

## THE MIXED FORTUNES AND POWER DYNAMICS OF THE GRASS FIELDS FOLK IN THE PLANTATION AND CASH CROPPING ECONOMY IN CAMEROON 1884-2000

Ngam Confidence Chia

Senior Lecturer, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Bamenda, Cameroon

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### ABSTRACT

*The economy borne out of Cash crops and plantations with all its dynamics is wholly a colonial adjunct to the African way of life and approaches to the concept of power and wellbeing. Central to the colonial adulteration of the traditional system of power tenure was the introduction of an economic cycle whose essence was not justified by complete submissions to the dictates of tradition but rather to new sorts of order where money or wealth was accorded supreme eminence. This kind of new economy had underlying varied and complex foundations but could aggregately be held to have emerged from the premises of money, power and prestige that owed its entire origin to trade, plantation and cash cropping life as well as, the ostentatious consumption pattern that were the pillars of the colonial enterprise as from 1884 and anytime thereafter. The African traditional economy prior to colonization depended largely on hunting, gathering fishing and other forms of farming and primary activities whose fate lay squarely in the bosom of nature. This was again conditioned by a firm belief in African traditional religion which burdened the native folk with a morass of responsibilities to ancestral spirits and gods. The idea of trade had faint representation in the African psyche but scarcity among tribal and ethnic units negotiated horizons of exchange which essentially went by barter system. The plantation and cash crop economy which became a sort of a king pin in the advancement of the colonial enterprise registered differential apprehensions and complexities by/in African locales but had enormous unity in the fact that; it greatly altered the patterns of power, prestige and dependence on the central traditional authorities prior to the colonial encroachment. The introduction of plantations and cash crops economies in Cameroon by the Germans brought about new agents and psyches of change to the traditional landscape. This new trend ignited enormous mixed passions among the Cameroon Grassfields native folk and essentially tilted the direction of command to a different side. Such new grounds of connectivity and dependence grew with astonishing tonic during and even after the colonial period. Aggregately, these new forces of change whose obedience and submission did not squarely fall within the ambits of traditional philosophy negated anything related to power and incidentally lodged it within the prescient of the new order why money and other symbols of the modern system of administration prevailed. In all these paradigmatic changes, a symbiotic order where duality was bound to prevail came to fore and dictated the traditional order even in most remote social fabric. This is the mission of this paper. It attempts to provide answers or refreshing insights to the new order figured in by the rise and development of plantation and cash crop culture generally but with a special focus on the agents of this culture in the Cameroon grass fields. It does this by making a solid recourse to the primary and secondary sources, complementing them with the available oral sources. It argues that the plantation and cash crop economy more than anything else helped to*

*registered alternating fortunes both to the agents of this change and the traditional polities involved. Secondly, it also occasioned an implosion in the tenure of power and direction of control in almost all traditional fiefs where this culture incidentally became a norm.*

**Keywords:** *Plantation, Economy, Grass fields, Power dynamics Fortunes, Cameroon*

## **Introduction**

The elements of change and transformation that were brought or anchored by colonialism to African pristine traditional economies and its perceptions in time and space far exceeds the compass of any single study. Its impact and depth of adulteration to African practices and values varied from one region to the other as well from one issue on investigation to the other.<sup>1</sup> However, colonialism either through force or peaceful contamination brought about vagaries of mutations which can broadly be said to have come – from the known to the unknown-the old/present to the new-the likely to the less likely and from the simple to the complex ways and approaches to the African wellbeing. Though at different times and with alternating magnitude of perceptions by the African folk, colonialism registered a unifying pattern of change to the African traditional psyche especially the issues that had to do with approaches to basic needs. Prior to the percolation of these change agents all of these aspects were still overwhelmingly firmly rooted in African traditional religion. One key area that encompassed almost every aspect of this change was/is the introduction and expansion of the cash crops and plantation economy and trade that brought about the market and money economy. Trade either in the coast or inland provided not only a source of livelihood to the natives but was sustained by the fantasies and news patterns of prestige ushered in by the plantation economy to alter both power tenure and leadership fiefs. Concretely, the Germans introduced plantations in Cameroon to serve mainly colonial interests top among which was the need for the German planters that were in constant increase throughout the German colonial period to make profit. It was also the surest means to raise money for colonial administration from the traders and for the natives to handle the local challenges that required spending since it was already clear that the transfer of ready financial resources to the German colonies abroad especially the Cameroons was attracting notorious pale attraction within the German political realm. Incidentally, such a scheme brought about the growth of a

