possibility of continuing with my education as I had no helper. The housing issue too was a burden on me. I also tried to set up some two little huts. The first one had a mistake being my first attempt. However, I did not destroy it. I simply looked for another space and set up a bigger structure which now had a larger parlour. In my life, I have always hated being challenged. If there is anything I see that I like, I always struggle to own mine rather than going about begging. So after the construction of the other hut, some friends came around congratulating me, saying I had done well and that pleased me that someone could appreciate what I had done' (I. Mbare, personal communication, June 23, 2011).

As a young man who had witnessed his father scorned and turned into a laughing stock, he was determined to turn things around for his family. His determination was fuelled by the fact that his family was not even settled in Baba I but was 'parasiting' in Bamali. He left home for the unknown 'in search of greener pastures' and his intention was that, when he makes some money, he would come back and set up a structure for Papa and Mami in the village. He had once met someone, Moh Nyifemebock, from Kumba in Ndop market and told him he will be visiting him and the man agreed not knowing he meant it. Kumba was going to be a completely new adventure for him as he did not know the man's full names, what he was doing and where he was staying. In Kumba, however, he successfully tracked him and he was lodged by this new family. He immediately went into hawking with interest into male accessories depending on the season and what was in vogue. Sun shades and watches have remained his main area of focus while other items come and go.

He was relentless in his efforts and worked hard to acquire the necessary funds to achieve his dream for his parents. He says,

> 'when I was finally ready, I asked them to go back and get a building land ready where I could eventually also build my house. Pa was not happy with the piece of land that was shown him, but I advised him to get any piece of land that will be shown him from the big compound and set up there as we were going to get a bigger and better land later. I'd told them that when the project gets to a certain level, I will come up myself as I was saving

> some money. I knew that the most important challenge was the roofing of the house, and when they told me it was time, I went up and bought the sticks and the zinc for the house and they moved into it. You know, when your own child does anything, you're the one who has done it. Now when people come to visit him and I'm there, he tells them: that is the man who built the house, and they turn and congratulate me. Even some of Pa's classmates who used to come and talk carelessly to him are beginning to adjust in the way they talk. You know that they used to talk that way because they did not know us as we were not often in the village, until the building project' (I. Mbare, personal communication, June 23, 2011).

He talked so passionately about this experience that impacted so much on his life and when I mentioned that I was surprised he wanted so much to go to Baba I, a place he did not know much about he continued. When asked how he intended to integrate his family back in the village, he was quick to respond:

> 'My wife is from Baba I. I speak the dialect with them (children), especially the bigger ones. But now that we are in a place where there are too many strangers and where children interact a lot, I have decided that during all holidays, they will be sent to the village so that they can learn to use the vernacular. Meanwhile, I also try to speak with them, and was also planning to talk about it in the meeting house so that the dialect would be the only means of communication in the meeting house. There are some children born of Baba I fathers but mothers of different villages and such children are more inclined to their mother's side. When these come here, we give them the opportunity to express themselves in English. They are even making an effort to speak. If we take it as our mode of communication in the meeting house, then many will be forced to follow. If I say something and you do not understand, you will be forced to ask your neighbour. When we draw the agenda for the meeting, I read it partially in English though I talk in the dialect. So, that is it... So I really respect the traditions and the values' (I. Mbare, personal communication, June 23, 2011).

Mbare story brings to light the different types of mobility (physical or geographical, social and virtual) of the Papiakum people. Their history and migratory route in the previous chapter clearly tells us the Papiakum are a mobile people being in concordance with the above life history. His family is one of those families where the parents had long settled out and they were all born out of the village but apparently never lost connection with home. As he narrates it, the father is an example of those traders mentioned in the previous chapter who finally settled out of the village, Nkongsamba but stayed connected with his family. Geographical mobility is a common practice as illustrated through life histories and their migratory route which De Bruijn (2014) pointed out in her study on the Cameroon Grassfields. Migration and mobility scholars in Africa and especially the Cameroon Grassfields have shown that trade/business, education, civil service are the push factors. Social and virtual mobility therefore explodes in the community through these urbanites who strive to stay in touch with their families and also through the material things they bring which inspires those at home to work hard to acquire them.

5.2 Mobility From and in Baba I

Little (1971) first pointed out how Africans in the urban centres live in a dual system whereby they strive through various ways to stay connected to home. This notion has since been expanded on by many African scholars on rural urban connections. From these studies was coined the concept of Bushfalling in Cameroon by Nyamnjoh (2002 and 2011) and propagated by others like Alpes (2012) and Atekmangoh (2017). Nkwi (2017) demonstrates how migrations in the Grassfields have rather stayed within the continent rather than the focus on north-south migration by IOM. Going back to the history and migratory route of

the Papiakum handled in the previous chapter, there are clear indications for the push-pull factors of migration/mobility from and within Papiakum group: quest for an autonomous chiefdom, agricultural land, trade, marriage, education, work itineraries and job opportunities. These are indexes to illustrating how mobility was part and parcel of this community. Mobility and belonging therefore are intrinsically interwoven within the Papiakum community of the Western Grassfields.

The quest for autonomy provoked their movement out of Rifum in the Tikar country in search land where they could settle and setup their own chiefdom as noted by Chilver and Kaberry (1967). Along their migratory route they engaged in cohabiting in several places with different people still they finally got to their current site. At their current site, they chose the upper part of the village to settle as a security strategy because skirmishes were still going on the Ndop plain as the different groups tried to expand and define their borders. When they finally settled on the plain in a place called their own, Baba I, the population engaged themselves fully in agriculture. This was done primary around the settlement area at the beginning before they started venturing further away for bigger farms. Farming was actually the first activity that pushed the people further afield. When subsistence farming led to cash crop, the people became even more mobile as they search for more land to expand on their farms. These farm lands had to be distributed following their tenure system as elaborated in the previous chapter. Farm houses were gradually built on the plain which constitutes the lower part of their village. An example of which was that of the Fon as seen on Fig 3.3. This was the primary factor for internal mobility and has stayed thus with large scale farms and the introduction of new cash crops and grazing activities. One interesting thing that I noticed was that almost all big celebrations took place in the upper part of the village. When I inquired, my research partners pointer to the fact that their 'big compounds' were all up and the farm area was just developing as new settlement areas. These were for family members who wanted or desired to move away from the main family cluster in search for more space. The upper part of the village where the palace is situated is considered the main settlement area of the village as people still have to move down to the plain on daily bases to their main farms. Agriculture also provokes seasonal mobility for workers, in and around, who come looking for jobs as well as social networks when groups go out to lend a hand on the farms of other persons. The produce from the farms were sold at the village market or on the farms especially when by land scale producers in the village or urbanites involved in agriculture at home.

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. Note should be taken that not all traders came to the market as some of the trading activities like moneylenders that took place at private homes. I also observed that a specific junction points in the various quarters in the evenings one could buy freshly harvested vegetables and other food stuff. This market arena later on expanded as the Papiakum people joined the other peoples of the Grassfields involved in long distant trade as elaborated by Nkwi and Warnier in Chapter Three. Like Nkwi (2011) who showed how Kom people created and recreated connection through their active or passive participation within trade routes so too it was among the Papiakum. Trading thus promoted and enhanced the physical/geographical and social mobility in the society. These methods of mobility were basically through messengers and carrier boys who represented their masters and thus ran errands for them. These errands carried out for their patrons eventually created another social class of persons within the community as concretely illustrated by Nkwi (2011) on the Kom people.

With the development of technologies and roads as detailed by Nkwi (2011) among the Kom people, many more Papiakum followed the trend and expanded their routes to other urban centres in the country. Their route to Nigeria still remains active though now there are other possibilities like through the Ekok road or via the sea from Tiko, Limbe or Ekondo Titi (all these routes in the coastal area of the South West region). Boy-boy concept still very much active today as young boys are still leaving the village for the urban centres to learn trade before engaging in theirs. As Moh Nkong will tell me hawking was the favourite holiday activity that made them leave the village for urban centres. He narrated how they started by going to Ndop to sell during the main market day and moved gradually to Bamenda where they depended on relatives and friends for lodging. He explained that their father, one of the renowned traders in the village was already tired and so they had to fend for themselves to pay their fees especially for those who were interested in schooling. Moh Fessame adds that some of them followed their elder brothers to Douala and did hawking there before eventually ending up there. Mbare's story above is also an explicit example of how young men moved away from home and gradually established themselves in the various urban centres but always with a permanent gaze towards home. Trading thus caused mobility from and within Baba I depending on the level of engagement.

Though the womenfolk is very much involve in agriculture and petite trade, marriage remains the strongest vector in their mobility. Marriage saw the physical moment of young girls to their new families as lay down by the norms of the Papiakum people. These marriages might have been via consent of the couple or through pre-arrangement of the parents to maintain their socio-political ties. No matter how these marriages were contracted it was and still to a great extent remains the single factor that propels the movement of the Papiakum womenfolk as well as those coming in from outside. This physical mobility is higher within the group and in the village than those going out or coming in from other ethnic groups. From Mbare's story we see that it was very important for him to point out that his wife came from Baba I and how they try to bring up their children according to their norms. Marriage nonetheless causes a spiral of social mobility as it primary binds families creating new socio-political statues. Though married, the women maintain a strong connection with their family through social and virtual mobility. The new families have to shift and move their resources to accommodate the new member coming in as they would do when it comes to the birth of new child into the family. Marriage alliances are some of the important vectors with the Papiakum to proof one's maturity that calls for a sense of respect and responsibility as my informants pointed out. It is a socio-cultural aspect that also stands out as a crucial index in attesting a person's belonging.

