

**ASSESSING THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE MANAGEMENT AND
RESOLUTION OF THE CHIEFTAINCY IMBROGLIO IN FURU-AWA OF
CAMEROON’S GRASSFIELDS, 1986-2016**

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ABSTRACT

Chieftaincy conflicts constitute one of the most perennial problems among the Furu communities in the Cameroon Grassfields. The contestations over leadership emerged out of the budding desire by contesting parties claiming their legitimacy to the throne. The management and resolution of the dissonances actually depended on the role played by different actors ranging from traditional to state institutions. Amidst the rebuttal of this succession squabbles, traditional institutions stood as the major actors in the resolution and management of chieftaincy squabbles in Furu-Awa. Their inability in providing lasting solutions during vacancies at the helm of the village brought on board administering authorities after the attainment of independence. The paper in this regard, contends that inconsistent administrative and customary laws in the management and resolution of chieftaincy vacancies rather accentuated the imbroglio in Furu-Awa village with the major contestation straddled on the rotatory form of chieftaincy among the three main families. The various contesting parties exploited pitfalls of customary and administrative norms to lay claims to the throne thus making transition a very difficult task. The paper makes use of a combination of both primary and secondary source material to succor its main thesis.

Key words: *chieftaincy, succession, conflicts, imbroglio, resolution, family, administration and pitfalls.*

Background

Chieftaincy conflicts is of an ubiquitous occurrence in the Bamenda Grasslands in general and among the Furu-Awa community in particular. Chieftaincy institution considered as one of the pillars in African communities was well respected and justifies reasons why it stood the test of time. The various traditional institutions had clear cut functions crafted with customary norms.

¹The Chief or Fon that incarnated this institution was divine in nature and thus exercised judiciary, legislative, executive, religious and military functions during the pre-eminence period. They therefore acted as custodians to the customs and traditions of their states or kingdoms². Bearing in mind that conflicts are inevitable in human societies, the process of naming a successor to traditional leadership position among different ethnic groups in Africa became a major bone of contention within several communities. In the North West Region of Cameroon, the situation had become rampant thus constituting the bases of disintegration of ethnic communities leading to the emergence of so many composite Fondoms within the region.

Although not peculiar to the region alone, chieftaincy succession in Furu-Awa became a unique experience within the grassfield based on its location and traditional instruments. Certain casual agreements during the pre-eminence period constituted reasons why succession disputes emerged in the later years. The advent of independence helped to relieve the situation as Civil administrators were brought to the lime light as mediators within conflicting parties. Administrative interference in chieftaincy issues were very weak at the dawn of independence based on the enclaved nature of Furu-Awa. It was equally compounded by migration and settlement patterns within the community. The role of administrators was highly felt in 1981 when Furu-Awa became a district. A District Head was therefore assigned to manage the day to day affairs of the District placed under his tutelage. Pertaining to chieftaincy related issues, Decree No.245/77 of July 15 1977 gave guidelines to the role played by the different administering authorities in relation to traditional governance and conflict situations in particular³. It was in this regard that the state would become involved in resolving conflicts among the three major families consisting of Mentap, Bukpo and Bufam that make up the Furu-Awa village. In most instances, these conflicts were resolved to the dissatisfaction of certain fractions of the community. When majority accepted administrative decisions, the minority were bound to succumb to the latter.

However, resolving chieftaincy imbroglio has proven to be dauntingly difficult and complex task in Furu-Awa as administrative authorities in recent time's contested customary norms thus

making indigenes to dissociated themselves from administrative measures aimed at resolving the crisis. This has aggravated community grievances against the administration leading to attacks against them. The odd number principle often used in resolving chieftaincy conflicts within the grasslands were futile as the vanquished were always unwilling to accept defeat from the victorious parties. These old number principle had often prevailed amongst kingsmen within a certain traditional institution, thus giving it a credible and legal backing within customary norms. The kingmen in Furu-Awa rather became divided after the 1990 chieftaincy imbroglio and only resurfaced by 2012 following the astute nature of Liweto Patrick in bringing the different belligerents to a common understanding.

Based on the aforementioned background, this paper therefore argues that inconsistent administrative and customary laws in the management and resolution of chieftaincy vacancies rather accentuated the imbroglio in Furu-Awa village with the major contestation straddled on the rotatory form of chieftaincy among the three main families. The various contesting parties exploited pitfalls of customary and administrative norms to lay claims to the throne thus making transition a very difficult task. On the basis of this argument, the paper articulates on three major preoccupations, it begins by analyzing the genesis of chieftaincy imbroglio in Furu-Awa. Secondly, it highlights the manifestation of the conflicts and lastly an assessment of the role played by different stakeholders in resolving the impasse.

