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# War Technology, Mystical Powers and Dialogue as the Restoration of Ethnic Unity in Bafut-Cameroon

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## Abstract:

This paper sets out to examine the strategies used by stakeholders to sustain the unity of the heterogeneous Bafut *Fondom* of Mezam Division, North West Region of Cameroon. The paper argues that the attainment and sustenance of unity was never accidental. Varied strategies worked in synergy to produce relative peace and unity. For instance, inherent technological prowess manifested itself in the production of war weaponry in the form of spears, bows and arrows, machetes and knives. This indigenous ingenuity was complimented by a formidable and skillful man power that was superbly organised into specialized warrior institutions such as *La'ale*, *Nda-Adanghawa*, *Ndanjem* and *Ndalee*, *Ndamukong*, *Nda Ngwarenwi*, *Nda-Nkwa'a*, *Ndangoh* that handled specific aspects of warrior life in the *Bafut Fondom*. With the advantage of primary and secondary sources, the findings revealed that, the use of mystical powers to fight, ward off any ambition from the tributary villages to breakaway or retaliate punitive attacks. It was the interplay of these varied strategies that informed the near absence of any major physical combat thereby creating a conducive, atmosphere for harnessing the culture of peaceful co-existence. Notwithstanding, the zero-sum identity preservation and inter-ethnic interactions remain elusive as disorder in different forms continued to assume smouldering proportions.

**Key Word:** *War Technology, Dialogue, Mystical Powers, Ethnicity, Bafut Fondom Mezam Cameroon.*

## Introduction

War technology, dialogue and mystical powers play a crucial role in nation building. Such concepts were used over the year to analyse and celebrate victory in conflicts in Africa specially, kingdoms that saw their ethnic identity under threat. African societies used war charms when communities were trapped in the process of ethnic disintegration. This was the case of Dozos in West Africa, such as the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), the Civil Defense Forces (CDF) in Sierra Leone, the Mai-Mai groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

and the Anti-Balaka in the Central African Republic were noticeable examples associated to mystical powers.<sup>1</sup> This technology was considered as the dark side of innovation, others validated it. This philosophy will be deconstructed to give impetus to usefulness of technological dexterity of science in Bafut *fondom*. The paradigm shifts from the use of physical weapons was largely provoked by inefficiency in combat with the use of weapons such as Dane guns, gunpowder, spears, bow and arrows, machetes and knives. Thus metaphysical power became an option to destroy the enemy of statehood as a contribution to the project and process of nation building. This spiritual prowess as an integral part of the custom and traditions of Africa help to shaped militia's behaviour. Happening elsewhere like in Mankon that saw the emergence and break away of satellite states such as Nsongwa and Batu precipitated the revision of science and technology to the development of war weapons. Such phenomenon gained grounds in traditional societies especially in the Bafut *fondom* wherein members saw it as panacea to state formations. Dialogue strategy was giving more pride of place in the twentieth and twenty first centuries as it became one of the *modus operandi* in the operationalisation of Bafut *fondom*. This was particularly witnessed in the British era in 1950s that gave glimmer of hope for the increasing legitimization of ethnic groups, mobilization of support, control, cohesion, discipline, motivation and protection.

In the context of this study, weapons like spears, knives, poisonous bows and arrows were fabricated by war industries as means to maintain order and sustain ethnic unity within heterogeneous Bafut *fondom*.<sup>2</sup> However with the declined of war, the weapons were directed to improve agriculture and hunting of games. This Statehood was one time proved to be too strange in the Bamenda Grassfields chiefly at the day break of German invasion.<sup>3</sup> The inevitability of harassment from neighbouring chiefdoms led to the development of war strategies to revive the sustainability of statehood. It was further worsened by secessionist threat emanating from chiefdoms such as Obang, Banji, Mundum etc. who used identity preservation as bases to justify their argument to secede. This trend triggered condemnation from the opposition camp that saw it as destabilisation mechanism. It became imperative for the utilization of all means available at their keeping to

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<sup>1</sup> Ana Dols Garcí'a, "Armed groups, IHL and the invisible world: How spiritual beliefs shape warfare" *The Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the ICRC*, (2021),1180

<sup>2</sup> Paul Nchoji Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy, A Study of Inter-Chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfield, Northwest Province of Cameroon*, Department of Sociology University of Yaounde, 1986. 76.

<sup>3</sup> Ambelem, Gideon Neba. "The Maintainance of social Order Within Traditional Societies: Case study of Bafut Fondom" (PhD, Thesis Department of Political Science University of Yaounde II,1998).

fight for the sustainability of the Bafut *fondom*. The research pays attention to the importance of history as an arts discipline in the development of a nation. It complements and values the achievement of science and technology in the unity of Bafut *fondom*. The study starts from 1891 and end in 1996. In the year 1891 Bafut defeated the German.<sup>4</sup> The year 1996 end the study, it is significant because Bawum secret burial of Ntoh in 1996 without the knowledge of *fon* Abumbi II threat public hence dialogue was needed to restore order in the Bafut *fondom*.<sup>5</sup> To better appreciate the topic under research, it is imperative to define the key concepts that will guide this study, such as war technology, mystical powers and ethnicity. It is for this reason that, this paper aimed at examining the techniques used to maintain unity and prevent further conflicts by the constituent groups of the Bafut *fondom*.

### The state of Literature

It is a tradition in scientific writing to review existing literature that is linked to the topic or area of study. This is to take stock of the research and conclusions arrived at by the previous researchers on the subject. Aletum<sup>6</sup> on his part investigates conflict in varying degree in the traditional setting. He realised that, conflicts were caused by the disagreement and hostile display between the central authorities headed by the *fon*, chiefs, sub-chiefs who were subdued from exhibiting functions within their ethnic groups. It was equally caused by the forces of modernity resulting from the impact of European colonialism. This impact was manifested in the loss of sovereignty. Ngwa,<sup>7</sup> argues that, conflicts were caused by wanton grabbing, complex relations between the leaders and the community. His Findings indicate that, land redistribution has inflamed conflicts, hinder coexistence within Bafut *fondom*. These articles tackled of causes of inter-ethnic conflicts in the Bafut *fondom*.

Mark Bolak Funtah,<sup>8</sup> argues that, the practice of magic motivate people to go to war, sustained their interest. The assurance at war helped them in the attempt to prevent or resolve conflicts. The restoration and use of these local methods was

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<sup>4</sup> Ambelem, Gideon Neba. "The Maintainance of social Order Within Traditional Societies: Case study of Bafut Fondom" PhD, Thesis Department of Political Science University of Yaounde II, 1998.40

<sup>5</sup> Ngwa, Eric. Bafut Quifon Averts Succession Plot by Bawum but Threat of Ethnic War Looms on, New Standard, 1996.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Tabuwe Aletum, *Political Conflict within the Traditional Institutional and Modern Institutions of the Bafut Cameroon*, (Louvain Vander, 1974).