Education is one of those factors that have push migrants out of their countries to specific destinations due to the opportunities offered by those places. Using myself, the researcher, as an example who have travelled abroad severally, many of my research partners who now find themselves in different offices or have gone on retirement, the quest for better education and specific training to enhance career made people leave home for other places. When I look closely at the educational path of all my informant above forty I realised they moved around quite a bit since the first secondary school only got to Baba I in the early 80s. Yenwoh, Delegue, as he is popularly called explained how after his primary education sponsored mainly by his elder who was then a teacher at the Presbyterian primary school, he moved to Ndop and then continued to Bambili for high school. He then proceeded to Ecole Normale Superieure (ENS) in Yaounde after having completed the first cycle of teachers' training course at Ecole Normale Superieure (ENS) in Bambili. Yenwoh later pursued a degree at the lone University in Yaounde where he did the bilingual series

(French and English). Upon completion of his university degree, he travelled to France where he obtained a diploma in teaching French as a foreign language from the University of Besancon. After successful completion of his training as a teacher, he was first posted to Fontem in the South West Region which is about 203km from home, Baba I. This is however, the educational path of one of my civil servant research partners who like the others he told stayed connected to home 'if not how will I eat, pay my rents and fees or cloth myself'. Returning home to assist his parents with farm work on the rice fields and do holiday jobs on peoples farms was a normal practice for him and many others. He explains the situation further as follows; 'from secondary school the payment of fees was almost indirectly my responsibility because of the farming that one used to carry out in order to get money for the payment of the fees since my elder brothers salary was nothing to go by too at that stage'. This goes to proof that coming from a low income background most of them who were interested in pursuing their education for a career had to engage in raising funds. Before becoming the workers they dreamt of, they participated in various activities such as farming and trading.

By workers here I am referring to the civil servants. These categories of persons either came into or left Baba I for work. I observed that among civil servants, service men and teachers, top the chart of career path with the Papiakum people. Those within these professions are very mobile during their work itinerary as elucidated by De Bruijn (2014) study following one of such families in Baba I. In this article she illustrates how the family travelled around the country with the father who was a service man until his retirement when he returned home. I also observed a similar situation with Yoyo who was a civil service employee and travelled to several places around the country. He later retired to his home in Ndop as he joined politics to become a parliamentarian for Ngoketunjia. He visits the village very often as has a house there. For Yenwoh, when he completed his training as teacher he was first posted to Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Fontem. He continues that 'From Fontem I was transferred to Government High School (GHS) Batibo, where I was later on appointed as Senior Discipline Master in the very school. After four years in Batibo as Senior Discipline Master, I was now appointed as principal in Government Secondary School (GSS) Baba I then later appointed principal of Government High School (GHS) Baba1. From Baba I, I was appointed Divisional Delegate for Secondary Education for Ngoketunjia'. From Ndop, Divisional headquarters of Ngoketunjia, he ended up in Bamenda as the Regional Delegate for Secondary Education for the North West Region. He was one of those urbanites whose work itinerary brought him home for some time before going off again. There were a number of Papiakum teachers in the different schools around the village but a majority of teachers came from outside. He noted that though challenging, he was very happy to be made the pioneer principal for GHS Baba I. He had the opportunity to set up the place at a certain standard giving his gained experiences from the other places and to campaign for more Papiakum students to continue with their education though it was not easy. His appointment back home was very important period for him to give back to his own people and improve their lot. It was a period of service back to his community though he continued to pull resources in as delegate at both the divisional and regional levels. What I observed was that almost all the civil servants had constructed houses and their homes in the varied places of work served as spring boards for relatives who came to live with them.

The search for job opportunities took many young people out of the village to the urban centres to try their luck as a few of them told me. These either dropped out of school for lack of sponsorship or did not see the prospect for a job if they continued schooling.

Most of them followed their friends or went to join relatives or siblings who had earlier gone to the urban centres like the case of Moh Fessame and Lassa. In Douala, like in Yaounde and the other places they were involved in hawking in various items depending on the season. For instance, towards school reopening time they would get into accessories for pupils and students. What actually caught my attention in Douala was that many of them were involved in selling medication as ambulance pharmacies. Like Mbare many ended up with a line of trade on which they focused and could pull up resources to fulfil their dream of constructing in the village. Lesley is another example young person, who after completing his technical high school in Bamenda, had to work with a number of engineers and architects to gain some practical hands on experience. Then 'I left for Yaounde struggling to get myself into one of the higher institutions, like Public Works or National Polytechnic. Then it came to a moment when things could not go through and Mr Moh Charles took me as one of his general foremen in 2001'. He worked with him in different construction projects around Yaounde as well as undertook personal projects.

Along the way, Moh Charles decided to build something for himself in the village. When they came to the village for this project in 2007 and finished the project within two months he stayed on. His original idea was to return to Yaounde where he was living after the completion of the project that brought him home. However, this changed due to the demands he started getting from different urbanites who wanted him to manage their own projects in the village. I observed he was very busy with his construction projects. As a skilled worker, he became a major broker in the transformation process of architectural landscape in Baba I. Lesley exposed the varied forms of mobility as he was constantly on the phone, moving around to get his building material on site or discussing with community members of high social statues including the Fon as he carried out their projects. The different job opportunities he had coming home moved him up the social ladder. Mbare, Lesley and others cited here who had left home highlight the intricacy of mobility and belonging among the Papiakum.

Being known and seen as a Papiakum man is crucial for Mbare and he worked hard to stay associated with the Baba I urbanites in Kumba while his family and himself were implanting their roots back in the village especially as he has constructed a second home for the family in the village. Second home ownership according to Jaakson,(1986); Williams & Kaltenborn, (1999), can also be interpreted as a step 'back to nature' with some people adapting the surrounding of the second home to the nature of their imagination, while others move towards an idealised simple rustic lifestyle in which rurality becomes extremely important (Jaakson,1986; Geipel, 1989; Löfgren, 1999; Müller, 2002 d; Hall & Page, 2002). Mbare took a bold step 'back to nature' by working very hard to construct a house in the village of his roots to relocate his parents. He was living in a dual system as propagated by rural urban migration studies. This step back was also a great signifier for his process of belonging.

Just as (Jansson & Müller, 2003) the majority of households owning a second home are older than 35 years, this is a vibrant age group and one will naturally expect competition amongst them. However, Robertson (1977), Buller & Hoggart, (1994a) and Müller (1999) in their studies showed that after becoming established on the housing and the labour market and often having teenage children, households identify second homes as objects for investment and creative focus. Evidence also suggests that a substantial proportion of second home owners actually purchase a property for later retirement, even if it is never used as such. Though this is not entirely the case in Baba I as many of the youths are trying to belong and make developmental strides through the construction of modern houses in the

village as their second homes.

The case of Mbare is quite different because he actually wanted to settle his retired parents who had been away from the village for a very long time. All the hard work, negotiations and the construction of the house for his father and his entire family was to relocate them home where memory and practice pulls them. Hence, second home ownership may sometimes represent a precursor to permanent domestic or international migration. However, in many cases, permanent migration is not registered, because households choose to keep a link with their formerly permanent home (Müller, 1999; King et al., 2000; Williams et al., 2004). Therefore, it is almost impossible to pinpoint the households that retire into their second homes. Nevertheless, second home retirement is clearly emerging as a significant planning issue from both domestic and international perspectives (Williams et al., 2004), particularly given the aging of the demographic profile in many developed countries and the demands that such aging places on infrastructure and services (Müller &Hall, 2004)

In the Papiakum meeting in Kumba, Mbare Ibrahim rose to the rank of financial secretary and later held the position of the Vice-President of the BADECA Kumba branch created in 1993. This meeting had started off in the 70s as a regular Sunday meeting hosted at Moh Nketeh's. His compound served as a stopover for Papiakum as Nkwi (2011:143) pointed out with Kubou's compound in Bamenda for the Kom. As Nkwi (2017:141) opines and reiterate, the home of the eldest member of the Grassfields community using the Kom example in the South West Region, was considered as the peoples palace in the diasporic space. Mbare's story opens up the salient nature of a home village and investments therein amongst urban elite and how houses have become crucial in the politics of belonging. When discussing the various access mechanisms through which one could benefit from land as a crucial resource, it becomes clear that identity and social relations are paramount in these negotiations. These negotiations highlight how, when and who can and/or cannot benefit from specific resources. As such, identity is always questioned or revisited through one's social connections and relations within the community as illustrated in the previous chapter.