Migratory Roots of the Conflicts

The tussle over chieftaincy issues in Furu-Awa was very intriguing as each of the conflicting party tried to exploit the lapses that was visible under traditional norms and customs. Its evolution brought on board different actors. The causes are as far reaching as they are complicated, spanning from the migratory history of the people to the institution of various legislatures. Discourses on the migration and settlement of the Furu-Awa people have often been trapped into controversies by the different families, thus constituting the bases of an eminent conflict. These different families unanimously agree on the fact that, power was bestowed on

certain families head within their enlarged families. These families were, the Bufam, Bukpo and Mentap in any other. All of these families emerged from the Furu ethnic group and so have similar cultural practises among themselves.⁴ The migration of the Awa's which consist of Bikiak, Busho and Awa were influenced by hunting and the search for security following inter-tribal conflicts⁵. The Bikiak, Busho and Awa emerged from the Furu ethnic group⁶. The settlement of the Furu-Awas into dispersed patterns made capturing very easy during the Fulani raids in the area. The Bufam family settled at Mt Buzony, Mentap at Mt. Buzizi and Bukpo if Mt Muzou with each having their royal clan and chief⁷. These three major families were captured during the 19th century and taken to Nigeria during the period of the Jihads. In Nigeria they began to work in different capacities to the Muslim clerics.

While in captivity, the three families became united as they were apprehended as warriors fighting for the Jihadist group. By the end of the 19th century, Jihadist activities had come to an end and so the different families were united as they migrate back to Furu-Awa. Chieftaincy leadership which were hitherto influenced by their large families were to be redefined among the different enlarged families while they all live in the same area. Their liberation from Nigeria had prompted new dynamics as to their cultural setting was concerned. They had apprehended the Jukum language and their traditional system based on the long duration of their stay back in Nigeria. It was at this period that the search for authority was to become a major issue⁸.

According to informants from the Mentap and Bukpo families, the compromise engaged by the various families was to unite the chieftaincy leadership making it rotatory among the different families. The response were positive and the different families were not yet united as per the period. The Bukpo while at Furu-Bana had to crown their chief called Nyenkutah⁹. This traditional ruler at the mantle of power had an arduous task of bringing the family together and taking them back to Furu-Awa. Their migration to Furu-Awa was short lived as Guru¹⁰ Nyenkutah died. Despite his rise to prominence as the traditional ruler, his influence was never felt across the main families' reason while the Bufam refute claims of his leadership¹¹. The Mentap family migrated to Furu-Bana for safety after the Jihads. The Furu-Awa people had

numerous cultural differences alongside the Furu-Bana people. The cultural practices of the Furu-Bana people were in contrast with those of the Furu-Awa people and vice versa. The Furu-Bana people felt they were controlled by the Furu-Awa people considering the population vis-a-vis theirs. This therefore led to their search for a common settlement amidst the Bufam family in their present site that were to be later on joined by Bukpo family.

Resource persons from the Bufam clan attest to the fact that, they were the first people to migrate to their present side and later followed by the Mentap and Bukpo. The Mentap on their part sustains arguments stemming from the fact that Chief Gakiek moved to Mount Kweso where they finally joined the Bufam around their present site. Before the merger actually existed Gakiek had passed on. Guru Sabio Kaigama Gamina took over the leadership of Furu-Awa by 1922 making his authority felt across the different families¹². The village Furu-Awa was named after him Gamina and it became pronounced especially among the Busho and Sambari people. His rise to prominence was characterized by an era where several concessions came to the lime light as advanced by members of the Mentap and Bukpo families. According to some key informants, the Mentap and Bufam families agreed on a transitional form of leadership from one family to another. The eventual arrival of the Bukpo meant leadership to be extended to their family as well¹³. The Bufam family had often refuted such claims. The transition from one leader to another became a perennial issue as the different families do not agree about their past as a people. These suspicion actually began to resurface following the transfer of mantle from Guru Sabio to Guru Jam.