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<sup>1</sup>Graphic presentation of this startling differences are carefully documented by Martin Guy, *African Political Thought* (New York: St Martins's Press Macmillan, USA, 2012) pp.11-15.

market economy on whose bosom were found abundant alternative sources of power that indirectly undermined blind obedience to nature and traditional philosophy where the veneration of ancestral spirits and the gods rang supreme. This paper garners evidence from primary and secondary sources to bring up a literary portrait of the alternating fortunes of the Grassfield folk in the general context of plantations and cash crop economy in Cameroon during the colonial and post-colonial eras. It argues that colonialism with regards to the introduction of the Plantation and cash crops was exceedingly good but for lack of effective measures to appropriate the changes by the African(Cameroon) traditional folk.<sup>2</sup> From its evidence the paper feels apt to posit that the overall impact of this was that, the perceptions of power in the lexicon of wealth and security of the native folk wherever this became a norm gradually shifted away from blind allegiance to the tenets of tradition with its accessories to the prescient of self-worth.

### **Situating the Issues: Background**

The first people to have made contacts with the Whiteman; British, French or the Germans in the first and later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were the Douala. This early contacts gave exposed them to a different world view and survival pattern. The fundamental aspects that made them a people with a class apart can also be noted the Germans growing ability and willingness to engage in trade with the ultimate aim of usurping all the advantages that came with such commercial engagements. An outgrowth of this drastic twist in their traditional way of doing things was the fact that most of them became wealthy and sought not only for patterns of sophistication in materialism through the consumption of European made goods but also indulged in forms of worships like Christianity that did not naturally appealed to an unadulterated African conscience. Christian ideas and the world view that came with it had been lingering in the Coastal areas for a long time and so the fact that the Douala like most of the people in the Coastal got soaked with Christianity did not constitute any substance for surprise.

In retrospect, British had proactively set up the court of Equity to settle conflicts between the natives and the Britishers resulting from trade. This court did not have Christian underpinnings as the guiding principles but intrinsically, the conduct of matters in the court

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<sup>2</sup> The failure of Africans to appropriate alien values was really a general issues .See Ibid.pp.21-24. Same ideas are vividly expressed in Patmore George ° A Guide to Pan-Africanism in William,H. Friedland and carl G. Rosberg J.,eds.*African Socialism*,(Standford Ca. Standford University Press,1964)

ran closer to the Christian way of life and doctrine. The case of the court of justice that was set in the small Christian territory of Bimbia renamed in 1858 as Victoria was truly a replica of a new form of justice built within the spirit of Christology. The running idea here is that, these courts just like trade, formal education and other forms of colonial firmaments helped to forge out alien traditions and as such, significant transformed the coastal peoples thought pattern thereby making their comportment especially their taste for fashion to stand as a source of envy to so many people living inland.

### **Inland (Grassfields) Contextual Realities**

The geographical niche that provides the locus nexus for understanding shifting passions of African folk in the plantation and cash crop economy is an area of rich geographical and historical insight especially prior to the percolation of alien ideas. It's a sum total of people that can aggregately be subdivided into the Tikar, Ngemba, Chambas and the Aghem ethnic units. All of these groups display variations of histories of settlement and expansion but bear unifying elements of response to the provision of labour for plantations in the coast as well as the Cash cropping sector that eventually encumbered their traditional way of survival. On account of its remoteness from the sea along with its topography accompanied with a road infrastructure that was for the most part a nightmare, the entire Grassfield region did not host any of the plantations throughout the colonial period. There was indeed no plantation of great magnitude operating here but Grassfielders in their numbers constituted the workforce which was the prime substance for the functioning of the plantations. With this, the plantations incidentally rose to represent an interesting paradoxical symbiosis that made the plantation economy greatly felt in the Cameroon Grassfields. This geographical niche as stated above happened to have been identified as a reservoir of people with resilient labouring culture and as such, any colonial trader, missionary or officer turned to it for Labourers. In with this conviction and functioning order that brought many people from this area either through force or wooing to the coastal areas of Cameroon where these plantations were found