Although land in this context is about power, access and livelihood, it is also about belonging. That is why I talked of it as having its own social life as it ceases to be a mere thing. If owning a facet of land means I am part of this society or I claim land because I belong, then land is a cultural resource with a different kind of meaning. Through the ritual of handing over land, it is clearly demonstrated how land is culturally adopted as significant and symbolic objects within the community are used for this appropriation process. Looking at belonging per acceptance and rejection as there is a lot of power playing and unequal belonging is critical here. This kind of analysis throws more light with concrete examples to the debate which shows that it is not only access to land that matters but belonging as well.

The history of the Papiakum people as presented above illuminate this element through their migratory route. This 'act of appropriation' as hinted by Page, Evans and Mercer (2010:355) is another peril in the politics of belonging in Cameroon which is not discussed as such. Through lived and shared experiences, I concord with Lentz 'that land and land rights play an important role in the politics of belonging in Africa due to the fact that rights to land are intimately tied to membership in specific communities (Lentz, 2007:37). These rights to access of land which has been elaborated above will stand as lamppost for my discussion.

Others like Geschiere (2009), Lentz (2007) and Page, Evans and Mercer (2010) look at belonging as tied to land and land usage with claims and counter claims to access

made by the ‘sons of the soil’ living in various urban centres of the country. Power is very important in position to hierarchy in Baba I. How the elite are inscribed into the Baba I roles and how it relates to a modernising world is an interesting aspect. This links to the shifting power base and the ongoing urbanisation process that Baba I is going through. Therefore, the considerations made amongst the Papiakum people before one is seen and considered as a member of the community; and the expectations of members to gain, maintain or lose their membership are the core questions delved into here as my research partners, an example being Mbare above, kept reiterating that the village or home place continues to be the most salient.

For these urbanites who are resident and have investments in the various urban centres in the country but remain attached to their home village, ‘the local is both situated in specific places and dispersed across space; people are involved in local institutions while being widely spread out in different locales’ as articulated by Trager (1998:379). This shows that people are living in a mobile world engaged in various mobilities where different spaces represent different things. The present configuration of the Cameroonian state sort of obliges these urbanites to live in ‘a dual system’ elucidated by Jua (2002) and Page, Evans and Mercer (2010) in order to gain access to resources for their enhancement and advancement as well as for those left behind in their home village.

Being born and raised within the norms and traditions of the Grassfields and living in multiple sites since 1993, I (researcher) was opportune to be questioned several times why I was travelling around as someone whose navel (umbilical cord/stump) was carried away by a dog’ The umbilical cord/stump of a person in this part of the world is of great value and is handled and preserved with a lot of caution as I grew up to know. It was therefore not surprising for me to learn while on the field amongst the Papiakum people that the umbilical cords/stumps of children born in the urban centres were sent or taken home for the appropriate burial in the father’s or paternal grandfather’s compound except in cases where the child is born out of wedlock. Even when it is to be buried out of the village specific rituals had to be performed in the presence of one of the grandparents of the child or an elder of the family or community. The umbilical cords were never dumped in a refuse bin but rather served as ligature in mobility with home.

Similarly in 2010, I (researcher) transported one umbilical stump from Norway for proper disposition in Bafut. A young couple had their first child and decided that the umbilical cord would be sent as required as per the customs and traditions of the Bafut people of the grassfields. This raised eye brows in the hospital when the couple requested that the umbilical cord be preserved and not dumped at the hospital's incinerator. After having been handed over to them at the hospital, it was therefore kept frozen until my date of departure. It was handed over in a cool box for easy transportation to their homestead as the man's parents were there to receive it. This also served as a physical confirmation and connectivity of the presence of a new born grandchild into their family.

Through this symbolic act of where and how to bury one’s umbilical cord/stump we come in touch with an example which makes it possible for us to see how people use different practices and language as an attestation for their belonging. Where one's umbilical cord/stump is buried by implication, it is a very significant and symbolic act which ties or brings a child back to his/her place of origin. The umbilical cord/stump is therefore a signifier indicating situations/rootedness in a specific place as proof of one’s identity/belonging. It is believed that a child whose umbilical cord/stump is thrown away or discarded inappropriately cannot settle down or will be lost as there is nothing binding him/her to their home. This goes to explain the meaning of a dog carrying away one’s navel

as was once asked. To some people, they still see me as unsettled and 'disconnected' as I travel around for research and work purposes.

All this explains why Africans in general continuously have a link with the village or their roots. For instance, Busia (1950:12) in a social survey of Secodi-Takoradi, showed that 'a person's membership of a lineage binds him forever to his village, its locality and that wherever he may go; however long he/she may be away, he/she belongs to his lineage town or village…' Gugler (1961) studied Eastern Nigerians in towns and concluded that they lived in a dual system in which they were responsible to village development associations while trying to cope with city life. Geschiere and Gugler (1998: 309-319) show how an urbanite might choose to remain in the city but also always remain tied in some way with his or her home. Gugler (2002: 21-41) maintains that research on the urban-rural connection needs to be conducted elsewhere on the continent because of the 'wrenching changes its people have experienced over the last generation'. Geschiere (2009), Busia (1950) and Gugler (1961) here were only setting the agenda for scholars to study rural-urban migrations in Africa. The experience of the Papiakum people is just one contribution to this ongoing works and an explanation to the customary treatment given to umbilical cords.

Staying in touch with the village could be crucial for these urbanites through which many services are given. Investing in the home village is a kind of social investment which Mbare did not want his family to be left out. This is because generally upon retirement or death, one's corpse is brought back to the village which is the ultimate as illustrated by De Bruijn (2014). If the urbanite retired back to his village with the meaningful investment in symbolic and human capital he/she will be respected. This goes to show how the society has created and recreated structures that go to highlight the debate on the politics of belonging as attached to land but at same time being exclusionary and unpredictable as it is 'subject to constant redefinition against new "others" and at ever-closer range' as expressed in (Ceuppens and Geschiere, 2005:385) pointed out earlier by Geschiere and Nyamnjoh (1998, 2000); Konings (2001), Nyamnjoh and Rowlands,(1998) and reiterated by Ndjio (2006) and Geschiere (2009).

5.3 'Sons and Daughters' of Baba I

From birth, through the symbolic and significant act of burying the umbilical cord/stump, the child is rooted within a specific lineage. This is his/her first home under normal circumstances where you will be nurtured to maturity per the norms and customs of the Papiakum people regardless of your sex. While the female breaks away from her lineage into another for marriage as expected by the norms, the male folk of the community stay on to inherit, acquire and expand on the family property. Just like the female folk that that will be brought in through marriage, the female child leaving her family will have to be provided access to different resources for the upkeep of her new family especially that of her children and husband. For the livelihood of these persons, land becomes the most crucial of all the resources. Since it is inelastic in supply, granting access to benefit from it becomes a fundamental issue for concern. Who, when and where can someone gain access to land is constantly negotiated. The socialness of the land therefore cannot be ignored in this process as it is its social history that paves the way for someone belonging to be ascertained.

Amongst the Papiakum people as articulated by my research partners, there are certain 'stuff' Miller (2010) that communicate the maturity of a man: building a house, marrying a woman and owning a gun. These commands respect and elevate a man's social

standing amongst his peers, family and community at large. These spare you of all the derogative comments and far from the sphere of committing the 'unthinkable' (which is taking up residence at your parent's) as noted by Yoyo or being considered as 'inconsequential' by Yenwoh my research partners. Therefore having a house, being married and owning a gun are straight forward expectations of this society for men as also pointed out by Malaquais (1994) amongst the Bamileke people of Banjou. Being able to put up a house first of all means having access to land without which you cannot construct. What is intriguing is how one negotiates access to resources that permit one to attain this level of maturity as prescribed. The most straight forward means by which one could access land in Baba I is through inheritance from one's father. Sons are expected to be given land by their fathers and husbands provided land for the livelihood of their families to the women. Marriages stood out as sign posts for social mobility among the people which extended and connected families within the society.

'Big compounds' are an index through which a person's roots and connections in the society were situated and contextualised within the Papiakum genealogical frame. This was especially so if you did not follow the usual format of introducing yourself which was for instance, 'I am Pepila Arahimi son of Moh Fesame of Fesame'. This was later realised as an index used to situate a person before questioning one's identity in order to gain access into resources. This was a way to confirm if that person truly belonged to that lineage and in the Papiakum family at large. Interestingly, everyone apparently was/is related in the village. Nosing around to find out more about these complicated interwoven relations, one of my research partners said,

> 'In those days in Baba I, when you serve as a Nchinda (Tchindafue) in the palace and you are going out, they give you a princess to go and start your family. When the Fon sits and sees that a family is dwindling, the Fon sends a princess for marriage to that compound. She goes to build back with authority and they will be respecting her. There will be some order in the compound. Even if you had many wives, it is obvious that your successor will be a child of the princess in order that your family will subsequently have a bit of command or a bit of authority in the village. We already know that the royal family alone had a majority of the male and female children in the village. This made it difficult for you to go through three families without seeing a royal blood. Before the late Fon 'disappeared', he proclaimed that people can now be closing ranks a bit without which some people will never ever get married in the village. He declared it officially and that is why you see some people can be getting married to some relations of third and fourth generations that are not too close and there is no problem. If most of those things were to be respected then just know that it will be difficult for farming to even take place in the village because, this one dies here, if you want to calculate almost all families are involved then nobody will go to the farm and the next week another one will die then for three, four days nobody will go to the farm just like that then the whole place will just be in stagnation (Victor Yenwoh, personal communication, August 13, 2011).