<sup>7</sup> Divine Fuhnwi NGWA Cameroon: Power Politics, Land Conflicts and Controversy Over Redistribution in Bafut History " *Conlict Studies Quarterly*, 17 October 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Bolak Funtah "A Historical Thought to the Cameroon Grassfields' Traditions of Magic, Warfare and Peace," *International Journal of Research*, 2 no 1 January 2015, 766-780

useful in form of conflict. He found out that, magical power was the driving factor behind war successes. Before, during and after war, diplomats, war agents and soldier, exploited mysterious powers to wage and war. Gabsa Wilfred Nyongbet and Suh Fru Norbert,<sup>9</sup> on their part sustained the argument that, the development of the art of war was a consequence of the conflicts, characterized relationships between kingdoms, and eventually colonial regimes. He discovered that Fon Angwafo II 1866-1920 was able to raise and coordinate a strong army of Mankon soldiers and created a system of military and diplomatic alliances to resist invasions by neighbouring kingdoms in alliance with European invaders.

Jean-Pierre Warnier,<sup>10</sup> discuss the collection of guns from the Bamenda Grassfields of Western Cameroon. His finding revealed that guns were trade, where they were manufacture. Guns and Guns wear were repaired by local blacksmiths who were quite skillful at their trade. This had impact on local warfare and tactics. Confidence Chia Ngam<sup>11</sup> argues that, war negotiated special horizons of power sharing between the Germans and the Kom traditional state. It was established that, power sharing had ramifications that shape the fortunes of African economies and political life styles elsewhere. Ana Dols Garcia<sup>12</sup> argued that, charms and mystical weapons play an important role in shaping armed groups' behaviour and framing warfare dynamics. Such beliefs may also serve various strategic functions, including mobilization of support, discipline, motivation and protection. He further delved into understanding of such beliefs and its impact on internal dynamics of armed groups and their external relations with other armed groups. Yunisha<sup>13</sup> argues that, the culture of guns and control imposes threat to security and peace of Cameroon. His finding revealed that, the culture of guns was wrapped and sustain by socio economic and politics in different era. Secondly, the implementation of Brussel Act in 1890 and Mandate agreement was prompted to respect international laws. Thirdly, it was largely motivated to contain internal revolt that had destabilised most communities in Bamenda Grassfields. The search concludes that, the weak firearms control catalysed the illegal firearms within the

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<sup>9</sup> Gabsa Wilfred Nyongbet and Dr. Suh Fru Norbert, "Traditional Rulers and the Art of War in Traditional Societies on the Eve of World War one: Case Study of FON Angwafo II of Mankon 1866-1920," *The International Journal Of Humanities & Social Studies*, 9203.

<sup>10</sup> Jean-Pierre Warnier, "Trade Guns in the Grassfields of Cameroon, Paideuma," *Frobenius Institute*, 1980, 79-92

<sup>11</sup> Confidence Chia Ngam, "The 1904-5 Kom- German- War: Dimensioning the Power and Leadership Horizons opened and closed by the War," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, III no II, February 2019. 391-402

<sup>12</sup> Ana Dols Garcia, "Armed groups, IHL and the invisible world: How spiritual beliefs shape warfare" *The Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the ICRC*, 2021, 1179-1199

<sup>13</sup> Kingsly Ayunifor Yunisha, *Paradigm shifts in the firearm culture and Administrative control policies in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon 1922-2018* (Phd Thesis, Department of History and Archaeology, The University of Bamenda, 2022,)

Bamenda Grassfields. This research will help to direct the idea of war technology in Bafut *fondom*. Therefore, the lacuna existing in this review will fill by analysing war technology, mystical powers and dialogue as the restoration of ethnic divide in the Bafut *fondom*. It against this background that, the paper argues that, the attainment of national unity and its sustenance was never accidental. It is within this ambit that this research is anchored.

### Conceptual Clarification

**Mystical power:** According to Bernard and Dickson mystical powers is the manipulation of hidden means of communication.<sup>14</sup> This definition agrees with that of Dennis Kuyenda Lembani who defines mystical power as the transformation of charms, amulets, medical portions, rags, feathers, figurines, special incantations, or cuttings on the body.<sup>15</sup> Evans-Pritchard defines it as innate ability to cause supernatural harm.<sup>16</sup> Defining mystical powers, Lembani states that, it is a state of being in possession of harmful paraphernalia to harm others using evil and demonic spirits which are contrary to the word of God. These authors view mystical powers from different perspectives but agree on the fact that it is metaphysical. This research signals a departure from the conventional definitions as it is viewed here as a mixture of herbs used to defend the Bafut *fondom* from disintegration.

**War Technology:** Nkwi, describes war technology as the essential tools which facilitate the practice of war and reflect the technological achievement of a given society.<sup>17</sup> Warren Chin states that, war technology is the innovation in defence.<sup>18</sup> Alvin and Heildi Toffler refer to war technology as the improvement in the tools of warfare.<sup>19</sup> Fuller and Creveld regard war technology as dominant on the

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<sup>14</sup>Bernard G. Dickson N. "The Impact of Magic and Witchcraft in the Social, Economic, Political and Spiritual Life of African Communities." *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education* 1, no 5, (May 2014): 9.

<sup>15</sup>Dennis Kuyenda Lembani, "The Effect of Witchcraft and Magic and Mystical Powers in the Social, Economic, Political and Spiritual Life of African Societies; A Critical Review." *International Journal For Research In Social Science And Humanities*, 7 no 1 (Jan, 2021): 11.

<sup>16</sup>Evans-Pritchard, Edward Evan, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*, Oxford: (Clarendon Press, 1937).

<sup>17</sup>Nkwain, Paul, Nchoji. *Traditional Diplomacy: A Study of Inter-Chiefdom Relations In the Western Grassfield Northwest Province of Cameroon*, Department of sociology university of Yaounde, 1986,76.

<sup>18</sup> Warren Chin, "Technology, War and the State: Past, Present and Future" *International Affairs*, 95 no 4, (July 2019):765.

<sup>19</sup> Alvin and Heildi Toffler, *War and Anti-war Survival at the Dawn of the 21 century*, (New York Warner Book, 1995),30.

outcome of wars.<sup>20</sup> War technology in this research is the utilization of advanced knowledge to produce weapons mainly for nation building.