### **The Ligaments of the Economy and the Cooking of Mixed Fortunes**

The German colonial economy in Cameroon was first and foremost a commercial one. Everything was skewed to make sure that all activities or functions performed satisfied first the German colonial ambitions with the welfare of the natives most of the time relegated to

the background.<sup>3</sup> To achieve the designed colonial objective, hard core matters that determined the welfare of the planters and the products therefrom were carefully tailored to ensure that the breathing of the economy was regimented by the German commercial firm of Hamburg known as *Handelskolonie*. This firm received instructions and sponsorship from the colonial Economic Committee, the Colonial Society along as well as the direct subsidies from the ministry in charge of colonial matters.<sup>4</sup> This somewhat consortium for colonial affairs in the German overseas territories paved the way not only for the development of plantations in Coastal Cameroon on full scale basis but also brought about other forms of social amenities that significantly moderated their natives' regard to wellbeing. It was in this kind of background that the mixed passions of natives (Horror and plight) were cooked up and allowed to take space in the plantation economy.

### **The Horror and Plight of Natives in the Labour Recruitment Projects**

The obsession for profit alive in the minds of the German planters and traders in Cameroon during the close to 30 years of authorship spurred them to push through the plantation and cash cropping project with labour recruited essentially from among the local chieftains. The haste and confusion that surrounded this selfish project brought horrendous and awful prejudices to the natives. This passion for native labour at all cost seemingly blinded their view from seeing other naked realities that were associated to such a grandiose venture. It was this blindness that paved the way for every bad thing that was responsible or sustained the native's plight in the plantation deals. The economy that produced mixed fortunes to the Grassfields natives recruited for plantation assignment was a type that was instinctively patterned in new heights of prestige and comfort with money and alternative power supply posing as its unique qualities or characteristics.

In the first place plantation and cash crop economy brought local chieftains whose pattern of prestige depended most of the time on time honoured local tradition into the money orbit. Secondly the recruitment of Labourers from the Grassfields and other areas of hinterland Cameroon for the plantation assignments were done forcefully and that gave the recruits

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the German Traders tactfully placated Bismarck to engage in annexing Cameroon. As per the secret deals and negotiations with the natives and the correspondences to the German colonial society on this subject Bismarck was deceived to think that the financial burden of administering the Kamerunstadt could be borne only by the traders themselves. This is why the whole business of economic activities was left in the hands of a commercial firm

<sup>4</sup> V.G.Ngoh, (1987) Cameroon 1884-1985: A Hundred Years History (Limbe: Navi Group Publication), p.48.

enormous difficulties in their new environments. Labour recruitment and the labourers themselves constituted a three pronged problems to the local chieftains. The urgency of plantation labourers motivated the German planters to negotiate very shady deals with the Grassfield traditional rulers and the haste and harshness with which this was carried on placed these recruits most of the time at odds with their subjects. Secondly the labourer's recruited even under such smoky conditions virtually interpreted that to be an open divorce from anything linked to the traditional essence of power and leadership.<sup>5</sup> For fear of the unknown in their areas of destination such a fierce way of divorcing from traditions that had formed them worked in synergy to provide the recruited natives with passions of bewilderment and fear which in the long run amounted to veritable scenes of disappointments to the planters.

This very volatile situation was accentuated by the fact that local chieftains in the German subjugated areas had little or faint memories of the German style and as such, were hesitant to be involved in anything that required their control. Others simply did not for anything else want to abandon their villages and local chores like eating, dancing, hunting along with the other primary functions that projected them as epic heroes.<sup>6</sup> In spite of the abundant percolation of many items to the Grass field that appealed to the natives' vanity, many of them were still prepared as much as possible to sacrifice the consumption of these new goods by staying permanently in their local fiefs if the choice of leaving home or staying back was within their reach. To the favour of the German labour conscription agenda stood the fact that Fon Galega of Bali after the German blood Pact of 1891<sup>7</sup> opted to serve like the main architect of plantation labour conscription from the Grassfields. With a somewhat sound mastery of the local terrain especially the dynamics of local customs and tradition, Galega encouraged the Bamenda Chiefs/fons to indulge full-scale in labour conscription so as to stand ready to earn stipends of 300 German marks per annum that stood as a reward for such

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<sup>5</sup>See Ahmed Sekour, Toure, Africa on the move,(Lodon:Panaf Books.2010).

<sup>6</sup> Epic Heroism in the traditional setting was obtained through various forms of display of bravery most of them closely connected the performance of primary functions. For the Kom case see graphic details in P.N.Nkwi(1976) *Traditional Government and Social Change: A study of the Traditional Institutions among the Kom of the Cameroon Garssfields*.(Fribourg:.....).