Upon the death of Guru Gamina, the debacle over leadership was created within the village. The eventual death of Guru Gamina had caused numerous problems as it created a vacuum. The Bukpo and Mentap families claim that they were not yet ready to take upon leadership considering the fact that Gamina ruled for a very short time and coupled with the youthfulness of their children¹⁴. It was against this backdrop that Guru Jam Kaigama emerged as chief of Furu-Awa. He was very smart as he knew that the chieftaincy stool was highly contested. Certain Informants of the Bufam descent attest to the fact that Jam was conversant about leadership

moving from one family to another. He had strong attachment to members from the Mentap and Bukpo families¹⁵. During his reign he tried as much as possible to maintain the stool for the Bufam families although it was not out rightly spoken. Chieftaincy succession was to become a major issue reason while he tried as much as possible to revisit hitherto agreements between Guru Gamina and the Mentap families. The Bufam families attest to the fact, Guru Jam had written to the administration which was aimed at legalizing the throne for his family. He therefore began to train his son Usmanu Jam into taking over the mantle after his death. He later on died in 1986 creating an eminent vacuum that was characterized by contestation to the crown. The three families began to contest the throne out rightly, thus creating tension among the kingmakers.

The Furu-Awa succession Conflicts

The death of Chief Jam Kaigama on October 1, 1986 intensified chieftaincy conflicts in Furu-Awa. The District Officer who by then was in Wum for a meeting had to return in the company of the Senior Divisional Officer to Furu-Awa. Upon his arrival he had realized that the son of Jam Kaigama was on the stool. He decided to conduct an inquiry to understand how Chieftaincy coronations are done in Furu-Awa in conformity to the norms and traditions of the people¹⁶. It was at the end of his investigations that he discovered that the chieftaincy stool was rather rotatory as advanced by a cross section of his informants. The death of Chief Jam Gaigama had brought a lot of controversy upon the Furu-Awa stool.

Each of the various families exploited lapses inherent on succession to claim supremacy upon the crown. The Bufam claimed their patriarchy right over leadership in Furu-Awa following presiding chiefs like Gamina, Sabio and Jam Kaigama successively¹⁷. The Mentap and Bukpo, equally claimed their legitimate rights to the throne from the Jihads and Chamba wars. The District Officer in bid to resolve the issue couldn't succeed as the conflicting families were at confrontations with each other. Based on the fact that second class chiefdoms were placed under the control of the Senior Divisional Officer, he therefore wrote a report and send to the Senior Divisional Officer for a lasting solution.

It was based on the nature of the terrain that administrative measures would take a long time to resolve the squabbles. In 1990, the Senior Divisional Officer represented by his Second Assistant Senior Divisional Officer, Assistant Divisional Officer Wum, and the Brigade Commander of Gendarmerie for Furu-Awa, the commissioner of special branch Wum, the Furu-Awa CPDM branch president and the District Officer would move to Furu-Awa to provide lasting solutions to be the imbroglia¹⁸. The District Head noted for his brute attitude towards the indigenes would move into the villages with whips to force the people to come out for the consultative talks. He was very much aware of the antagonism that had emerged among the families following chieftaincy issues. Three members were called upon from each of the families and the law of 1977 organizing chiefdoms in Cameroon was read to them¹⁹. The Assistant Divisional Officer called upon the notables to present their chief to the administration. Efforts were therefore made by the administration in trying to ensure that the indigenes of Furu-Awa concerted among themselves to present a candidate. The Bufam family presented Usmanu Jam as their candidate. The Mentap presented Umaru Yakuba and Bukpo, Tempe Jonathan. The Bufam candidate declined his position in favour of his brother Jam Danladi. Upon the administration proclamation of Jam Danladi, the notables murmured among themselves and the hall became noisy²⁰.

The administration in strict compliance with the law had rejected the Mentap candidate Umaru Yakuba who was a former teacher from Nigeria. He was rejected on grounds that he was not in possession of a Cameroonian national identity card²¹. His was the most popular candidate presented but considering his long stay in Nigeria: that had made him more Nigerian-oriented as he was never in possession of his valid Cameroonian documents which disqualified him. Equally, he was very level headed and humble among the candidates presented. This factor acted to the admiration of the people. The 1977 chieftaincy law acted to his disfavour and so considerations could not be arrived upon his candidacy.

The administration therefore resorted to voting on the two candidates whose applications were retained for the exercise. At the end of the day, Chief Tempe Jonathan won. The participants had

to sign the report from the consultation talks attesting the concessions arrived at. The Electoral College that consisted of nine members, three from each family had to sign a report at the end in favour of a rotatory chieftaincy stool . The kingmakers were not to vote in the elections to be conducted considering the very fact that they were not members from the different families. These consultative talks held on March 16 1990 provided a lasting solution to the squabbles. The throne as entrusted to the Bakpo was to subsequently pass to Mentap family and then to Bufam²². The Bufam family became annoyed and after they appointment of a new Sub Divisional Officer, began writing petitions to DO'S calling on them to revisit the 1990 consensus. In 1991, they began to contest against Bigal Awa who was District Head at the time for masterminding the ploy to transfer Bufam legitimate claim to the throne in favour of the other families. The Divisional Officer²³ (DO) refuted all the allegations levied against him as the facts were clear. He had handed over the matter to the Senior Divisional Officer (SDO) and only acted as a member of the Commission created by the SDO²⁴.