**Ethnicity:** Crossman thinks that ethnicity is shared cultural way of life.<sup>21</sup> Chanka defines ethnicity as a group of people who identify with each other on the bases of shared attributes that distinguish them from other groups.<sup>22</sup> The American school of sociology led by Berreman thinks that ethnicity is a level of social stratification or social inequality.<sup>23</sup> Boerre refers to ethnicity as membership of culturally and geographically defined group that shares cultural practices.<sup>24</sup> Kellas thinks that, ethnicity is the state of belonging to a certain ethnic group.<sup>25</sup> The definitions of ethnic identity had developed into instrumentalist and primordialist school thoughts.

The emergence of the primordialist school thought argues that, ethnicity is a fixed characteristic of individuals and communities. They believe that ethnicity is entrenched in inherited biological attributes, a long history of practicing cultural differences. George Bryan Vold writing in conflicts says that groups are form when members have a common need and interest, therefore mobilisation and ethnic nationalism become primordial.<sup>26</sup> The instrumentalist champion by Copperbelt in 1950s in the Manchester school argued that, ethnicity is an informal organisation created by political elite to unify, organize, and mobilize populations to gain allegiance.<sup>27</sup> The objectives are mostly political in nature with the anxieties for autonomy, access to resources, power and respect for culture. Instrumentalists held the view that, ethnicity has very little or no independent ranking outside the political process. This meant that, ethnic conflict arises if ethnic groups compete for the same goal notably power, access to resources, or territory. This help to buttressed Bafut argument that no multiple ethnicity exist in the *fondom*. Therefore, it was the manipulation of the elite in Banji, Bawum, Mankanikong and Obang chiefdoms for political again. Ethnicity according to the present study is a group of

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<sup>20</sup> Fuller, JFC *Armament and History: A Study of the Influence of Armament from the Dawn of Classical Warfare to the Second World War*, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1946). Creveld, M. Van , *Technology and War: From 200B.C to the Present*. (New York: The Fress Press,1991).

<sup>21</sup> Ashly Crossman, "The Definition of Ethnicity in Sociology, Key Concepts," (30 September 2019), *Www.Thoughtco.com* , Accessed, October 2022.

<sup>22</sup> Chanka Kancha, *Constructivist theories of Ethnic Politics* (Oxford University Press 2012), 69-70.

<sup>23</sup> Berreman Generald D. Race, *Cast Other Invidious Distinctions in Social Stratification*(New York: Academic Press1972),3.

<sup>24</sup> GeorgeBoeree, "Personality Theories," (2004), Accessed, October 18, 2021, [www.goodreads.com/book/show/7713252-personality-theories](http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/7713252-personality-theories)

<sup>25</sup> Kellas J.G., *The Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity* (Macmillan Press Ltd:London,1998),29.

<sup>26</sup> George B. Vold *Conflict Theory in Don Martindal, The Nature and Types of Sociological Theories*, (London: Low and Brydon, 1960), 200.

<sup>27</sup> Naysan Adlparvar Mariz Tadros "The Evolution of Ethnicity Theory: Intersectionality, Geopolitics and Development" *IDS Bulletin 47 no 2* (2016),3.

people who identify themselves with the same ancestral origin with a share culture.

## Background

The Bafut *fondom* is a heterogeneous society in Cameroon Northwest Region. In this region Bafut *fondom* is located in Mezam Division situated some 20 kilometers away from the Northwest regional capital Bamenda with a land surface of about 425 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 120,000.<sup>28</sup> Following the readjustment of chiefdoms on 7 February 1981, Bafut *fondom* was officially recognized as a First Class Chiefdom under Prime Ministerial Decree 019/CAB/PM 1981.<sup>29</sup> The *fondom* is composed of 9 Second Class Chiefdoms namely Bawum, Obang, Mambu, Mankanikong, Mbakong, Bamundum, Nsem, Mankwi, Bawum and Bukari and 34 Third Class Chiefdoms. These chiefdoms are referred to in this study as ethnic groups recognized by Ministerial order No 36, 1982.<sup>30</sup> It should be noted that these ethnic groups traced their origins from different areas such as Widikum and Banyo in the Adamawa Region. For this reason, coexistence has become problematic and therefore other weapons such as war technology and mystical powers became useful in solidifying the union.

## War Technology in the Bafut *Fondom*

The type of conflicts usually determines the different types of weapons to be used. In the Bafut *fondom* these weapons were manufactured from natural and in-built devices to artificial man-made arms.<sup>31</sup> For example Chiefdoms such as Mambu, Bawum, Mankanikong and Mbeleli had a strong orientation towards iron production.<sup>32</sup> The local industries expanded to produce weapons and cloths for their warriors. These iron industries fabricated weapons such as spears, machetes and knives, Dane guns, bows and arrows, jabbing stick and stones which helped in protecting the *fondom* against external attacks.

The built-up arms were used according to the nature and form of warfare. Ambelem state that, these weapons were classified into projectile weapons, stock

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<sup>28</sup>Abeni, 2012

<sup>29</sup> Divine Fuhwi Ngwa, "The Concept of State Within a State' Smidst Conflict and Peace Building Ventures in Bafut, Cameroon," *Global Journal of Human Social Science: D History, Archaeology and Anthropology*, no 23, (2023), 11.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Paul Nchoji Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy, A Study of Inter-Chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfield, Northwest Province of Cameroon*, 76.

<sup>32</sup>Mbitimeh, Joseph, Ngwa, "Introduction to Archaeological Research in Bafut" (Master Dissertation in Archaeology, University of Yaounde I, 1987), 125.

weapons and defence weapons.<sup>33</sup> Ngam opined that, locally made weapons were produced from the black smiting industries that had developed to majestic repute in the manufacture of weapons and tools in the Grassfields throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>34</sup> The efficient organization combined with weapons made the warriors powerful and efficient to defend the union.

The spears used were long and pointed produce from Meta and fitted on a wooding bar known in Bafut as *nukongmanchuh*<sup>35</sup> *Nukong*.<sup>36</sup> These longer spears improved the strength of the phalanx by extending the rows of overlapping weapons projecting towards the enemy, and it remained in use throughout the *fondom*. This weapon was common in the Bafut *fondom*. Research from the field shows that, spears were used by Bafut warriors to fought the Mankon Bafut war.