<sup>7</sup> Details of how this blood pact was signed and how it was instrumental in the Germanisation of the entire Grassfields thereafter are recorded in File No 3 of the 1916 reports on the Cameroons in the Buea national archives and also in the League of Nations Reports about Cameroon of 1925-30.

grotesque assignments.<sup>8</sup> Though this labour recruitment produced further Wars like that of Kom 1904-5<sup>9</sup> and Nso 1906<sup>10</sup>, the Germans succeeded in the main to enlist and carry away so many Grass fielders to serve in the German plantations. This is where a bulk of the mixed fortunes took its roots. Again planters and traders in competition for labourers interestingly formed the nexus for anything connected to the native confusion both in their local fiefs and in the plantation camps. The level of acrimony and contradicting stands both on labour recruitment and their treatment between the traders and the planter was strikingly terrible. In any case, the planters played off most of these striking contradictions and assigned most of the recruits with exalting tasks to perform in the different plantations. In the course of performing these tasks which most of the time went very close to slavery these recruits were exposed to enormous problems. Some of such travails were the wages paid to them as well as the working conditions plus the physical and social climate that defined their times. There were indeed very disturbing issues surrounding the German administration that had some remote connections with the local perceptions of the entire idea of a new economy. By every calculation the German colonial project had tactfully alienated anything connected to colonialism with the traditional masses notably, their impatience with practices that agreed mostly to local customs and traditions. To this should be included and their obnoxious or grotesque usage of the iron fist to push through their colonial mission everywhere in the Cameroon soils. This was particularly evident in public flogging and other acts of arson on native patterns of traditional elegance plus the pain inflicted on the Grassfields ethnic units through wars of resistance by the German Police, army or any either authority in their administrative network. All of this cultivated many enemies against the German colonial government and some sort of phobia for plantation issues since the whole idea was under the firm grip of German officials and planters. The paradoxical symbioses announced above is explained by the fact that plantations and soils suitable for them were almost entirely found in the Coastal areas while the kind of labourers that suited the plantations assignments' were overwhelmingly coming from the grassfield region. By 1914 when the First world started, a few but not a negligible size of the Grassfield folk had been forcibly recruited to perform

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<sup>8</sup> The conditions and evolution of the labourers and their plight and fortunes in Cameroon has been researched and presented in details by Leonard Harding (1985 "Cent ans des Relations Commerciales entre l'Afrique et les allemandes le cas du Cameroun 1884-1985" in *Colloque International* (University of Yaounde: whole text.

<sup>9</sup> Paul TuhKiawi (2006) "The Kom German War, 1904-5: The War tactics" (MA. Dissertation in History, the University of Buea). The carries this war in every details.

<sup>10</sup> All of these wars provided more opportunities for the Germans to advance the labour recruitment project.

quite demanding manual tasks in the German plantations. This number in spite of their ordeal they got exposed to a life where leisure could be spent listening to some strange stories from people across cultures .Disputes over labour recruitment between the traders and planters as well as the treatment in any assignment given to them constituted another source of native worry which the German colonial administration took keen interest and decided to step in. This notwithstanding labour recruitment and the conditions surrounding the whole project remained a startling venture given the amount of force and inhuman treatment of the natives involved.<sup>11</sup>Ngoh graphically and lucidly puts this when among other issues of native inconvenience he states that:

Some plantation owners shanghaied labourers, shackled them together and marched them [over] long distances to work... the native worker was usually taken to a new and unfamiliar environment he more often than not was a victim of loneliness and homesickness.Those who were unfortunate to work in the malaria infected areas usually returned to the villages only to die of the disease. The lack of adequate food,poor shelter, overwork, disease and absence of medical care led to many deaths.<sup>12</sup>

The conditions of work-of living and of surviving in the plantation camps represented and resembled anything close to a nightmare for the natives.For the reasons advanced above and a lot more, death rate continued to rise in the plantation dramatically. Infact, by 1913 barely three years to the closure of official German assignments in Cameroon, death rate was still very alarming in the plantations. For instance in 1913 alone a total of about 1430 people were reported to have been conscripted in the Grassfield and transported under terrific conditions to serve in different capacities in the German plantation. Barely nine months later, a total of about 157 people perished as a result of terrible working conditions.<sup>13</sup>This whooping death tollroughly represented a total of 148 per cent death per thousands and vividly reveals the agony that encumbered the sojourn of the natives especially from the Grassfields in the German plantations in the coast.Upon the death of each plantation worker, the plantation authorities faced problems of different kinds and magnitudes. Besides the

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<sup>11</sup>The maltreatment of the natives in any deal that required a dual deal ran across every sector of African life. See the general case presented by OlufemiTaiwo in *How Colonialism Pre-empted modernity in Africa*.(Bloomington, Indiana University Press,2010),p.26.