For the Fon to have declared publicly that people should be closing ranks in marriage to 3rd and 4thgenerations, meant that things were becoming indeed complicated as hinted above by Yenwoh. This also explained that the identity of a Papiakum man was always traced back to the 3rd generation to ascertain one's rootedness or belonging in this patriarchal society. It was only after the questioning of one's identity that considerations/decisions were arrived at whether one is qualified to have access to land and/or its benefits. This goes to fulfil if one qualified for access to construction land as one of the prime roles of maturity

amongst the Papiakum people. This was no problem before at the family level when land was allocated to the male child except for the princes. As Big Mami will explain:

> 'At first in the palace, the Chief will call a man and give him the bamboo or say take this palace bamboo. At the time you do not know the boy you will be given. If they gave you a boy like this and said it was your son, you will give him a plot to build a house. But now Baba people refuse to take the bamboo. They say that the 'palace boy' will come and start controlling them. When they give a Muontoh (Prince), it means he will eventually become a big Moh (an inherited title of a prince and accredited to heads of compounds) in his compound, so they refuse because of land and such related issues. Now these princes have to go and buy their plots' (Rose Mallama, April 8, 2011).

Identity here is not fixed but fluid due to mobility and its contestations. According to the Papiakum norms as noted in the excerpt above, princes are not given land for settlement directly by the Fon. Before the 1980s, it was seen as an honour to be given a prince. This practice of giving a 'palace bamboo', Kemndrang, started changing due partly to pressure on land and the monetary value now attached to land acquisition. Kemndrang is a piece of bamboo stick that was given to notables by the Fon as a symbol of providing land for the settlement a prince. Princes who wanted to leave the palace got into lobbying the head of the compound where he was vying to settle. This required creating special social ties with community members that involved gifts. This was to pave the way and make it easier for the prince's acceptance into this new family. The last of the ceremonies of giving Kemndrang took place in 2011. The allocation of plots in a way was to ensure that the male off-springs who come of age should have a standing in the village through the structures they would put up. This was in order to free their families and themselves from ridicule and abuse from age mates, friends and the village at large. Houses therefore are said to be the visible/physical attestation of one's rootedness and belonging in the Papiakum society.

5.4 Connections in Belonging

Social relations are constantly negotiated in everyday life and these negotiations most often than not take cognizance of the different resources that these people have access to in order to tap off some benefits. As a social institution that binds families, marriages were/are negotiated in terms of benefits of the union for both families. From Yenwoh's narration noted above, marriage is not seen only as a means to represent maturity amongst the Papiakum people but also as a negotiation process through which access to resources are gained, maintained and controlled. Who and how someone was/is married off were crucial for both families. The access to power/authority, wealth and social relations here goes to show how people from different ranks of the society could benefit through these unions to gain and maintain control over various resources.

The Fon for instance, by giving princesses out for marriage to a Nchinda or some 'dwindling family' as Yenwoh puts it or princes to be settled by other families as per Mallama's narration, was on the one hand for the Fon to maintain his control over his people and to ensure that his family stays rooted in the village. Princes and princesses, Muontoh, were expected to and are able to assert royal influence over the families where they are incorporated as new members. This partly goes to explain the resistance put up now by the villagers as pointed out by Mallama. On the other hand, due to their social standings, these Muontoh were treated with a certain amount of caution and respect. Through the newly created socio-political bonds formed via these royals, these families and

persons could negotiate to gain benefits from different resources as they now had access to royal privileges, thus, planting their roots further in the land.

Marriages for both the royals and the commoners were and/or are used as a means of consolidating relationships between friends; in recognition of some service offered like the case of Mallama who was whisked off from school to Mamfe by the Fon's emissary (Mohfesame) to honour a promise made; in compensation of a negotiation gone wrong or simply as a means to attain some social status in the village as seen by parents offering their daughters to the Fon and princes. Though things are changing with more and more Papia youths working and living in the urban centres, negotiations are still rife amongst mothers especially to see to it that their children are 'well married off' within the confines of the Papiakum society. When it comes to marriages that symbolise the union between two families for ever, inter background checks are made on both families by its members to ensure that there are no negative straits medically, socially or spiritually.

Given the number of Muontoh, the form of settlement of the princes and the marriages contracted explains why almost everybody in the village seems related. On the other hand, because persons would also claim relations to gain access to resources through these marriage bonds made it even more difficult to comprehend how widespread the royal roots have gone. While in the field, it was also noted that marrying women from outside the Papiakum group is gradually gaining grounds as more and more young people are spending most of their time out of the village as well as their interwoven relations. Through the active participation of parents in making this decision, it became clear that preference is still given to girls from Baba I or of Papiakum parentage. This has caused an untold amount of tension and frictions within families as some of these women from outside are out rightly rejected.

Marrying from outside Baba I also meant limiting one's chances of gaining access and benefits from resources in the village. However, marrying from outside was commonplace and somehow limited to the royal family and wealthy notables as an exchange from other friendly Fondoms or friends to solidify relations and maintain good diplomatic ties. In the Baba I palace, there are wives from Bamum, Nso', Bangolan and Bambalang. Bamum and Nso' have historic ties as advanced in the Baba I history while Bangolan and Bambalang have very cordial relations. The current Fon of Bangolan, Isaac Chafa, is actually a brother to Fue Kemshi of Baba I because his mother was a princess of Baba I, thus a royal wedding. Nkwi (1986) probed into the royal weddings in the grassfield and how important they were in creating lasting bonds between Fondoms. In most of the Western Grassfields with 'marriage systems that were exogamous and patrilocal … women generally remained relatively outsiders in the communities where they lived and often lacked the means to political participation, while unmarried women were even more marginal,' van den Bersselaar (2005:56). This is one of the realities that these women have to confront and accommodate especially when they have to compete for access to resources. It is particularly hard on those women from outside who have not borne children as well as for those without a son. The birth of a son within the Papiakum community gives the mother legitimacy to access resources and ownership unlike the daughters/female children.

Over the years, the Papiakum people have been experiencing some changes. In the Ngoketunjia area, the Papiakum people are known for their business aptitude and are commonly referred to as smugglers. Amongst the Bamenda Grassfield, people's trade was principally to the Muslim north and southwards to the Atlantic coast with the primary commodity being slaves in exchange for European manufactured goods such as guns, gun

powder, cloths, Toby jugs amongst others Warnier, (2006:94). The Papiakum people formed part of this trade circuit; their biggest trade route was to Nigeria which continues till date though many more persons have taken it to other urban centres especially Douala. This activity carried out by notables in association with the Fons prompted the mobility of young men and women who either were taken away as head carriers or slaves for the traders involved. It has been taken over today by all who are interested and the Fon is still very much into it as one of his main trading routes.

Having a mentor in business was very essential for the new comers into town known as Johnny Just Cams (JJCs) in local parlance. These mentors could be relatives, friends or neighbours and might be responsible or be the brain behind the person's travel. Of course, there were always others who left their home villages with vague or some imaginary knowledge to the place they were migrating to for whatever adventure like Mbare. Eventually, they would link up to a mentor, known or unknown. As postulated by (van den Bersselaar, 2005:60) these mentors 'helped new arrivals to adjust to the urban way of life, and offered a network through which to find employment or business opportunities'. These movements of persons from the hinterlands that started in the late 1700s according to Warnier (2006), have continued with the growth and the development of many more cities/urban centres in Cameroon offering glamorous employment opportunities, new technologies and better living conditions. Eventually, the rural-urban mobility led to the permanent settlement/investments of some of these migrants and the village became just a notion of a place especially for their offspring borne 'out there' as the example of Mbare. However for a majority of them, they strove to maintain their links/ties at home through landed, social and human investments which serve as social security back home. It is very important for those who want to maintain these ties at home to try to marry a Papiakum man or woman. Parents on their part do put pressure on their children so that they do not 'get missing', dislocated or disconnected from their roots by getting married to people from other villages.

It is commonly said and taken for granted that this rural-urban mobility's was provoked by the escape from poverty. Given that the Western Grassfield is hierarchical in its organisational structure, there were societal constraints limiting the growth of younger people, thus, the search for greener pastures or an 'open and free society'. However, I will push this discussion further as there are salient elements that have been most often than not glossed over. Some of the migrants were kids as noted in the Moh Tanghongho's story below. According to Warnier (2006), kids were coaxed and taken away as slaves while others were sent to stay with relatives that could not bear children and for others urban centres became a refuge against witch-hunting in the village. Depending from which society you were coming from, witch-hunting remains a living phenomenon in rural communities. These kids were therefore exposed to urban life earlier and developed coping strategies to make life easier and better. Other elements like formal/informal education, job hunting and trade still prompted others to leave because through this means they could aspire to get a better and brighter future.