Kaberry recounts that in May 1960, Bafut gave land to the Mankon to settle on grounds that Mankon would pay allegiance to the Bafut ethnic group by giving out any leopard pelt caught.<sup>37</sup> In the reign of Achirimbi II, this agreement was violated when they caught a leopard and refused to hand over the requested pelt to the Bafut *fondom*.<sup>38</sup> Bafut had to launch a war against Mankon wherein spears were the main weapons. This fact has been corroborated with that of Gabsa and Suh who posited that, Bafut Mankon relations was conflictual because Mankon had failed to respect the Leopard pelt tribute engagement. This contributed to confrontation between Mankon and Bafut.<sup>39</sup> Other weapons were imported from Akum which had huge deposit of iron.<sup>40</sup> Warnier, cited by Nkwi describes how the warriors fought and operated the different war weapons

...the standard armament consisted of a handful of throwing spears, a shield and cutlass carried on the side in a sheath.... the warriors fought in groups moving backwards and forwards in quick leaps waving one spear in their right hand above their heads, ready, to strike when they found the opportunity. When they have thrown all available spears, they tried to engage in short-range fighting with their cutlasses. The primary use of the cutlass, however, was to sever the head of

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<sup>33</sup>Ambelem, Gideon Neba. "The Maintainance of social Order Within Traditional Societies: Case study of Bafut Fondom" (PhD, Thesis Department of Political Science University of Yaounde II, 1998), 136.

<sup>34</sup>Ngam Confidence Chia, "The Travails of Bamenda Grassfields Homemade Soldiers in the World War I in Cameroon: Scenes of Disappointments Versus Passions of Fulfillment," *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, 8 no (2017), 9.

<sup>35</sup> This means weapon use in warfare.

<sup>36</sup> Spear is call *Nukong* in Bafut language.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Nchoji Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy, A Study of Inter-Chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfield, Northwest Province of Cameroon*, Department of Sociology University of Yaounde, 1986, 68.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Gideon Neba Ambelem, "The Maintenance of Social Order Within Traditional Societies: Case study of Bafut Fondom", 144..

<sup>40</sup>Joseph Ngwa Mbitimeh, "Introduction to Archaeological Research in Bafut", 46.

dead enemy and bring it back for display and to win the reward bestowed on a good fighter.<sup>41</sup>

The bows and arrows referred to as *nkere* was another war weapon used to defend the *fondom*. The diffusion centre of weapon could be traced from the Benue and Banyo land introduced in Bafut as a result of the Chamba and Fulani raids. The weapons were not only introduced as indigenes had gained skills to produce them. Ethnic clashes involving the Bafut *fondom* and neighbouring chiefdoms such as Nkwen, Bambui and Kom were fought with bows and arrows although it was not popular as reported by Nkwi.<sup>42</sup> However, it was rendered ineffective with the advent of guns around the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The increasing intertribal wars made bows and arrows to gradually fade away as Dane guns known as *tafan* were introduced. This type of weapon was very prestigious for defensive and offensive tactics. According to Warnier, guns were the best in terms of long-distance shooting of the defender over the assailants.<sup>43</sup> Warriors in the *fondom* defended themselves during war by congregating behind a natural or man-made defence wall in wait of the enemy. Reports from fieldwork showed that even if the gun misfired, the defender still had that opportunity to eliminate an assailant successfully.<sup>44</sup> The most common kind of gun in the Bafut *fondom* was the flint-lock and muzzle loading gun or the Dane gun commonly known in Bafut as *ngare* or *nkong muh*. Nkwi argued that, the invention of guns to defend the *fondom* did not have any significant impact as some historian's glorified guns.<sup>45</sup> Warnier posited that, guns gave sight advantage to the defender.<sup>46</sup> According to Kea, shot gun, used by Bafut warriors found themselves in disadvantage against the enemy of the *fondom*.<sup>47</sup> Warnier, went ahead to argue that, the difficulties that surrounded the one round shooting led to the development of new spearmen and gunmen who worked together in the *fondom*. To make the warriors effective they were organized specialized units such *La'ale*,

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<sup>41</sup>Paul Nchoji Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy, A Study of Inter-Chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfield, Northwest Province of Cameroon*, 78

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Pollock(JHH), An assessment report of bum in the Bamenda division Cameroon province, Buea Archives, 1927.

<sup>45</sup>Paul Nchoji Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy, A Study of Inter-Chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfield, Northwest Province of Cameroon*, 78

<sup>46</sup>Jean Pierre Warnier, *Trade Guns in the Grassfields of Cameroon*, (In *paideuma*, 1989), 16.

<sup>47</sup>Paul Nchoji Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy, A Study of Inter-Chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfield, Northwest Province of Cameroon*, 79

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

*Nda-Adanghawa, Ndanjem and Ndalee, Ndamukong, Nda Ngwareniwi, Nda-Nkwa'a, Ndangoh.* This made Bafut more efficient than their counterpart.

**Picture 1: Bafut Militia or Manjong Warrior in Colonial Era**



Source: *Abumbi II, The Customs and Traditions of Bafut, Presbook Plc. 2016, 40.*

These weapons were complimented with the use of stones in most cases, this was to defend or protect the *fondom* from enemies. This was a natural weapon commonly used around the Cameroon Grassfields of Cameroon. It cost-less to obtain one by the fighter, referred in Bafut as *ngo'o*. It was accompanied by war shields made of Buffalo skin, tree backs and Booby traps used for protection as defensive tactics. The people who lived rocky areas had the advantage of using rocks to defend the *fondom* in the advent of war.<sup>48</sup> Findings from the field show that, the hilly and rocky nature of Mbebili was used to fight enemies of the *fondom*. After the dislocation of the palace from Mbebili to Mumulah the area was used as vantage point to detect incoming enemy from the lowland. When the enemy was detected, they were dispersed with the use of stones or rocks rolled to the lowland towards the assailants. In other situations, the *Neko* (basket) that usually tied around the waist was used to carry into the battle field to defend the *fondom*. Just like the Bafut warriors, NKwen warriors equally used stones to resist the Bafut, Mandakwe and Mankon incursions. It should be noted that, stones were used to protect the central *fon's* Palace in Bafut which was the hub of traditional diplomacy. The collapse of the central palace would signify a breakdown of traditional diplomacy over the semi-autonomous chiefdoms and subsequent collapse of the *fondom*. Such an idea led to the construction of the strategic parts of the palace to limit external aggressions. It was not peculiar with the Bafut, but for the Kom palace was equally constructed with stones. The central palace of Bafut

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<sup>48</sup>Abumbi II, *The Customs and Traditions of Bafut*, 38.

was encircled by stones with gates locked or guarded especially during times of political crisis.