<sup>12</sup>Ngoh, a Hundred Years,p.54.

<sup>13</sup> ibid.



obvious problem of finance needed for transportation and other logistical arrangements that arose following the death of each worker was also accompanied the difficulties of facing the relatives with the corpses of people who as most natives claimed, were taken out of their village confinements in excellent health.<sup>14</sup> These difficulties became compounded when a married plantation worker died and worse off when the deceased identity had conflicting elements of origin. The haste with which labour recruitment was done in the Grassfields and other regions of Cameroon provided possibilities where and within which plantation authorities/German planters could easily mistake or completely loss track of the home identity of workers. These possibilities brought the likelihood of corpses transported to unknown destination and others simply unaccounted for by the German authorities.<sup>15</sup> As the plantation economy grew larger and complicated, some of these difficulties were waved aside by the grouping of workers according to cultural and tribal origins and enormous efforts to keep precise data about their origins. To this was added the fact that some plantations were allowed to own cemeteries. The church either by field observation or direct reports had come to a realization that the natives employed or recruited in the German plantation often went through the trouble of working each day for up 50 hours. This alone was aggravated by the fact such lengthy hours of hard labour were not interspersed with any period of distraction or reasonable rest time. Together with mosquito bites and inadequate medical care plantation labour gradually grew to become synonymous with the workshop of death.<sup>16</sup> It was in these conditions that the plight of the Grassfield folk in the plantation life was shaped. As indicated earlier, all of the identified insufficiencies in the plantation infrastructure in the plantations only went a long way to calcify the fact that; most planters were prepared as much as possible to recruit labour from everywhere but very little was done in terms of logistical and technical preparation to host and nurture this labour for higher dividends. Transporting a huge crowd of people with doubtful<sup>17</sup> health profiles from the Grassfields to the coastal region was exceedingly not only difficulty but serious leaps into the dark. This task was compounded by

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<sup>14</sup> Cameroonians like other Africans at the time had very confusing conceptions of what excellent health implied. The very fact that an individual could go about his daily business without complaining could literally be translated as good health. To some large extent these conception were founded.

<sup>15</sup> Such tragic details of the travails of plantation workers were given to us by bobbe Francis Chia Ngam during an interview in his home residence in Fundong. He happened to have witnessed several situations where corpses were virtually abandoned by the plantation authorities. Interview was done on December 5<sup>th</sup> 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Lafonaton Veriyuy 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2017 at Bamenda aged 82. He worked with the CDC in Bota between 1933 and 67.

<sup>17</sup> No medical examination was conducted to know either the health condition of the worker or his responsiveness to changing conditions. Just physical examination was done though with no allowances for rejection of those who looked frail for such tasking assignments.

the fact that, the German colonial government just like the authorities of the Basel mission insisted on certain health and labour standards were to be maintained but in practice few of such prudent measures were upheld either in the recruitment of natives or their treatment in the camps. In any case, the sojourn of the natives in the plantations was not a complete black box where only blames than pleasantries were found.