5.5 Merging Rural and Urban Social Categories: Neo-Traditional Titles

The creation of regents in the urban centres is also a growing phenomenon as these persons are seen and treated as special representatives of the Fon. Regents of the Fon are chosen by him or in some cases by the people but must be installed by the Fon to oversee his kinsmen in the urban centres. In concordance with Fisiy and Goheen (1998:390), 'in many ways, life in these urban settings has become the prolongation of the social arena of the home area. It

is based on the combination of urban and rural issues that the new ethnic projects are constructed and identities are revised and redefined'. New hierarchical systems are therefore created within these urban centres that open and challenge access into the newly created social fields answerable to the Fon.

Through their new acquired knowledge via the migrant's educational pursuit which was limited then in this region, these urbanites could easily get into the competitive job market, gain employment and/or enhance their careers. Gaining the appropriate education became a new opportunity to acquire and accumulate wealth without tilling the fields; the only opportunity apart from trading that young people had grown up to know. Through their education and employment, the migrants were also exposed to different and bigger networks from which they could tap on social resources for the enhancement and betterment of their lives in the urban as well as in the rural areas. Those who used their opportunities smartly became successful but those who wasted theirs or were unfortunate became unsuccessful in the risky adventures out in the unknown. Risks of urban life can be divided into successful and unsuccessful urbanites. By successful, I am referring to those who have gotten access into the urban infrastructure and employment, be it public or private and on the other hand, the unsuccessful are those who have been unable to build a house for themselves in the village or do some significant investment in the village.

However, being successful does not essentially depend on one's achievements in the urban centres to the Papiakum people.

> 'Generally, the people will judge you by what you are in the village and not so much on what you are outside. They will want to imagine that others outside are benefiting more from you and they are not benefiting in one way or the other either by their village looking beautiful, because of the one house that you have constructed or by some contribution that you come and make for the general progress of the village. If you are not part of it, then they will just consider you as inconsequential. It is only when you will come and build something in the village that you know that you are standing in the village' (Victor Yenwoh, personal communication, August 13, 2011).

This brings in the notion of the 'second home' whereby urbanites working outside the village come back home to construct houses to maintain their identities. They visit these homes as tourists during the holidays with their children, weekends or during celebrations. This connection is in concordance with Hall and Muller's (2004:11-14) discussion on the motives behind owning second homes where they postulate that 'second home ownership may be strongly related to personal identity (Jaakson, 1986). This is particularly true in cases where second homes represent emotional connections with places of childhood, family or ancestry (Kaltenborn, 1997a, 1997b; Löfgren, 1999). Such familial connections may also positively influence the extent to which second home owners may be integrated into the local community (Pacione, 1979). Jaakson (1986) even argued that a major reason for second home ownership is as a perceived means of keeping a family together. Many second home owners inherit their properties, which thus represent a significant place of family heritage. This point by Jaakson resonates among the peoples of the Western Grassfields and Papiakum in particular when it comes to successors taking over their family compounds and improving on them. In fact, some second home owners state that they invest in a second home so that they can pass it onto the next generation as insinuated by Jansson & Müller (2003). This is situated in the heart of many of the interviews conducted why these urbanites are going back home to modify the old houses and build these big houses that are sparingly used. Thus in their mobilities, they strive to remain connected to

home to have a sense of security and belonging.

The success of an urbanite therefore depends a lot on the type of urban rural connection sought out for, nurtured, cultivated and maintained. This is mostly achieved through social, human and landed investments in the village, Baba I, which the community has to acknowledge and appreciate as the village was the point of validation of one's successful hunt. This is linked very much to their identities as 'true son' of the soil as postulated by Geschiere (2009), Nyamnjoh (2002 and 2005), Gugler (2002), Fisiy and Goheen (1998), Gugler and Geschiere (1998). Having to manage to keep these relations in the right balance, these urbanites are living their lives in a dual system as they have to commute between the urban and rural areas all the time as noted by Gugler (1971 and2002). With better road networks and ICTs gaining grounds in the country, commuting to the village and communicating with the people back is more frequent and not only physically but virtual as well.

In the urban centres, these successful urbanites have become icons that are looked up to as mentors with all its accreditations as mentioned above. Some of these successful urbanites through their new found wealth and connections have acquired a new social or political status within the village in circles where they were formally. In the village, they are given titles (see Figure 5.1) in recognition of their active participation in developmental issues and beyond in landed, social and human investment as these nouveaux riches strive always to maintain their ties and commitment to the Papiakum people. I also observed that 'while some have refused to take either honorary or traditional titles, others feel honoured to be recognised in this way', as indicates by Trager (1998:367). There is the proliferation of these neo-traditional titles in Cameroon today as it has become a commodity for sale to urbanites in particular longing for traditional socio-political recognition, thus, the invention of all sorts of titles. 'It is possible to buy more than one title, each new title being more exclusive and carrying more prestige' as van den Bersselaar (2005:56) eloquently express. Though working amongst the Igbos in Nigeria, Trager and Van den Bersselaar represent the true examples of the realities lived on the field among the Papiakum people of Baba I in the Ngokentungia Division of the North West Region of Cameroon.

Figure 5.1: Conferment of Traditional Titles

Source: Photo by Author

The justification of the endowment of the non-hereditary titles amongst the Nso' people, who have a historical link with the Papiakum people as per their origin, (Fisiy and Goheen, 1998:388) shows a mechanism through which these urbanites get into the governance of

their villages. This is from the perspective 'that the Fon of Nso rules/reigns the land not only with his regulatory society, the Ngwerong, but also with the new elite. Some of these elite command substantial powers within the Nso' Fondom as stated by Fisiy and Goheen. This claim of stewardship by the ruling organs of Nso' captured by the metaphor that the Ngwerong has 800 eyes with which to see the limits of the Nso' land' can be said to be a common belief in the Grassfields. This shows that his divine authority transcends the Nso' land and controls all Nso' people all over the world. The Ngwerong can execute the Fon's orders, but not equal to the Fon in terms of visual ability (800 eyes).This is in concurrence with what I lived amongst the Papiakum people and the type of authority they attribute to their own Fon. The Fon had regents in almost all the urban centres and some of them acted as satellites to other centres where the Papiakum population was small.

This does not in any way mean that meritorious titles are out of place. Though few in number, these titles do exist and for those bestowed upon in recognition of their meritorious activities and inter personal relations by the Traditional Council, it always comes as a surprise. The reaction from the laureates most often than not is to shy away and turn the title down but this resistance is often over-come as the Fon can be very persuasive and insistent. There are successful urbanites whose social ties to their villages have been reinforced through traditional social network by means of succession, traditional titles and acquisition of land for farming and construction. Succession comes with its own responsibility as part of it is taking over and assuming the place of the person succeeded within the traditional social setup. At the political level depending on your title, you might have to be with the traditional council when key decisions are taken as well as be present at the socio-cultural levels in happy and sad celebrations not forgetting education and health care of the family members. With this social network though far off in the city, the landed properties are taken care of as well as recognition upheld through investments not only at family levels but at the community level through participation in developmental projects as well as the construction of houses and engaging in farming. Being a successor as a simple family head, your duties are limited to your family only and you must be physical present at home for important family issues.

It has been realised that the quest for money and position has watered down the meaning and significance of these traditional titles. Interestingly as observed during some core traditional performances in the village, clear distinctions were made in such a way that different categories came out clearly. If one mastered the socio-political hierarchy of the village, then these categories were visible and if one asked, the political hierarchy would be explained in the manner in which the title holders presented themselves in public. Within the category of title holders knowing when to be at the front stage or back stage in Goffman's term is very crucial in performing functions within the socio-political structure. Thus, 'the genuine traditional title holders (those who had inherited their titles) knew themselves and were still playing their customary functions in the society' (Fisiy and Goheen, 1998:389). Going back to one's village to find their roots as Mbare said before made the village an essential element in the development of one's career be it in the formal or the informal sector. The question that remains to be answered in this work is how they organise themselves out there in the various urban centres.

5.6 Urban Papia: The Formation of an Elite Association, BADECA

Stepping back in time to contextualise this discussion is necessary at this juncture. "In earlier days when 'nation building' was the over-riding factor in national politics under President Ahmadou Ahidjo, the nation's founding president, who ruled from independence

(1960) until 1982, it was bad taste to mention someone's ethnic affiliation, let alone to qualify someone openly as an allogène" Geschiere (2009). There was a lot of prudence in the use or inference of such words as the unity of Cameroonians was ingrained in Ahidjo's ideology. After President Paul Biya come to power in 1982, this ideology and prudence started crumbling. With the coming of multiparty politics in 1990, Geschiere states 'autochthony became the all-over-ridding issue in Cameroonian politics'. This phenomenal change led to the creation and escalation of all sorts of ethnic elite associations claiming rights to belong in specific places. Nkwi (2017) however pointed out the underlining fact that amongst the Grassfielders in Diasporic spaces there have always been as many development associations as there were ethnic groups even after 1972 when they were banned as a drive to promote unity. Elite associations were supported and its members were encouraged to take their ties to their home regions seriously. The new deal regime of Paul Biya 'had realised that regional elite associations offered special possibilities in the new political configurations' and have since used them in political manipulations to stay in power as vividly portrayed in Geschiere (2009:39-65). As hinted by Mbare above like Geschiere amongst others, these changes in ideology caused a lot of agitations and tensions as well as a wave of movement of urbanites between urban centres and villages to ascertain their identity and belonging. 'Place-based politics' to use the words of Page, Evans and Mercer (2010:358) became the order of the day as different ethnic groups in urban centres rallied to form home town associations referred to here as Cultural and Development Associations (CDAs) as known in Cameroon (Page, Evans and Mercer, 2010:348 and Evans, 2010 and Nkwi 2017).