The Bufam family was continuously in disagreement with hitherto agreements of 1990 and began writing petitions. The compromised reached in 1990 had made successive administrators to use tact in calming down the Bufam families. These petitions were mostly orchestrated by Jam Danladi from the Bufam family as a protest response to the 1990 agreements²⁵. He was greatly enlightened and wanted a reversal of previous agreements. He was often given a listening ear considering his level of enlightenment vis a vis other indigenes within the community, thus his proposals were heeded to by some administrators²⁶.

The Bufam family therefore decided to exempt themselves from chieftaincy issues until a lasting solution was agreed upon to their favour. They no longer participated in chieftaincy issues for close to 15years. The advent of Lieweto Patrick brought great relieve as far as chieftaincy issues were concerned. He encouraged the Bufam to get involved in traditional issues while a lasting solution to their grievances was to be revisited²⁷. In 2007, the head of the council Danladi Dinga from Bukpo family was bound to surrender his position. The head of the traditional council

actually rotated with each having a mandate of five years. It had been previously agreed that the chief and traditional head could not come from the same family. It was in this regard that the head of the traditional council was to be replaced. The Bufam family therefore proposed Bassen Danladi. He was therefore to replace Danladi Dinga²⁸. The Bufam therefore became involved in the affairs of Furu-Awa in the capacity of chief council within the traditional council. He is the second in command after the chief.

The Traditional council had to take over the leadership of Furu-Awa considering the ill health of Guru Tempe Jonathan. The ill health of the chief had given the head of the traditional council the major prerogative of distributing land in consultation with other council members and to solve problems amicably among indigenes within the community. The ill health of the Guru will further lead to his death in April 2014. The inability to learn from history had often exacerbated the problem of chieftaincy succession. However, some of these administrators were often supported by some misguided individuals that had always leaned on administrative decisions as a stepping stone to emerge. The case in Furu-Awa is bound as lasting solutions had been arrived hitherto the conflicts of 2016 following Chief Tempe's death in 2014²⁹. The bugging need to distort certain facts by certain parties to suit their whims and caprices had preempted certain growing demands for peace to be restored.

It is rather erroneous that administrative decisions had out rightly favoured particular personalities during consultative talks giving little or no room for discussions. This had therefore provoked the growing hatred for administration authorities leading to an eventual attack by 2016. Administrative authorities that took sides were greatly manipulated by gullible individuals from the different families. A correspondence he wrote in response to the conflicts in 1990 rather insinuated he was misled. He alleged that internal wrangling's over leadership after the demise of Chief Jam Kaigama had led to the detention of his son Prince Kashibo Shika for writing a petition against the Divisional Officer after which an election was organized³⁰. These allegations were rather wrong as insinuated by the Divisional Officer since no detention took place as a result of chieftaincy syllables³¹.

Another patient allegation stemmed from the fact that the supposed king makers were not recognized by chiefs of their various villages and their names never featured in the consultative report which the DO alleges as fake³². The culture and tradition of Furu-Awa had stipulated that king makers enthroned Chiefs and so do not select chiefs. These kingmakers were not members of the Electoral College and so couldn't sign the report. Only commission members and those who signed the consultative reports were given the pride of place to sign.

The administrative authorities were very versed with the problems inherent in Furu-Awa prior to designation of chiefs. It was in this regard that various administrators set inescapable traps to either resolve the crisis or to discard certain persons from ascending the throne³³. By virtue of the socio-political setting in Furu-Awa and its enclave nature, administrative decisions had a great influence on the perception the indigenes had towards their leadership. The various families tried as much as possible to go closer to the administration either to reinforce their relationship or to gain favour from the administration. The first district officer applied a lot of tact in resolving problems that were to stand the test of time by his predecessor who in turn viewed an administrative decision that emerged from the administrative consultation reports as fake. This they did to compliance with prescribed text.

The death of Chief Tempe Jonathan orchestrated other new developments in chieftaincy debacles among the three families that make up Furu-Awa. By 2015, the issues became glaring as it was between two parties. The Bufam family was on one hand backed by the Divisional Officer and the Mentap and Bukpo on the other side. Rather than applying the 1990 arrangements, the administration of Adamu Shaibu Ibrahim rather brought to the limelight new developments. His major prerogative was aimed at restituting the traditional leadership of the Bafum family. The leadership of Tempe was outmatched by the gullibility of members of Bufam family who intended to seize back the throne from them. They decided to liaise with the administration as a major step towards regaining the throne. This would later spark disagreements between the administration and people from the Mentap and Bukpo families respectively.