### **The Pleasantries of the Grassfields Folk within the Plantations**

In spite of the litany of issues that the native folk stood to suffer under the yoke of plantation labour, there were still many things that animated their spirits and tacitly elevated their esteem to post as people of an enviable social class. It is for this that this paper feels that the sojourn of each plantation worker was a one of mixed and changing matrix of power and fortunes. As colonization inched forward and the plantations grew both in size and functions, the ordeal of the natives in the plantation camps as well as the disgusting wages paid to them became an opened secret. These are the kind of things that caught the attention of the colonial Society and the Basel Church authorities that literally defined social patterns in Southern Cameroon by then. With this, the planters were urged to take measures geared towards improving the lot of their labourers. One of such measures was the advice both from the colonial authorities and the administration of the church that the plantation owners should do all in their powers to put in place more adaptable housing infrastructure. It was in this connection that the Victoria, Tiko and the Bota plantations constructed houses that could house limited number of persons especially for those with families. A lot too was done on the toileting ventilation and other standards of sanitation that were part and parcel of the natives' ordeal. With this, the painful conditions that encumbered the daily survival of the native folk in the plantation economy began to witness pleasant dividends. Through the Basel mission again the planters were often bugged with the problem of improved wages and understandable working condition. With a somewhat pale improvement on plantation labour welfare, the passions of loneliness and homesickness that accompanied each labourer extracted from his grassfield traditional fief began fading away and gradually disappeared for most of them. By living in new communities and intermingling with people of different abstractions and cultural outfit plantation labourers were exposed to a number of things that entailed both a change in mind-set and their approach to life necessities. Living and working in the any of the plantations entailed a moment of learning, experience and practices which went beyond the traditional nomenclature and perception of power and the universe. For all

of those who survived death in the plantations, their stories were those of profound lessons. They learnt though most of time painfully to live a community life in camps where the notion of public or joint ownership of property was not just expedient but wholesomely indispensable. Over and above all these Grassfields folk were introduced to a notion of tasks, time keeping and menu chores which were evaluated and sanctioned through wages in money value which together with the use of pidgin language as lingua Franca yielded in them a sense of new worth and fulfilment.

As far as health was concerned, the colonial government tried as much as possible to push through the idea that each Plantation had to ensure that 500 people were being taken care of by health experts while 100 labourers failed within the rich of health junior staff that could be nurses or any other informed medical person. Owing to the complaints that flooded the colonial office about the carelessness involved in medical and health welfare of labourers especially those that were tendered in by the Basel mission, the colonial government sought to maintain a certain level of life surviving strategies in their camps. The joint work of the colonial administration with that of the Church authorities led to some considerable improvement in plantation labour conditions. For once natives involved in plantation assignment started seeing some of their basic demands met. It was awesome for a native to have his/her health needs attended to by medical officers who were savvy of their jobs and the working of tropical diseases. Aside the strides registered in the domain of medical care and sanitation that were part of this joint endeavour was accompanied the addition of some recreational centres for leisure, sports and shops. To this should be added the fact that lots of efforts were construed to improve upon the wages and the housing conditions. Following these adjustment it became easy for a single family to own an apartment as well as developing a feeling care both from the plantation owners and the colonial administration on one hand and the church authorities on the other.

A crucial development greatly linked to this was that the enchanting labourers just like the returning soldiers of the First World War espoused a cash cropping and plantation culture which was diametrically different from their traditional way of doing things especially the search for comfortable standards or wellbeing. As colonization inched forward in the first halve of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most of these people returned to their different ethnic origins in the Grassfields and introduced a new way of life that was essentially based in Cash crop cultivation and plantation culture. The number of these new agents of change was

geometrically increased after independence through/within the Broad based programme that was introduced in Cameroon by President Ahmadou Ahidjo to boost Agricultural production known as the Green Revolution. The frenzy of plantation life and its profits motivated even those who were left at home to seek ways of starting up small scale coffee and other cash crop plantations which provided them with an alternative source of power and dependence.

### **The Plantation Idea and its Operatives in the Colonial Agenda**

The possibilities of trade and the advantages thereof constituted the core element among the moving forces behind European connections to Africa along with the colonization<sup>18</sup> that came with it. German traders like Woermann and Thoenen in Cameroon were pushed by trading and profit motives to establish their trading firms in the Cameroons as far back as the late 1800s. By 1884 when the Germano-Douala Treaty was contracted, the idea of establishing Plantations as a commercial venture appealed to a very negligible size of the European population on the ground as indicated above. However intense trading through the middlemen informed the German traders that the Cameroon soils were suitable for a number of items that Germany was importing elsewhere like tobacco, cocoa, ivory, Palm Kernels and rubber. These revelations along with trading difficulties and frictions between the traders and the colonial officials on one hand and the Douala natives and the German traders on the other, made the need to engage in plantation farming both urgent and indispensable. Through the various Wars of subjugation the Douala middle men monopoly advantage in trade and control of the interior was technically rendered obsolete. This was done the German traders came in contact with the naked beauties and treasures of the African interior. Some of the natives too had the fortune of making first hand contact with European items like Brass, cloths, liquor and perfume that greatly changed their taste and fashion. The change was not only limited to consumption pattern and mounting heights of prestige. In some areas it ignited some growing admiration and blind reverence for the European way of life. It was in this background that so many natives notably from the Grassfield following the transfer and establishment of the German Fort in the Bamenda station by 1903 got recruited either as itinerant soldiers or as carriers within the colonial orbits. Even as far late as 1913, Rudins records that there were in all only 195 Germans planters engaged in the business of