It is therefore in this light that in 1993, Fue Kemchi IV of Baba I visited, Kumba, in the South West Region of Cameroon, to install the first executive members of the Baba I Cultural and Development Union (BACDU) which was later on changed to Baba I Development and Cultural Association (BADECA) that covered the whole coastal region including main urban centres like Buea, Mutengene, Limbe, Tiko and Douala. From Mbare's story, one can figure out that Kumba was one of the political hot beds before, during and after the 1992 presidential elections in the country. By this time also there was a vibrant Papiakum community with their village meeting taking place at Moh Nketeh's residence (a very popular/renowned traditional herbalist). He had a very big compound in Kosala where BADECA meetings took place every Sunday which I visited in 2011 as I travelled to meet research partners. I noted that many persons were still hosted in this compound. Kumba had become a hub for their business activities as they could easily move to Nigeria from here and back to Douala and other parts of the country. It is not surprising therefore that the formation of the Baba I elite association was launched in Kumba. Like many other structures that had to be recognised at home by their Fon, these urbanites had him travel all the way to Kumba out of his area of jurisdiction to install the executive of BADECA. To have the Fon travel out of the village requires a lot of logistics as befitting to his personality. This means that even being far away from home; these people still continue to pay their respect to the hierarchy left behind as they need an attestation from the Fon. The creation of BADECA also suggested that the number of the Papiakum people in these urban centres had grown to a point that they could form an association following the current trend of the new political era in Cameroon.

It was only after this that the creation of the various branches of BADECA took place in other major centres of the country and the original one had long grown into several branches in the coastal region. The Papiakum people like other peoples of Cameroon out of their villages had to rally together and be their brother's keepers. This phenomenon though

'new' to Cameroonians had gained grounds in other African countries. They were part and parcel 'to the process of economic development in Africa by providing needed infrastructure, as well as an array of social welfare services which the state is unwilling or unable to deliver, especially to small towns and rural areas' as elucidated by Barkan, McNulty, and Ayeni (1991:458). Being born and bred in the Bamenda urban centre, we grew up knowing that every Sunday afternoon our house hosted the meeting of 'my village people' but making this official by legalising it by the traditional administration gave these 'voluntary hometown associations' a new meaning and prospective.

Concurring with Barkan et al through my interactions and observations, the CDAs now represent and/or can be seen as 'Civic Virtue … citizens of a nation are viewed as a vast reservoir of untapped energy, eager to participate in national and local development, creating a 'Local Growth Machine… that seek to develop communities for their own interests, where actors are involved in political bargaining, resource mobilisation and communication which link central institutions to local communities and Attachment to Place … to elicit deep and lasting commitments from their members. They are communities of memory which affirm people's sense of place and attachment to their hometowns or origin' as Barkan, McNulty, and Ayeni, (1991:459-460) ascertain in their study in western Nigeria.

In these varied characteristics of CDA, I can identify the different strands of growth in Baba I spearheaded by urbanites. They serve under various categories for the development of their community given their socio political attainment within the government cum urban centre. Since these CDAs have many coats on, that could be used in varied contexts, being a member entails full participation and contribution towards developmental projects related to the village which contribute in firmly establishing one's rootedness and belonging to the group.

Membership is acquired automatically through descent, marriage, honorary/affiliation through friends or previous stay in the village. One's participation also determines one's level of connection and commitment towards developmental goals as their preoccupation is to make available needed facilities and amenities in the village. Recognition is not solely given based on how much one can contribute financially but also on the socio-cultural and political abilities of persons. CDA 'becomes a forum for the meshing of local and national interest which enables them to play an effective intermediary role' (Barkan, McNulty, and Ayeni 1991:463). This is so because the association functions as an external unit of the village whose legislation and proper functioning depends a lot on its recognition from the village, thus, enhancing the rural-urban connection as well as reinforcing dual life styles. One's participation further gives accreditation to its members vying for public position as the village has become the centre of gravity in modern-day politics (Fisiy and Goheen 1998, Monga 2002 and Nyamnjoh, 2009). Political aspirations as well as the village focus developmental programmes of these associations make it that circular migration is very much in vogue. There is an increased number of returned migrants especially for those retiring from public service. This return home is easier for those who had constructed a house and/or had acquired farmland/cattle to keep them busy. The repercussions created by this phenomenon back at home by the urbanites are encapsulated actively by bringing in urban amenities and facilities.

However, there are others who decided to disassociate themselves from the group and concentrated mainly on their nuclear families most especially in the urban centres. How successful these urbanites can be when they depend on the social networks back home for one thing or the other is debatable. Most often than not, they are treated as outsiders

since they do not want any social bonding with the groups in the various centre. These urbanites therefore get limited participation and assistance from members when something happens at the family front. No matter their position and status in the urban centre, back at home they are generally considered as failures and seriously mocked at by their age groups. They are regarded as 'inconsequential' as stated by Yenwoh above when he talks about the importance of owning a house and participating in social activities at home no matter how successful you might be in the urban centres. If home, the village is considered as one's final resting place as propagated by the Cameroonian government since there is a provision to take the corpse of a civil servant to the place of origin,(Fisiy and Goheen 1998 and Geschiere 2009), where then will these people will be buried. Apart from Muslims in Cameroon who could be buried wherever they die, usually for the others, there are always discussions and negotiations of taking the corpse home. Burial, especially in Africa marks the place where you were born and thus ultimate belonging but exactly where burial could be done has recently become a much debated issue. The next unit will focus on the geography of burial.

A man without a home will be buried in the bush or in the wild which will be a big blow (an untold embarrassment) to his family and friends. 'However, through mechanisms of social pressure including ostracism, these associations have proven to be very effective in ensuring compliance' (Barkan, McNulty, and Ayeni 1991:462) as these CDAs send reports back home so that they work in harmony. In Baba I, injunction orders (a mechanism of social pressure) have been placed in compounds during burials and funeral celebrations because of the waywardness or non-participation of individuals or family members in village development associations. Having an injunction order from the palace placed in the compound where an occasion is supposed to take place is always a big issue that must be immediately ironed out. When this is done all is suspended and the cases where recalcitrant and/or defaulting individuals have tried to minimise or overlook it, they have been properly lynched. The family would have to recognise and acknowledge the problem, and then negotiate to pay some fine to the Traditional Council to have a corpse buried or for a celebration to go on. Though a very embarrassing situation in front of their friends especially from outside and the family, this has turned out to be very effective as witnessed during two burials in the village (one being a cousin to the Fon who had returned from South Africa, died in Kumba and the corpse brought home for burial).

5.7 Gaining and/or Maintaining Identity

At a very general level, as shown by many writers, for all urbanites the formation and participation in these CDAs generally and BADECA in particular has been a significant way for them to maintain their links with the village. The association represents the bridge of rural urban continuum as per their objectives geared towards the development of their village. It therefore became an obligation of each member to put in their quota towards the achievement of projects at home. By doing so individuals were assessed and approved as per their participation/contributions. Using their personal and interpersonal networks, urbanites would work relentlessly to gain access through available resources within their networks in order to bring benefits to the village. Most often, people were encouraged from all walks of life to participate as it was also a venue where urbanites could gain new and better perspective on enhancing employment or jobs.

Each person with their strengths and weaknesses was considered a reservoir from which specific talents and abilities could be tapped to enhance livelihood for all at home. The impacts of their activities were visible and felt in different strata of the communities.

Those based at home could be seen energetically renovating and building better living structures. The number of houses that still had kitchens and bedrooms in a single room was fast dying out. The sanitation conditions were better as well as the improvement on their nutrition though corn fufu remains the staple food. The health service and educational facilities greatly improved with access roads opened for all to have easy circulation. The enhancement and distribution of utility services was a constant drive. All these visible and invisible changes are the driving force behind the main advocates amongst the urbanites.

For those who abstained from meetings and contributions, sanctions were meted on them. This will be elaborated further within the discussions on losing one's identity. As Fisiy and Goheen (1998:386) aptly put it 'belonging to a group is much more than being physically present in a given community. It is the state of attachment to a given place that sustains images of the home village which is the social centre of gravity and the primary anchor or source of security. The home village provides the framework or reference within which individuals make judgements and articulate linkages between the different cultural and political worlds in which they operate'. At the individual and concrete levels and falling back on the stories of Mbare and that of Moh Tanghongho, gives two exemplary persons amongst other research partners.