The DO instantaneously took the Bufam position of analyzing the history of Furu-Awa based on the facts that were presented to him. He acted in obscurantism by not allowing the different family members to talk freely during the consultative talks. He established the fact that the Bukpos and the Mentaps were subjects of Furu-Bana, living in Furu-Bana under the chief of Furu-Bana³⁴. They had no chiefs but clan heads Nyenkuta and Gakieh respectively. He further posits in a letter that Nyenkuta and Gakieh lived and died in Furu-Bana long before the Mentaps and Furu-Bana long migrated to meet the Bufams under Chief Kaigama Sabio (1922-1955)³⁵. Oral evidence from most notables from Furu-Bana and Furu-Awa refutes such claims that Nyenkuta and Gakieh were clan heads and not chiefs. The DO further lays the claims that chief Sabio had to pay a tax in Shillings for the Bukpos and the Mentaps to the chief of Furu-Bana to take them down to Furu-Awa³⁶. This therefore meant that the Bukpos and the Mentaps were rescued by the Bufams under the dominating leadership of Furu-Bana people.

The chief of Furu-Bana equally refuted these claims. The Bukpos and Mentaps settled in Nangwa before they finally settled in Furu-Awa upon persuasion from the Bufams. The Bufams equally sustain the fact that chief Sabio was succeeded by his son Jam Kaigama who ruled from 1955 to 1986 leaving a will in favour of his son Usmanu Joseph Jam (living). Another prominent issue was based on the 2014 Chieftaincy dispute that resurfaces in 2016 with rather new issues that needed deliberations by the actors concerned. The Mentap and Bukpo families were annoyed by the manner with which DO Adamu Shuibu carried out the consultative talks that were aimed at resolving the issues at stake. It was in this regard that they wrote a petition to the SDO in view to seeking a lasting solution to the problem. The DO In return wrote a letter to two prominent notables Bui Ntep and Lodia Bawun as a rejoinder to their previous petition³⁷. The conflicts still continued as both contenders crown their respective candidates. Despite this continuous state of affairs, an assessment of traditional institutions, administering authority and the problem of identity acted as major issues in the resolution and management of the imbroglio .

The Role of Traditional institution

Adherence to traditional norms and practices preoccupied different traditional institutions when vacancies emerged at the helm of the village. The essence of choosing a particular leader at the helm of the community centred on legitimacy. Pre-colonial experiences had limited contestations in the selection of a ruler considering the fact that royalty was bestowed on particular family heads. The settlement of the Awa's in separate communities made chieftaincy issues easy as each clan family was charged with the responsibility of enthroning their chiefs. The advent of the Holy Wars within the ambits of Jihads as well as the Chamba wars had greatly affected the instruments of traditional leadership³⁸. The coming together of these three main families created pitfalls in native customs and traditions. The drawbacks reached in its inability of addressing succession issues. The Bufam family haven gained authority during the colonial era conserved power as the major founders of the locality. The Mentap and Bukpo families based their arguments on agreements arrived at during the end of the Jihadist wars.

In all this contestation, the tussle over power began to prevail. Some Bufam informants attest to an agreement with the Mentap families on a rotatory chieftaincy system. Considering the fact that chieftaincy enthronement was still championed by the individuals indicated lope holes in the resolution of conflicts in authority when they occurred. The process of enthronement of traditional rulers in Furu-Awa was unanimously agreed by the various families. Their disagreements often emerged on the personalities to assent the throne. The probation period of 40 days after the death of a chief and the enthronement of another created drawbacks³⁹. This probation period rather became a moment were families contested the throne. Customary norms failed to address the conditions to which the vacancy was to be carried out in case were a failure on the part of the family to organise a funeral.