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<sup>18</sup>The dimensions of change created by colonization were so enormous. See how this became a living reality in Y.V. Mudimbe, *The invention of Africa; Gnosis Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* (London: Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 1-4.

plantations in Cameroon. These planters were generally serving about 58 plantations and about 17827 natives were employed to perform various roles in the plantation.<sup>19</sup> Though this number looks tiny compared with the whopping number involved in trade, the impact of the rising culture borne out of plantation economy to the grassfields was beginning to yield enormous trends. This can be better understood on the realms of a detailed cast of the kind of life conditions that were part and parcel of plantation moods.

### **The Plantation Economy: Cooperate Versus Private Views Juxtaposed**

Plantations and the cash cropping culture that overwhelmingly led to the mass migration of the Bamenda Grassfield folk from their Grassfields traditional fiefs to the Coastal regions has been most often wrongly associated with other items of profound change that were part and parcel of the colonial enterprise. The truth is that the idea of indulging in plantation farming as an asset of the colonial mission in Cameroon remained quite unpopular for a very long time during the German colonial era but rather on (a) the difficulties of hiring the required technical labour among the white chieftains working in other parts of Africa or in Europe (b) the communication problems which hampered movement and transportation of the plantation products from the interior to the Tiko and the Victoria ports as well as the (c) the inconveniences involved in recruiting and training local chieftains to perform special tasks which was to exceedingly vary from one plantation to the other. As for funds to run the plantations and the high calibre technical expertise, the colonial society and the economic committee were prepared to handle such responsibilities full scale. The problem of local labour could have been washed out of existence by the recruitment of migrant labour from the ethnic entities like from the robust Bakoko or from the Mamfe and even right inland from the western Grassfields but these possibilities still posed as a problem because the traders were already draining the vibrant labour in these areas through trade. It was an assembly of all of these difficulties that made the German colonial government not to engage fully on Plantation and cash crop business.

This notwithstanding, the sparse availability of wild Rubber, Palm, Cocoa and other items appealed to the colonial conscience though almost throughout the German colonial era no crucial measures towards such colossal projects really became an attractive colonial prey. As

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<sup>19</sup>Harry Ruidin (1938) *Germans in Cameroon, 1884-1914: A case Study in Modern Imperialism*, (Yale: Yale University Press), p.249.

indicated, private individuals were ready to brave or surmount the above numerated difficulties since their problem was not about economic welfare as it was with the colonial government but the candid intention to exploit the forces of demand and supply that dictated tides in capitalist economy. Up to 1911 plantations in the Cameroon soils and the experimentation sites like the Botanical gardens where improved seedling were nursed were in practice, almost entirely controlled and owned by private individuals while the German colonial government played essentially an advising role. The idea of using plantation for colonial motives was therefore a tradition that was initiated and mounted into a concrete mould by the German planters from 1890 to 1916. The urge for planters to surmount any other difficulties located by the colonial administration emerged from the fact that, geological and meteorological research revealed to the German notably at home and abroad that the slopes of mount Cameroon and a greater part of its adjacent region provided excellent conditions for the growth of Rubber, Plantains, Palms and other marketable fruits. The geostrategic closeness of this area to the Atlantic Ocean with the vibrant Ports of Tiko and Victoria provided another recipe for this conviction. By the time the Germans annexed Cameroon Slavery trade and Slavery in the official circles had been officially regimented and kept within the realms of an obscure ancient practice but history still kept fond memories of hinterland areas like the Grassfields in Cameroon with people of robust energy. This added another human motivation for the German planters to see the need to engage in such enterprises. To these three reasons should be added the need of raising funds from the plantation business that could attained to local needs as well as provide an alternative source of livelihood to the natives whose traditionalism was still tightly intact. The idea of making plantations part and parcel of the German political social and economic life in Cameroon was as per the reasons cited above, based on sound practical judgement. This conviction was in every way generally sensitive to the needs of the season though most of the natives and the wider systems of African thoughts found this to be quite admissible. However, the plight of the natives in the German plantation substantially witnessed shifting positions following the outbreak of the First World War and its ramification in the geopolitical setting.