Apart from using weapons to defend the *fondom*, other defensive techniques were adopted such as digging and the used of trenches to defend the *fondom* from external attacks. It resulted from the high contest among the big *fondoms* such as Kom, Mankon, Bali Nyonga and Nso to increase the size of their *fondoms*.<sup>49</sup> This situation led to the development of new techniques to avoid surprise or ward off attacks. For example at about 300 to 400 meters from the central palace on the right side towards Mankaah road, a trench was dug to defend the *fondom*. Ambelem opined that, this strategy was not only used in Bafut because evidence of the use of trenches in war was found in Mankon, Nkwen, Bambui, Nso and Bali Nyonga.<sup>50</sup> These trenches were dug to protect and defend the *fondom* from eminent attacks from long-time rivals such as the Bali Nyonga.

The two and half meter wide and two meters deep trenches made it difficult for counter attacks to succeed. Warnier explained that, the enemies were allowed into this perimeter and bridges made to ease passed were removed by the Bafut warriors to prevent reinforcement for encircled enemy forces.<sup>51</sup> New traps and without possibility of reinforcement, the enemy was easily defeated.<sup>52</sup> If the *fondom* had to survive from internal and external attacks, then it was as a result of the different war technologies that were developed in the Bafut *fondom*.

### **The use of Mystical Powers as an Instrument to Defend the Bafut *Fondom***

The used of mystical powers during wars was very popular within the ranks of the traditional warriors. Again it was not only used to defend the Bafut *fondom* for other chiefdoms such as Songwa, Mbatu and Mbu.<sup>53</sup> These practices were carried out by 77 war medicine men known as *nnwongan*. They made use mysterious powers to succeed in their mission. This group was classified into diviners, omen readers, war magicians and war thunder senders.<sup>54</sup> The traditional warriors used war charms while diviners assisted them to determine the time and direction to

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<sup>49</sup>Paul Nchoji Nkwi, "Traditional Diplomacy, A Study of Inter-Chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfield, Northwest Province of Cameroon", 79

<sup>50</sup>Gideon Neba Ambelem, "The Maintenance of Social Order Within Traditional Societies: Case study of Bafut Fondom", 144.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid, 141.

<sup>53</sup>Hunt W.E, An Assessment Report On Bali Clan In The Bamenda Division Of The Cameroon Province ( Ms) Buea Archive, 1925

<sup>54</sup>Abumbi II, The Customs and Traditions of Bafut, 37.

avoid danger. The picture capture shows the performance of Diviner in Bafut (See picture 1).

**Picture 2: Diviner of Bafut Fondom**



Source :Pat Ritzenthaler Robert, 1962, 26.

Aletum observed that, diviners and medicine-men played a pivotal role in determine the time of war.<sup>55</sup> The function of the diviner was to find out, understand and predict the secret knowledge and inform the warriors how they could attack or defend the *fondom*.

These charms were either spoken or tied on the body around the waist, necks ankles and armpit or carried in a bag called *abag cho*.<sup>56</sup> It was activated by the movement of hands, touching of a tree or the ground. In other cases it made the warriors invisible in the face of his or her enemy. In order to succeed in the operationalisation of the charms names were pronounced and songs sang allowing warriors to cast spells on the enemy. It was prepared with the use of natural plants in *nda-anlu* and thrown in the path of the enemy by scouts and spies. The harvesting of these protective medicinal plants by traditional healers and magician was guided by cultural norms. The parts of herbs required for the therapy was harvested during the day, usually in the morning or evening or on particular days of the week. The aim was to ensure their effectiveness in the difficult situation. This was to weaken the enemy in the battle field. The warriors carried these charms under their armpit known in Bafut as *mbua*. It was accompanied by the use of the *musuya* and *mbusu* to protect warriors from severe

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<sup>55</sup>MichealAletumTabuwe, *Bafut Institutions in Modern Politics Cameroon*, (Yaounde:, SOPECAM,1990), 34.

<sup>56</sup> The Equivalent of this is War Bag.

injuries.<sup>57</sup>The Bafut militias were accompanied to the battlefield by healers and enchantress. The healers healed the injured person considered as *fu ibe*<sup>58</sup>while enchanting used spells to prevent physical or magical powers referred to as *fuisigine*.<sup>59</sup> Even the weapons used by the warriors were smeared with medicine developed from tree backs and herbs. If the enemy happened to sustained wounds it would never get healed.

To add, it was believed that, bees, ants, storms and cloud formed part of the Bafut war force. For instance, a case in point was an elephant shot at Kenshu by a Bukari hunter.<sup>60</sup> It was believed that, the elephant came from neighbouring *fondom* with the specific mission to destabilised the Bafut *fondom*. As a reward from the palace, the hunter was decorated with the *nefru ngu-u* or red father and raised to the rank of a warrior as a mark of appreciation for destroying an enemy.

This belief was exploited by the Bafut magicians to assist the Bafut warriors in the task of defending the territorial integrity of Bafut *fondom*. It was alleged that, warriors used magical potions which enable them to disappear, transform into trees, rocks and wind making them invisible in the eyes of the enemy. Chilver, says that, magic was used by the Bafut forces during the German war against the Mankon and Bafut.<sup>61</sup> It was for this reason that, the Bafut resisted the Germans for so long. Even when the *fon*, Abumbi I was exiled to Douala in 1907 Bafut remained united against the Germans. Therefore, this contributed to nation building and unity of the *fondom*.

### **Mystical Powers and Ethnic Unity**

Away from the usage of medicine in warfare, natural forces were used to prevent the enemies from entering into Bafut *fondom*. This practice, like in other communities in Cameroon especially in the Western Grassfields has been used to block the entrance into their communities. This was done by the used of herbs, sometime proactive ropes (see picture 2).

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<sup>57</sup> Hunt W.E, An Assessment Report On Bali Clan In The Bamenda Division Of The Cameroon Province ( Ms) Buea Archive, 1925.