Amidst rebuttal of succession squabbles, traditional institutions stood as the major actors in resolving the dissonance. The different chiefs were conversant of their role in resolving crisis that was anticipated. It was against this backdrop that Chief Kaigama Jam had designated his son

Jam Danladi as heir. In due course, he designated Usmanu Jam considering the attitude of the latter to live up to certain expectations. Chief Kaigama's inability to bring on board the different other families considering the strata and configuration of these institutions were therefore viewed as a major reason why his aspirations of resolving the dissonance that were previewed could not stand the test of time. The issues of chieftaincy squabbles had further weakened the authority of traditional governance as the various organs became weak and some had to exit from community activities. The era of Chief Tempe Jonathan witnessed a very weak traditional institution. The functions of *Dogareh* and *Mangaji* were inexistence following contestations from the Bufam. The 2007 process of reconciliation was rather short lived following the ill health and eventual passing on of Chief Tempe. The reconciliation process also faced numerous obstacles that emerged from the famous land crisis between the Divisional Officer and indigenes from the Mentap and Bukpo families. In essence, traditional institutions after the death of Chief Kaigama Jam became very weak in resolving the crisis and so had to depend on administering authorities to break the impasse that created suspicion and hatred among the families.

The Role of Administering Authorities

The functional mechanism of administrative interference in conflict situations was enshrined in the laws of the country. The degree no 77/245 of 1977 was explicit on chieftaincy related issues. The administrative authorities were therefore charged with the responsibility of resolving conflicts in compliance with regulations⁴⁰. Gazetted chiefdoms like Furu-Awa, was placed under the jurisdiction of the Senior Divisional Officer. The various Senior Divisional Officers never resolved the conflicts directly but used their sub-ordinates in carrying out consultation talks. In this regard, resolving the conflicts actually depended on mechanisms adopted by the direct actors. The first administering authority as previously mentioned was Bigal Awa. Considering his background from the grasslands had initially affected his method of resolving the conflict.

The father to son patrimony in traditional leader was thought by the administrator as a norm in most grassfield communities. Upon investigations, a cross section of people within the community recounted traditional leadership transition from a rotatory perspective. The deadlock

among the families had made the District Head to seek solutions from hierarchy as per the law. The enclaved nature of the community took the Senior Divisional Officer some time in creating a commission that was to resolve the crisis⁴¹. The commission had to proposed methods of resolving the crisis by first seeking customary norms and tradition. The inability to break the impasse based on disagreements as per traditional demands had led to the voting system with members from all the conflict families involved. The electoral college of three persons from each of the families were to be designated by their families for voting. The results went a long way in legitimizing the rotatory system of succession. The Bufam family contested the results accusing the District Head of master minding the ploy to seize power from them. These allegations resurface when the Bufam candidate failed to become victorious after the elections were conducted. The District Head refuted all the claims bringing out the consultation talks report within which he was a member⁴².

The succeeding administering authorities while receiving the various petitions from the vanquished only reassured the Bufam family that a revisit of the 1990 agreements can only take place following the death of the Chief. They were assured of one day obtaining the throne in future when the chief had passed on. The demise of Chief Tempe brought to the limelight new developments from the Bufam family pertaining to the throne. The inability of the Sub Divisional Office of Furu-Awa in accepting the 1990 agreements, regarding it as fake only accentuated the crisis. The new developments in favour of the Bufam family against the Mentap and Bukpo only help to develop hatred from a cross section of the community. The imprisonment of the supposed chief from the Mentap families only created more suspicion. Tension arose in the community and in 2016, the Sub Divisional Officer was beaten and wounded seriously in connection to the crisis. The immediate course to this brutal treatment he received by some youths of the Mentap and Bukpo families alongside some Turuwa indigenes were in connection to his inability in resolving farmer- grazer conflicts. This issue only provided grounds for the disgruntled family members in attacking the Divisional Officer. Their reaction

towards this administrative authority was based on his inability to strike a balance among the different families.

The Question of identity

On the bases of the chieftaincy, the contestation among the families was aimed at justifying the origins of the different contenders to the throne. This prominent issue was raised in 1955 but later on abandoned as all the families sought to welcome all despite the controversy that surrounded their origins. The issues over nationality became a major point for concern particularly among the Bufam family who were not in accordance with the Bukpo and Mentap candidate called Jugo Oscar. The analysis from the Bufam had indicated that Jugo Oscar had no links to the throne. The DO had carried out detailed investigations aimed at attesting the background of Oscar. He affirms that;

Jugo Oscar had no ancestral claims to the throne. Except it is assumed that the throne could be assessed by just anyone who desires .Nevertheless, I had to prove this last assumption as well as all your claims.....the nationality of Oscar was put to question as his father appeared to have several names and was born of three different families spread across two different countries. With unanimity pointing to his father being a certain Jugo Kudeh of Sabongida Yukuben in the Federal Republic of Nigeria contrary to your claims that he is the son of a certain imaginary Umaru Simon Jugo of Furu-Awa .Given this appalling controversies , the divisional officer still devised alternative means of enabling you to clarify your claims-he requested you to provide a copy of Umaru Simon Jugo's identity card or any civil status document to prove his nationality or place of birth. You first of all tried to ridicule my initiative by saying the DO was not normal to request documents of Oscars father who died in the days of Chief Sabio(1950's), then you later on led a delegation to my office on 28/07/2016 to inform me that Umaru Simon Jugo died when national identity cards were not invented..... While Oscar was born in 1992 ⁴³.