Moh Tanghongho Sylvester

Moh Tanghongho was born in Ndop after his mother had lost six previous pregnancies and was named Perndap, meaning war in the house. His mother left him under the care of her sister when he was four and went back to Baba I. No one from his family was permitted to visit him as a sort of protection against witch-craft. His mother's sister nurtured him till he completed his primary education. Only then did he go to the village for the first time in his life before leaving for Kumba for two years and then back to Bamenda for the continuation and completion of his secondary and high school education. He then proceeded to Yaoundé in 1982 for the lone university to read Economics. While in Yaoundé, he worked with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as an accountant before getting into L'École Nationale d'Administration et de Magistrature (ENAM). He completed his studies as a treasury inspector, became an accountant general and currently, he is the Director General of Treasury at the Ministry of Finance. He started sponsoring his siblings and other relatives in schools from when he got his first job with USAID. He has expanded this gesture now to promote and sponsor a great number of under privileged children in Baba I. Mbare and Moh Tanghongho's stories above are two examples amongst others of those who were born out of the village and spent most of their lives outside the village though under different circumstances but decided to work hard to gain and maintain their identities with those back at home. From Mbare's perspective, the misfortune of his father brought the family home and they had to face the harsh reality of life as they were treated as strangers. This was principally because his father had no landed investments especially a house to shelter his family and had to do the unthinkable as Yoyo puts it, staying at his father's house and depending on others. The penalty heaped on one being a parasite is very frustrating as pointed out by Yenwoh and Mbare himself. A man with his family under such circumstances is hauled at with all sorts of abuses and treated with disdain. Even during public celebrations you could ridiculed and turned to a laughing stock by dancing to your insults if you do not listen to the lyrics of the lead singer.

Moving to stay in Bamali was perhaps the best option for them for the growth of their family because the situation became a big source of inspiration for young Mbare. He took up the challenge to construct a house for his family to bring them back to their root.

Staying in Bamali meant being 'disconnected from one's home village which is seen as being without roots or having lost the social nexus that attaches an individual to a given community. This did not only imply physical separation but also a psychological disturbance as they are socially cut off as pointed out in Fisiy and Goheen (1998:386). The fact that his father went back and started the construction work though Mbare was the brain behind it boosted the father's ego. Through this, he was rebuilding his image amongst the people who had considered him 'inconsequential' and in the process gaining his self-worth. Though he appreciates their stay in Bamali for he learnt quite a lot, for Mbare, 'it is important to go back to your village because that is where you find your roots, your base', (Mbare, 2011). Living outside and not having a base at home was something which had hit hard on this family and Mbare could not afford to take more chances on this for his family and himself.

Not having any house in the village, they had been 'excluded' from the family and treated like strangers. In this case, it was not their descent that was in question but the fact that Mbare's father had not fulfilled one of the paramount expectations of the Papiakum people of having a house. Houses are therefore signifiers of visible and physical attestation of one's rootedness and belonging freeing oneself and family from ridicule and abuses. Mbare had become very conscious of this and did everything to build a house for his parents before one for himself. 'Right now, if I go back to the village, I will feel free even with some of my friends. I will have my privacy and have my home and things in order. Formerly, when I went home, any shirt I put on smell of smoke', (Mbare, 2011).

Through his active participation in BADECA, he is leaving behind imprints as he puts it, 'when you are now in Baba, you develop Baba, tomorrow your names will be cited as those who brought such and such development to your own village. That is why I think it is good to go back home and carry out the necessary developments there. After you have brought in development, you will enjoy the facilities put in place in your old age', (Mbare, 2011). The village community is the watch dog of the participation of the urbanites in the infrastructural developments in the village. Conscious of these sorts of checks, the urbanites work hard to contribute their quota to develop their communities of origin.

Moh Tanghongho's return was not as dramatic as that of Mbare. Though he had spent most of his life outside his village of origin, he was seen, considered and treated as a stranger especially giving the circumstances surrounding his birth. However, as a young boy he grew up knowing he was away from home and when he finally got the opportunity to go back home, he could not miss any chance to build his contacts with his parents and siblings. Though treated with a lot of scorn at first by family and friends, he eventually gained acceptance when they figured out whom he was and that he had come to stay in the village especially for those who had never seen him. His holidays spent at home gradually bridged this gap for him and made him more comfortable among his people even though he never forgot about his other family in Ndop where he had grown up. It is only when he returned home that he started re-building his bond with his biological mother and father. He regrets his 'parents' in Ndop (his maternal aunt and husband) did not live long after he became an independent and mature man to enjoy the fruits of their labour. He lives with a watchful and sensitive gaze on this family as he is largely treated and regarded as one of its members.

However, due to this bond with his parents in Ndop his first ever land dispute was on their behalf as he explains.

> ‘They have a compound in Ndop. That is where I grew up and that is what I know like my own. The co-wives of my aunt had children. So when the husband died, they took one of the grandchildren as successor. We had a lot of big land in Ndop, in Bikom quarter at the centre of the town. He came and started selling the land and was actually getting closer and closer to the compound. That is where I had to intervene and it went right up to the level of the gendarmerie and even the court to get back the land. He had even sold part of the compound. I went and bought it back from the person and even paid back three times more than what the person paid just to keep that place. My aunt and husband were buried there. So at least, I have some attachment to the land. I could not stay and then they come to dig up my aunt’s grave. This is because if land is sold to somebody and the person wants to develop it, you have no authority over it. That strong link made me fight. For the first time, I was involved in a land dispute. I could not stay like that and a small child is selling the whole place. I had to buy back the place and proceed to do a land title. I said I am not going to stay there but I just want the compound to be there with some life. After that, there were a lot of problems but finally he himself has seen that what I was doing was really quite good. He is happy now and once in a while, I try to help whenever he calls me for help’ (Sylvester Moh Tanghongho, personal communication, August 21, 2011).

From the above excerpt, I realised that the house was not the only symbol and signifier on the landscape of a person’s belonging. Graves held even a stronger link to an individual’s attachment to the place. This case of Moh Tanghongho concurs with that of the successor buried on his facet of land (see Fig. 4.8), in dispute with the prince that ended in court, after his death. There has to be a sufficient reason for a corpse to be exhumed in the same way one is regarded as ‘useless’ when he/she sells the place where a parent or both parents are buried. These places and graves, like that seen beside the house below (Fig 5.2), remain symbolic performing art spaces for the family as libations are constantly poured there as rituals to appease the ancestors. Thus, for one to think of selling off such a place is an ultimate show of disregard, disrespect and ungratefulness. You basically are considered as having acquired the worst curse and done away with your birth right and attachment.

Figure 5.2: An example of a grave beside the house that serves a symbolic art space and a symbolic signifier of attestation of belonging.

Source: Photo by Author

Human investments in terms of health care and education are one of the predominant ways through which urbanites use in maintaining links to the home village. This is most often centred on family members. Moh Tanghongho got into this venture as soon as he started working. He took up the responsibility of sponsoring his siblings through school as well as providing for their health care. It must be pointed out that coming from a very large family coupled with the fact that he is now the successor, his responsibilities are abundant, and this is even a position which he resisted because it did not follow the right order considering that his step mother was a princess. He explains this peculiar situation as follows,

> 'it is quite a long story anyway because there were a lot of people who were on the line so I will say that destiny had it. First of all, we had the first daughter of the Fon's father Fue Shanghamagha I, Muentoh married to my father, she is in the compound. She had a son Forchu. So normally if he was alive, he would have automatically succeeded because that is the tradition. He died in 1979 when I was in form four. And now there was another brother, Yenwoh who had done a seven year course in the palace, staying in the palace and serving the Fon as a Nchinda. That one too according to tradition, in matters of succession they look at those people who had served in the palace and they are given some priority. Then I was born out. My father had about eight wives. The real people who had to do it, it happened that they were not there at the time my father died and even my own junior brother who left INJS died too in 1998, a very dynamic young man who could have been the successor. One week before he died, he actually indicated. He showed signs to me that he wanted me to take over but by then, he was very weak. I came to the compound on the 7thof December 2001and he asked me to carry him up. I carried him up from the bed. He sat, held my hand like this, put it like this (lifting it up and down). He did it three times that I have put it. Even then it meant nothing to me. So when he died on the 14thof December 2001, there was terrible pressure from all over. I realised that I had been taking care of virtually everything in the compound and so there was no need trying to run away. Even when he was alive, I was taking care of him and all the children. So what is going to change if I became a Moh? On the contrary, I may instead have difficulties if I get somebody else who will come tomorrow and maybe you want to come and do something in the compound and he will say that you cannot do it. He will want that you give him money to do it for you. And when you will come and realize that he has not done it, there is nothing you will do' (Sylvester Moh Tanghongho, personal communication, August 21, 2011).

Traditionally, following the Papiakum logic, a son of this princess should have been made the successor. Such connections serve to maintain strong social and political links with the palace, thus, establishing firm roots of control over landed property in the village. The case above ushers in a new socio-political change within the Papiakum network of relations. The rule of succession here was altered in preference to a more dynamic and viable person in recognition of his economic standing, interpersonal relations with the family/community and socio political position in the government.