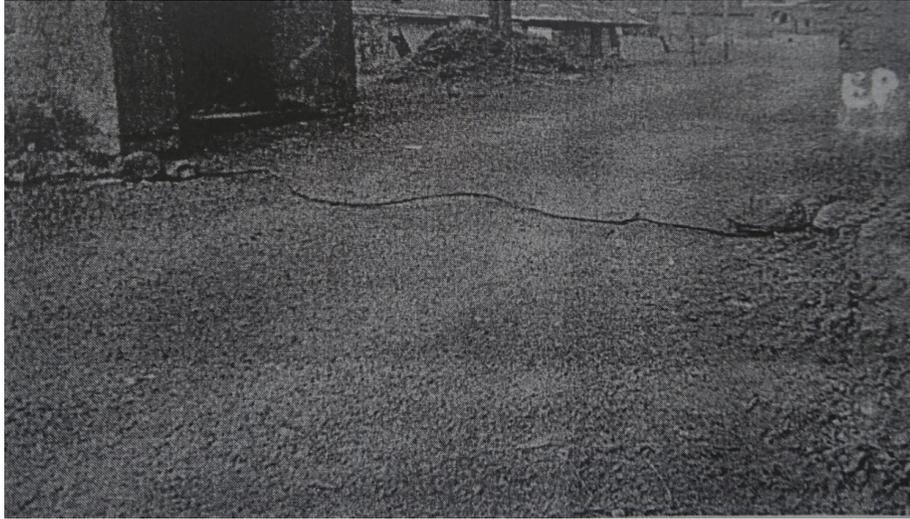
<sup>58</sup> Good traditional healer who use herbs to treatment war victim and sick people.

<sup>59</sup> Bad traditional medicine use to neutralize wittcraft. Make peple sick and other kill in time of crisis.

<sup>60</sup> Johnson Nsalah, Aged 70. Notable Bafut, Interview by Nwufor Christian Fuh, Ntamulung, March 11, 2022.

<sup>61</sup> Chilver Paramountcy and Protection in Cameroon, Bali and the Germans 1889-1913, in Britain and Germany in Africa P. Gifford and W.M Roger Louis (ed), (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1967), 11.

**Picture3: Protective Rope Laid in the Entrance of Bafut Palace**



Source: *Paschal Kum Awah, 2005,50.*

All roads leading to the *fondom* were closed with protective rope and circulation was seriously restricted. It was meant to barricade enemies considered as forces of destabilisation from passing through the Bafut territory. This was to ensure that, anybody entering the *fondom* with the aim to cause disorder was stripped of the strength of his or her super natural powers.

This was possible with the concoction of leaves, roots of trees, fruits such as *fenag* and bark of trees. Such mixture was referred to as *afoo-cho*. As earlier mentioned it was believed that, the invisible enemies from rival *fondom* or ethnic groups came in the form of wind, insects, storms and other pests to caused havoc in the *fondom*.<sup>62</sup> For example when Abumbi I was exiled to Douala mystical power was used to inflict the Germans and their allies with sickness, panic and confusion.<sup>63</sup> It should be noted that, even the return of the *fon* of Bafut from exile was as a result of the influence of the cultic society and the used of magical spells. Asombang state that, the palace of Bafut was also the centre where most of the rituals were planned, and executed. This is where most ritual life began and extended to the other quarters and chiefdoms. Sacrifices were made in unification shrine to protect the *fondom* from external attacks as illustrated in plate 1.

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<sup>62</sup>Warnier J.P, Pre-colonial Mankon the Development of Cameroon Chiefdom, in its Regional setting (Phd Thesis Woroy, Arbor Michigan University, 1975),409.

<sup>63</sup>Abumbi II, The Customs and Traditions of Bafut, 40.

### Plate 1: Unification Shrines

A



B



Source: Fabian Plock Alamy Stock Photo 25 March 2004

The pictures of dual attachment pillars A and B were used for sacrifices in the unification shrine with animals to protect the Bafut *fondom* from external attacks. Picture A is stone pillar that shows protection of the *fondom* while picture B is two sticks planted in a shrine which signified the union treaty signed between the aborigines and Bafut in Mbebili to create the Bafut *fondom*. It was for this reason that libation was poured on the unification shrine every December to appeased the ancestors for mutual understanding and protection of the *fondom*. Thus, Ngwa Joseph Suh Tamasang explained that;

I saw the mixture of potion to protect the *fondom* from disaster. Early in the morning, Takumbeng members gather at a shrine outside Ntooh to chop grasses and water harvested from mysterious areas in the Bafut *fondom*. There after it was mixed with blood of *country fowls*. *M'boneh* wood ashes collected from the *Nda Kwifor* was untied and gives to all partakers. In unison, they blow it into the air as a sign to barricade misfortune. At the close of the day, they disperse to different chiefdoms and villages with the potions to repeat the same rite. The Bukums and magicians were dispatched in all road junctions and farm road directions around the *fondom* to place potion at special points. The aim was to protect the *fondom* against witchcraft and improve on crop yields.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>64</sup>Jesoph Ngwa SuhTamasang, Aged 77, Teacher, From Agyiti Bafut but Residen Behind ST Paul Callege Nkwen, Interviewed by Nwufor Christian, 22, March 2021.

To close this ritual, the Takumbeng, the *fon*, the Bukums and Muntohs<sup>65</sup> moved to the central square in Bujong for final performance. It was in this light that J.S Mbiti, argued that, natural enemies come through nature like drought, earthquake, epidemics, famine, locusts and calamities in African societies.<sup>66</sup> Some of the enemies enumerated by this author attacked the whole communities at the same time and inflicted pains on the community. The strange occurrence provoked the population to think of magical solution to natural enemies while other point of views such as Aletum believed that, magic was used to protect the militia and the whole of the Bafut *fondom*.

This was through sacrifices and purification done to the ancestors as a means of protection from misfortune. This misfortune could demoralize the Bafut militia and put them on a disadvantaged position. According to Peter C.W. Gutking and Peter Waterman, the spirit of the founding father was considered to be an instrument of collective societal welfare and tend to protect the living from problems affecting them.<sup>67</sup> It is a belief in Africa that, society is made up of the living and the dead. The dead composed of the ancestors, who lay guidelines for that society. Therefore, they played a very important role to defend their people in times of danger. Ambelem articulate that, the ancestors were the invisible policemen who assured the maintenance of law and order which could only disintegrate if they withdrew their support for protection.<sup>68</sup> It could be argued that, the ancestors represent the gods and founders of Bafut *fondom* and who laid down the norms, ethics and tradition to governing the society and therefore watch over the living. In the absence of animal sacrifice to appease the gods and guarantee the protection, powerful and aggressive neighbours could exploit the situation to launch an attack with the aim of making territorial gains. Any ethnic group that violated the rules and regulation in a bid to destroy the *fondom* was inflicted with supernatural punishment. For example, the claim of the people of Bafut in relation to the dead of Ntoh Nicolas the chief of Bawum was that, he committed suicide. It was hurriedly concluded that his punishment was inflicted by the ancestors of Bafut *fondom* who were not happy with his action in relation to the Pan Bafut vision. This explains why the Bawum secret burial of Ntoh in 1996 without the notification of Bafut traditional authorities to explain the circumstances that led to his death was seen as a demolition to public peace in the Bafut *fondom*. According to Bafut tradition when somebody commits suicide purification is needed before

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<sup>65</sup>The name of princes

<sup>66</sup>John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to Africa Religion*, (Heinenmann Educational Books Ltd, 1977), 165.