The Divisional Officer had previously set inescapable traps which had actually affected the responds from the Mentap families. It was against this backdrop that the Divisional Officer acknowledged a well constituted file from the Bufam people. They had provided original documents to ascertain the nationality and princely connections of Bassen Jam to the throne. The national identity card of Chief Kiagama Jam was presented thus castigating the Mentap families from these major irregularities. The responds from the Bufam families were clear about the issue

based on the fact that Simon Jugo was a Nigerian and his mothers father a Cameroonian from Furu-Awa. Considering the fact that dowries were never paid by the father, Jugo automatically became the son of the Grandfather. This therefore gave him the legality of been a Furu-Awa indigene. He was later recruited into the Cameroonian army in 2013. His father died in 1988 and not 1950s as earlier on postulated by informants to the Divisional Officer. Jugos age on his birth certificate indicating 1992 was rather to serve him the convenience of gaining access to several state registered exams for recruitment.

In responds to the Bufams claims the Mentap and Bukpo families equally brought new insides into the origin of the Bufam candidate to the throne by bring out certain pertinent insides to those claims.

....Sabio was a Nigeria hunter called Bisim from Bisuala a village in the Krumi local government in Taraba state of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. He came for hunting and felt in love with a woman and gave birth to two sons- Bisim Sabio and Bisim Zarami. Sabia was the elder, his maternal uncles called him Kaigama Sabio.....the biological father of Jam on his part was a kom man from Boyo Division. This Kom slave trader captured this Furu-Awa woman (a Bufam) and took to Kom. She came back from Kom with Jam as a baby⁴⁴.

The bases of nationality although enshrined in the constitution could not effectively be applied in Furu-Awa considering the strong attachment of the people towards neighbouring Nigeria. Both conflicting parties had certain irregularities on the bases of their origin. The administration could therefore not apply this principle as a major instrument to sideline the Mentap and Bukpo candidate.

Conclusion

Traditional institutions had as their cardinal principle, the promotion of peace,order and the respect of certain norms within the community. By and large, grit and the desire to conserve power among the traditional kingmakers rather accentuated the imbroglio, thus turning chieftaincy succession to a generic problem. Their failure in providing lasting solutions to the chieftaincy phenomenon brought on board administrators as major actors in resolving the dissonances. The emergence of administering authorities' broad new insides into chieftaincy

matters as they jettisoned the role played by traditional authorities. Despite the delicate nature of this conflict, a resolution arrived at in 1990 was never accepted by all and sundry within the community but rather dissociated one family from traditional governance. Although they were disgruntled, they were bound to accept the results. The re-emergence of this dispute saw the light of day in 2014 with new insiders brought onboard by the administering authority. Agreements reached by the latter were rather disregarded by the Divisional Officer in 2015. This inconsistent administrative decision flared tempers within the village as most leaders from the Mentap and Bukpo families became disgruntled. This confusion was further compounded by the enthronement of two traditional rulers within the same community. The administering authority recognized one candidate against the other who had enjoyed legitimacy from a greater majority of the people. The conflict further led to an attack on the Divisional Officer in 2016: due to the socio political crisis currently plaguing the North West and South Western part of the country, no concrete solution has reemerged.

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²² Fuhnwi Divine , “Fon, Chiefs and People in Conflicts in Bafut North West Cameroon,1900-19 82” (PhD Thesis, The University of Yaounde 1 ,2011),29.

³Decree No.245/77 of July 15 1977 Organizing Chiefdoms in Cameroon

⁴P. Sanangbidob, “Furu-Awa Sub Division From 19th Century to Present (An X-Ray)”, unpublished, 2013,6.

⁵P. Sanangbidob , “Furu-Awa Sub Division”, 6.

⁶The Furu ethnic group actually consist of the Chambas that migrated from Northern Nigeria . Zingraft in the course of his exploratory movements had discovered that the cousin of Fon Galega 1 of Bali was the traditional leader of the Jukun In Takum, Yakubu 1. Their names and culture greatly attest to the aforementioned facts.

⁷ N. Awa, ”Relation Between the Cameroon Bordering Locality”,46-47.

⁸P. Sanangbidob , “Furu-Awa Sub Division”, 4.