> At the community level, he continues with his human investment projects. He worked diligently to make available water and electricity to his quarter to ease the livelihood of the people. For years, 'I used to actually finance the maintenance of the water project every now and then but I realised that it was difficult. It really needed that the community should get involved. I told them that the women could contribute 25 FRS or 50 FRS a month, which should be gathered into some small fund which could be used to do repairs. If there is a broken pipe somewhere, something should be given to the person who is repairing it. Now we are struggling to see how next year the government can assist us to redo the project with a good catchment' (Moh Tanghongho, 2011).

As the current president of BADECA Yaoundé branch, he is also using his personal networks within the governmental ranks joining forces with the Fon and Yoyo especially to even lobby for bigger water and electricity projects that would soon start in the village as he says,

> 'even if the external elite are not living in the village, they have their parents and
>
> relatives who are living there. And once in a while, they also visit. So they care. We have development meetings and we have contributions towards development but that cannot really be enough which means that we have to do a lot of lobbying to get some of our projects actually put in the budget, like we succeeded in getting 90 million in the budget of 2011 to do the road to the palace. Then now we have presently 165 million for electrification which is coming up. In the next one month, they should be able to start. We cannot contribute all that money even in the next twenty years. So the government is actually coming in with a lot to assist us through one's own external connections by presenting them to the right quarters and lobbying. That is what it is all about. Those are things that cannot be done by villagers' (Sylvester Moh Tanghongho, personal communication, August 21, 2011).

This access to authority corroborates with Dike and Jua's (1982 and 2002) assertion concerning how urbanites penetrate the governmental structures to tap resources that are geared towards the development of the local communities. In his gentle nature, he wraps this up by saying,

> 'when you have done things that have an impact on the people in the village that is when they can say that you are successful. It is not being successful on your own. You must be able to do things in the village which people can benefit from. If you come to town and build your houses and stay there, you do not go to the village, you have never built in the village, and you have never done anything, I do not think that to the villager you are a successful person. You must be able to do things in the village; you can come home and pay fees for about twenty poor children. With those types of things, they can then see that this person is doing something. The Fon listens to all what people say when he interacts with people. They talk about some success of the child from the village or something and then he could take the initiative now and say ok I am going to give him a red feather or title in acknowledgement and appreciation' (Sylvester Moh Tanghongho, personal communication, August 21, 2011).

This falls in line with Goheen's (1996) study amongst the Nso' people as one of the ways through which Urbanites are upgraded in social standings in their communities. Active participation of members was the expected norm and meritorious bushfallers were therefore awarded with traditional titles.

5.8 Losing and/or Loss of Identity

In as much as urbanites try to come together for the common good of their communities, there are still some to whom participation in such associations means almost nothing. In this section, two categories of persons are singled out. There are those who are losing their identity and those who have lost their identities and thus their 'belonging' amongst the people. Those who associate themselves with other urbanites, pay their annual contributions as required but who have not put up any structure in the village to attest their belonging and standing in the village. This category is losing their respect and identity. For this category of persons, their visits to the village were very short and limited as observed. What usually took them to the village were events they could not afford to miss like the death of a parent or sibling and aunt, uncle or cousin depending on their closeness. Most of them had lots of

investments in the urban centres and focused more on their immediate families most often with them in these centres.

Swebu is a vibrant young man with a very humble beginning who can be said to be a self- made man. He lost his mother when he was quite young and started his outward journey to the urban centre in search of greener pastures after finishing his primary education. He did all sorts of odd jobs and hawking starting from Bamenda to Bertoua and then to Kribi and Douala to see himself through secondary and high schools. Today, he is the owner of a business enterprise in Douala called Tropical Trading Company (TTC) with a catching slogan 'we supply from a pin to an elephant with competitive prices'. He has made several landed investments in Douala and has two apartment houses that are out on rent but he lives in a rented apartment which he says is cheaper for him. His human investments are mostly focused on his family and he participates fully rather in their family/lineage meetings in Douala.

While in Douala unlike the other urban centres, it was noted that there is no regular general meeting for the Papiakum people. There are instead small units of clan/family and quarter meetings that come together annually for the general meeting. This takes us back in history as mentioned above that CDAs developed from such meetings. Coming together under these units was more effective to take care of one's close relatives as the Papiakum community in Douala had gotten very big as I was informed. With large numbers, family members were easily tracked down in these small units. Cases of family feuds cannot be ignored in the formation of these small units. However, each person is expected to raise funds to make their annual contribution to BADECA. These contributions are redeployed into the various developmental projects going on in the village as in the construction of roads, upgrading classrooms the provision of water.

Swebu, makes his contributions but has never attended any of the annual general conventions. This attitude of staying away from meetings has made him rather unpopular amongst some of the members of the Papiakum community in Douala as they consider him snobbish, arrogant, and proud and to an extent, a strange person. Through gentle persuasion from some of the members of this community and with some push from the Fon, he is gradually coming back to the fold as he is being seen more often during their village events.

Paradoxically, he is highly sought for medical and other social assistance that requires financial backings. Through the persuasion and encouragement from the Fon, he has started the construction of his house in the village and is very proud for the development of this project. He frequents the village now more than ever before. As he said in his conversations, he feels really lost as he does not really know people in the village even in his own extended family. He is however happy that this construction project will bring him in close contact with his family and the wider Papiakum community having lived outside for so long.

As for those who have refused totally to associate with groups in one way or the other, they do not even participate in meetings nor keep company with the others. Some would not grant listening ears and out-rightly refused being interviewed. Others were just evasive and stayed off any topic concerning their life in the urban centres. Most of them treated the researcher with suspicion and some with hostility when trying to gently probe and when they were told about this interview, they were not interested. As gathered from others, some of them at one point in their lives had experienced misfortune and severe loss. Unlike Mbare's father, they cannot stand the shame of going back to the village empty handed. For others, the lack of education, capital and creativity/initiative has over the years

made it impossible to have jobs but they still hang around in the cities hoping that things would be better. They barely live from hand to mouth and live in crammed accommodations. Due to social/family pressures, some disillusioned urbanites have gone underground because they can no longer manage the expectations from their communities and gotten themselves into vices like drugs and excess alcohol consumption. These persons are considered lost and forgotten in a way.

When I asked the National Secretary of BADECA, how those members of the Papiakum community who are not interested in the association's activities were handled, he had this to say;

> 'For those who have left the village who cannot come back for one reason or the other or who do not want to come back, people are delegated to meet them and discuss with them and make them understand the good reasons for being part of the community. Sometimes too, those who are outside in their various groupings are advised to always behave very well so that those who are escaping can be jealous and then fall back within the fold. Sometimes when sanction is meted against one of them, they think twice. Sanction in the sense that some other relative can have some major activity to carry out in the village and they are impeached from carrying out that activity. The family members will be the first to run to him to try to beg him or whatever or induce him to comply with what is asked so that the event is carried out. In that way some of them will come back and I think many of them have been coming back. The most recent is one family by the stream at the Presbyterian Church. I think they were just lost. I was surprised to see some of them twice in the village on market days. They were entering off-licences, drinking, talking like any other person and even challenging the very regular Baba people. So I said to one how sweet it is to come back home. The man said 'massa give na my mimbo here make I drink', sir, just give me a drink (Victor Yenwoh, personal communication, August 13, 2011).

Belonging is therefore seen as having social and physical connotations. Socially, it is seen in terms of one's physical participation during events in the community. Participation in events gives social recognition as well as an opportunity to educate oneself on the norms and values of the society. One's presence is acknowledged and appreciated as a main pointer towards belonging in the community. However, this is only completed when there is a physical proof on the ground to testify and confirm this presence. Having a place or a home of your own is very important. As illustrated from the cases above, having and owning a house is a thing of great pride. It is the strongest indicator of one's belonging as it puts one on the physical landscape of the community. These discussions calls to some reasoning behind the building of these big houses back in the village.

Through the quest of belonging by the urbanites, this chapter have brought to light the different types of mobility from and in Baba I. This involve those who left home for greener pastures because of want of better education then moved on as civil servants and businessmen like Yenwoh, Yoyo and Swebu. As they went out, they maintained their links home through their participation in personal and community development of the village via their social and physical investments.

5.9 Conclusion

Mobility from without has to do with those urbanites who were born outside like Mbare and Moh Tanghongho but worked hard to reposition themselves through their investments in Baba I. For both categories of urbanites it has been demonstrated that these mobilities and investments does not remain at the physical level but expands to the socio-political and virtual levels. They have been engaged in this varied mobility as occasioned by their

different walks of life out there as well as back at home as they have gained positions in the local socio-political hierarchies. The empirical examples of my research partners above have been central in addressing the core questions of this thesis on mobility and belonging. The use of life histories elucidated the importance of mobility and belonging among the Papiakum and the Grassfields. Through this chapter I have added my voice to the body of literature on how mobility and belonging are intrinsically woven in the Western Grassfields of Cameroon in general. The next chapter would elaborate on the different investments mentioned here which will delve into the changing materiality of the Papiakum people