<sup>67</sup> Peter C.W. Gutking and Peter Waterman, *African Social Studies: A Radical Reader*, (London: Heineman, 1977), 299.

<sup>68</sup>Gideon Neba Ambelem, "The Maintenance of Social Order Within Traditional Societies: Case study of Bafut Fondom,"151.

proper burial could be conducted which was never the case hence Bawum was stopped from performing any celebrations. Bawum was called to order by the central *kwifor* and they respected the injunction. Beside, the fear of misfortune, sickness or dead had scared wrong doers from engaging in macabre acts in the Bafut *fondom*. To avoid sanctions from the ancestors and their consequences, the Bafut community tended to respect rules laid down by the ancestors. Purification rites and sacrifices were usually performed when the rules and regulation were not respected. This was the reason why the paramount *fon* conducted sacrifices every year before the *Abin-Mfor* to appease the ancestors. This was necessary to prevent them from interfering and disturbing the dance considered as a symbol of unity. This ritual was conducted early in the morning, before the first cockcrow at 1:00 am, the Bukums gathered in the palace and prepared the material to be use for the rite. Ritual songs, camwood and a calabash of palm wine were necessary items or requirements for the ritual.

According to legend presented by Ambelem, the Bafut people, believed that, a deceased *fon* lodged in waterfalls, while other important personalities such as lineage heads lived in road junctions. This explains why death celebration of such notable were crowned or finalised at the road junctions. For example, it was believed that, the spirit of *fon* Achirimbi II who was considered a symbol monument of national unity resided in a waterfall called *Nifoo'oh* at mile 20 on the Wum road. The Bafut people were familiar with the waterfall that for them was a symbol of protection. Anybody who violated the customs and traditions regarding the waterfall could be sanctioned. The *fon* as the immediate successor of the Bafut people interceded and protected the living population of the *fondom* from this waterfall. The mystical values attached to the waterfall were described by Awah:

When the Bukums, delegated from the palace to appease the deceased *fons*, reach the waterfalls, they place the food on leaves and put it where the waterfall collects. They also put the camwood and a calabash of palm wine nearby. The Bukums move some metres away from the waterfall and wait for a while. When it starts raining very heavily, it announces the arrival of the late *fon* and the ancestors to collect the gifts.(...)heavy rain was restricted to the area of the waterfall and soaks the delegates. During this time, the deceased *fon* talks to them and sends them with a message to the entire kingdom.<sup>69</sup>

According to Awah, if these sacrifices were rejected, the *fon* would send a delegation to the different directions in far off *fondoms* such as Kom, Mankon,

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<sup>69</sup>Paschal Kum Awah, "Treating Diabetes in Cameroon: A Comparative Study in Medical Anthropology," (PhD Thesis, The University of Newcastle, October 2005), 52.

Nkwen and Babanki to consult the fortune-tellers on the eminent problems of the *fondom*. This was to avoid devastating calamities on the people of the Bafut *fondom*.

Furthermore, sacrifices were made before and after war outings. Sacrifices offered before the wars were intended to solicit the help of the ancestors to protect the Bafut militia in the battle front. This was link to the idea of Mbiti who says, ancestors had an influential role on the lives of the living. This was equally true citing Tamasang,, the case of Bafut *fondom* where the ancestors protected the militia who more dedicated to keep the unity of the *fondom*.<sup>70</sup> In situations where people were killed unjustly, sacrifices were needed to prevent the occurrences of misfortune which might likely affect the *fondom*. This nursed fear amongst the traditional authorities who could be sanctioned by the supernatural forces for their offenses. Such fright led to constant contacts with the diviners and magicians for first-hand information on eminent dangers that might happen to the *fondom*.<sup>71</sup> For instance, in the Bafut war council, the *fon* has his special collaborators and advisers which were diviners and magicians who predicted the aftermath of the war and the subsequent dangers that might affect the unity of the *fondom*. This usually made the council to be cautious and to explore possible avenues to avert the situation.

Sacrifices and purification were equally done in situations such as crimes, suicide, incest and murder. According to the custom and traditions of Bafut *fondom*, a crime was considered as taboo and an offense to the gods and this created create disunity. Any person that was guilty of any such crime was banished, sold as slave or killed to avoid further crises.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, traditional authorities offered sacrifices and carried out purification to cleanse the *fondom*. Nkwi argued that, the unjust spilling of blood within war and without war called for the purification. This was to prevent a situation that could generate into conflicts that weaken the unity of the *fondom*. The idea of sacrifices and purification rituals was common in the Grassfields *fondoms* such as Nkwen, Mankon, Bambui and Kom where sacrifices and purification to sustain their communities were also easy. For example, Tamanji posited that, after the return of Abumbi I from exile in 1908, he met with *fon* Angafor Momboo-oh II of the Bambui *fondom*, and the two *fons* carried out a sacred ritual.<sup>73</sup> This ritual solidified the genealogical bonds between the two

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<sup>70</sup> Joseph Ngwa Suh Tamasang, Aged 77, Teacher, From Agyiti Bafut but Resident Behind ST Paul Callege Nkwen, Interviewed by Nwufor Christian, 22, March 2021.

<sup>71</sup> Idem

<sup>72</sup> Idem.

<sup>73</sup> Asenju Callistus Tamanji, "Three Instances of Western Colonial Governments and Christian Missions in Cameroon Education: 1884-1961", (Phd Dissertation in the Faculty of the Graduate School of Cultural and Educational Policy Studies, 2001),50.

*fondoms* to live in peace, harmony and never to offend each other. In this light, Ngam has observed that the overriding conviction on charm, magic and ancestral spirit was the sustenance of traditional societies under military battalions.<sup>74</sup> This view corroborates with that of Funteh who opined that, charm and magic were to sustained wars in African societies.<sup>75</sup> This author uses the Grassfields, Bafut *fondom* inclusive, to argue that, beliefs were enough to boost the morale of the militia during war of resistances against the Germans. This must have been the case in the Bafut *fondom* who used *magic* powers to defend unity of the Bafut *fondom*.