⁹Jugo Oscar (Security Officer and Supposed Enthroned Chief by the Bukpo and Muntap Families, Aged 32) In Discussion with the author ,Bamenda,16/01/2019.

¹⁰Appellation of a traditional ruler .Prominently referred to as chief in Africa

¹¹ Idem.

¹² Anonymous.

¹³ Anonymous.

¹⁴ Anderiya Ombaou,Danjuma Peter,Lodia Bawurou, Umaru Yakubu(elders in Furu-Awa from the Mentap and Bukpo family) in discussion with author Furu-Awa Town, 09/11/2014.

¹⁵ Awa Bigal (Retired and Former District Head of Furu-Awa, 84 years) in discussion with the author Metazem-Santa,12/04/2019.

¹⁶Idem.

¹⁷Usmanu Jam (Eldest Prince of the Jams Dynasty, 88 years) in discussion with the author Furu-Awa town,03/12/2014.

¹⁸SDA No 75/1/E28/02/2016, Chieftaincy Dispute In Furu-Awa Chiefdom.A letter written to Bui Ntep and Lodia Bawuru of Furu-Awa, 1-4.

¹⁹Awa Bigal.

²⁰Idem.

²¹Anderiya Ombaou el al.

²²Consultation Report in Furu-Awa Village undersigned by elders and kingmakers on 16/03/1990.This document actually placed an end to the chieftaincy conflicts in which Chief Tempe Jonathan was crown Chief of Furu-Awa.

²³Furu-Awa was created a District in 1981 and so had as administering authority a District Head. When it was transformed into a Sub Division in 1991, the administering authority was a Divisional Officer.

²⁴Awa Bigal.

²⁵He was one of the most enlightened individual from the Bufam family as per the 1990s. His function as secretary to the Divisonal officer had brought him closer to the administration .

²⁶Succeeding administrators like Lieweto Patrick and Adamu Shuibu believed so much in Jam Danladi Jesse. Every successive administrator recommended him to his predecessor's reason why he had a preponderant role to play alongside with the administration despite his retirement from active service. Due to the enclave nature of Furu-Awa, most administrators were never present in the locality in most instances and so depended on him to provide valuable information when they were absent.

²⁷Lieweto Patrick (Former Sub Divisional Officer for Furu-Awa. 54 years) in discussion with author Bamenda, 02/11/2019.

²⁸Lodia Bawuru (Family Head from the Mentap Family, 76 years) in discussion with author Furu-Awa Town,09/11/2014.

²⁹He was ill for so many years and thus finally died in 2014. Most of the activities of the village were carried out by the traditional council.

³⁰SDA No 75/1/E28/02/2016, Chieftaincy Dispute,3.

³¹ Awa Bigal.

³²SDA No 75/1/E28/02/2016, Chieftaincy Dispute,3.

³³Anderiya Ombaou el al.

³⁴Anonymous .

³⁵SDA No 75/1/E28/02/2016, Chieftaincy Dispute,3.

³⁶ Letter Written By Family Heads of the Mentap and Bukpo, November 17, 2016in responds to No 75/1/E28/02/2016, "Chieftaincy Dispute In Furu-Awa Chiefdom". A letter written to Bui Ntep and Lodia Bawuru of Furu-Awa, 1-4.

³⁷Kaderi Noagah Bakar, "A Concomitant of Conflict and Consensus: Case of a Chieftaincy Succession in Ghana", *Peace and Conflict Studies*: volume 23 ,no 1,(march 2016), Available at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/pcs/vol23/iss1/5>.

³⁸Bassen, Jam, Head of Traditional Council and Supposed Enthroned Chief by the Bufam family,(aged 62, in discussion with author,) Furu-Awa, 22/03/2014.

³⁹Idem. This is equally contained in a letter written by the DO in responds to a petition written by elders from the Bukpo and Mentap families.

⁴⁰Degree no 77/245 of 1977 Organising Chiefdoms in Cameroon, 1977.

⁴¹SDAF, File no. 4055/MR/E/GNW.64/SP The state of the Furu-Awa-Nigeria border of 05/09/1988,p.4.

⁴²Considering the fact that in most African societies, some individuals along the corridors of power give faithful rendition when out of the system was a very important testimony to this issue. His retirement and age could greatly affect his sense of judgement in relations to truth.

⁴³SDA No 75/1/E28/02/2016, Chieftaincy Dispute,3.

⁴⁴ Letter Written By Family Heads of the Mentap and Bukpo.Note that the name Jam is of Kom origin and not Furu-Awa