### **The Use of Dialigie to Prevent the disintegration of the Bafut Fondom**

Inter-ethnic community dialogue has been a useful tool for identity prevention and peace building. Experience in several fragile traditional settings has shown that, empowering and strengthening the capacities of individuals, communities, and institutions to manage crises was essential for peace building.<sup>76</sup> As an instrument, dialogue was used to build relationships among a wide group of actors as well as a tool to build consensus among ethnic affiliations. Prime examples were boundary demarcations between Bafut- Mundum at Ntahmuche.<sup>77</sup> While in 1938 Nsoh was incorporated to Bawum.<sup>78</sup> This helped to reduce tension within the Bafut *fondom*. Also, in 1974, the political wrangling between *fon* Abumbi II of Bafut and chief Ntoh of Bawum, Mbah Wanki of Mambu and Atanga Muwa of Mankanikong chiefdoms in Bafut *fondom* provoked the Prefect of Mezam, Alexander N. Montanga to convene a round table dialogue.<sup>79</sup> This was because the belligerent parties and civil administrator saw war looming and thus used the dialogue was seen as the best option to prevent tension. Some subchiefs like Ben Ngwa of Banji and Atanga Muwa of Mankanikong were Quarter headers in Bafut *fondom* who were elevated to sub chiefs. The idea was meant to portray the *fondom* as one of the greatest in the Grassfields. At the end of the discussion, conflicting

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<sup>74</sup>Ngam Confidence Chia, “The Travails of Bamenda Grassfields Homemade Soldiers in the World War I in Cameroon: Scenes of Disappointments Versus Passions of Fulfillment,” 7.

<sup>75</sup>Mark Bolak Funteh “A Historical Thought to the Cameroon Grassfields’ Traditional of Magic, Warfare and Peace,” *International Journal of Reseach*, 2 no, ISSN 2348-6848, (2015).

<sup>76</sup> Adjaratou Wakha Aidara Ndiaye, Thierno Mouctar Bah, Ndeye Amy Ndiaye, Odile Tendeng *Dialogue as an Effective Tool for Prevention and Conflict Resolution in Africa*, United States: Institute of Peace (May 2016), 7.

<sup>77</sup> NW File, Qf/BPA, Bamundum and Bafut Land Dispute, 1933.

<sup>78</sup> Minutes of Reconciliatory Meeting between the fon of Bafut and Chief Ntoh of Bawum Bafut held in the Subdivisional Office Bamenda Central On 26th September 1980 and 1st October 1980, 1-5

<sup>79</sup>Munites of meeting held on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> April, 1976 in the Prefect’s Office, Bamenda to solve the differences between

the fon of Bafut on one hand, and subchief Mbah Wanki, Atanga Muwa and Ntoh on the other hand, DBA, File NW/1976/1.

parties were satisfied as all of them signed the minutes as an approval to stay united in the *fondom*.

Local peace building in the Bafut *fondom* brought some concrete positive achievements, especially in the areas of institutional building, political, cultural and inter-ethnic dialogue. The dialogue rested on the knowledge of their ethnic and cultural differences, as well as the principle of 'does no harm'. This strategy improved communication and interaction within and between ethnic groups. Indigenous councils and Quarter heads took advantage of prevailing peace to increase the understanding and social cohesion, which were critical elements in peace building in ethnic groups. As a result, it reduced the tension and fostered the vision of a Pan Bafut *fondom*.

Furthermore, an organized discussion wherein free expression of opinions, contradictory debates, advice, negotiation and positive criticism were allowed was set up as a means of conflict prevention. The elders inspired by wisdom have continuously favoured the peaceful option in identity preservation and inter-ethnic conflict prevention. The elders in the *fondom* preferred crises prevention rather than its resolution.<sup>80</sup> Such option made them to embrace the expression, "prevention is better than cure." Che Nya opined that, the lack of dialogue in crises situation would cost more damage to the population.<sup>81</sup> It was for this reason that, *fon* Achirimbi II summoned Chief Njua Nanoh I of Obang, Chief Ben Ngwa of Banji and elders, in a dialogue under the watchful eyes of A.B Westmacott on the 29 of November 1954 in order to prevent any damage on the *fondom*.<sup>82</sup> The *fon* stressed that it was only through united efforts that development could be successful in the *fondom*. Chief Njua Nanoh of Obang, Chief Ben Ngwa and Ntoh agreed on earnest permanent peace and added that, they would only succeed when taxes, which has been a source of conflict be paid directly to taxation office and the percentage directly to the village head. It was advised that, the case concerning the leopard skin in the Native Court be reviewed and withdrawn.

Moreover, it was suggested that, the mandatory visits by the sub chiefs to the *fon* be abolished.<sup>83</sup> The decision which emanated from the dialogue helped in preventing the collapsed of the *fondom*. As a matter of fact, what was being sought

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<sup>80</sup> Adjaratou Wakha Aidara Ndiaye, Thierno Mouctar Bah, Ndeye Amy Ndiaye, Odile Tendeng Dialogue as an Effective Tool for Prevention and Conflict Resolution in Africa, United States Institute of Peace, (May 2016),4.

<sup>81</sup> Job Che Nya, Aged 75, Traditional Council Chairman Obang, Interviewed by Nwufor Christian, Bamenda Town, 29, April 2020.

<sup>82</sup>File 361, 223 BDA Mr Talah Village Head and Quarter heads of Banji Village Application for Resident's Review in Bafut Central Court Criminal Case No. 85/49

<sup>83</sup>Ibide.

through the process was a peaceful consensus, common understanding and the spirit of tolerance. To show that, discussion was fruitful, both parties cracked jokes and shared *akwouo*,<sup>84</sup> kola nuts, as a sign of forgiveness.<sup>85</sup> However, these attributes were absent at times; hence the process of dialogue was painstaking and most often did not work to address deeply-rooted causes of identity preservation and inter-ethnic conflicts.

## Conclusion

The objective of this paper was to examine the survival strategies used to sustain the unity of the *fondom*. The research revealed that, war technology was common in Bafut *fondom* which saw fabrication of weapons such as spears, bows and arrows, machetes, and knives. Traditional armed forces utilized arms in war as means to sustain the unity of the *fondom*. Such formidable manpower in war situations was admired in the *fondom* as they fought with the spirit of patriotism to restore harmony and peace in the *fondom*. The success was facilitated by well-organized warriors under war club or Manjong with different specialties. Arms production was complimented with the used of mystical powers to fight wars which was destructive to the unity of the *fondom*. In other to further obstruct disintegration tendency in the *fondom* dialogue was exploited. Therefore, the paper submits that, these strategies contributed in harnessing the spirit of peaceful co-existence in the *fondom*. Nevertheless, the complete elimination of ethnic divides was an illusion as there has been continuous manifestation of crisis in the *fondom* in other forms that threaten state existence.

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<sup>84</sup> Raffia Hookeri

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