### **The First World War and Paradigmatic Twists in Native Passions**

By 1914 the German obsession for power and growing need to remake the world in the likeness of its pattern of prestige plunged the world into the First World War.<sup>20</sup> Amongst other things the collapse of the last German fortress in the Cameroon town of Mora in February 1916 following the sustained and well-coordinated allied forces under the firm command of the British War Lord Charles Dobell ended the entire episode of German colonial adventure in Cameroon.<sup>21</sup> With this automatically arose other problems mainly associated with the fate of the plantations that were run entirely by German planters and traders and moreover, the fortunes of those natives that had been uprooted from their traditional niches to perform plantation assignments.<sup>22</sup> The new allied administration that took up the German possessions in Africa at large and Cameroon in particular was not immediately poised to provide magic therapies to the plantation assignments and the problems that surfaced. The apprehensions of the German departure and the treatment of the property left behind had juxtaposed perceptions in Cameroon. These deferring perceptions had its roots in the regard that both powers had for Germany prior to the war.<sup>23</sup> From 1916 and more formally from 1922, France took a greater part of this territory as compared to Britain but most of the German plantations were found in the British side. The survival of the plantations in this British part of Cameroon was compounded not by the Germanophobia syndrome that was quite severe in the French part but rather by a sustained unwillingness of the British business class to take over the plantation ownership. The complications and acrimonies that bedevilled the Condominium of 1916-19 leading to its complete abandonment only went a long way to heighten the frustrations of the plantations and the people in its network.

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<sup>20</sup>See graphic details on how the German blind obsession to power brought about a global war along with how this repositioned plantation fortunes in Simon Joseph Epale, *Plantation and Development in Western Cameroon, A study in Agrarian Capitalism, 1885-1975*, (New York, Washington et al: vantage Press, 1985), pp.94-97. Aside, the fact that the German king kept promising the signatories of the Triple entente to "March on for a night in black amour was but their sight stirred trouble and eventually landed the world ondamaging global conflagration that was generally accepted to be called the First World War.

<sup>21</sup>George NdakwenaNjung "Soldiers of their Own: Honour, Violence, Resistance and Conscription in Colonial Cameroon during the First world War" (Michican: Ph.D Thesis in History, 2017), pp. 3-5.

<sup>22</sup>Though working and living conditions were not generally the best for grassfields folks in the German plantations, many of the recruits were already acquainted to a way of life that was far different from that obtained in their traditional fiefs. The abrupt departure of the German following the end of the Second World War and the confusion that surrounded the authorship of those plantations landed the recruits in a broad junction of confusion.

<sup>23</sup>See full development of these juxtaposed positions graphically development by Confidence Chia Ngam in "The Working of the Germanophile and the Germanophobia Concepts in Post German Cameroon" published by Afro-Asian Journal of Social science, 2017. Also see how such differences were cooked up in The Germanophone Elite of Douala under the German by Jonathan Dereck, published by African History Journal, 2012.

These complications continued to paint a hopeless future to the plantations with most of them virtually abandoned to faint for survival in the wider blues. Concretely, From 1916-19 the authorship of the plantation fluctuated between complete abandonment and some absurd ownership that did not spell anything less than frustration to the plantation labourers that had painfully grown to accept their fate prior to the Great War. With such disturbing trends most Grassfields recruits decided to negotiate their survival either by engaging in some manual jobs among the few individuals that attempted to run their personal plantation or simply relocated to their traditional fiefs to begin life anew. Indeed, the period stretching from 1916-25 can be practically described as a time of colonial versus indigenous confusion with regards to plantation ownership and the natives fortunes. This is evidence in the fact that the first half of the 1920s international and home born arrangements worked in harmony to reposition the plantations in an interesting lane of interest. In this repositioning the atmosphere of confusion and contemplation witnessed certain fortunes in 1925.

Key among these developments that occasioned changing fortunes were the fact that by 1921, most of the War captives that were interned by the allied in the Spanish island of Fernando-Po were released and authorised to be sent back to their traditional fiefs. The return of these natives with new philosophies of life found a small but very determined population of returning recruits who were already soaked in Christian and the plantation life that was a little quite different from the traditional authorities. Again, by 1925 the treaty of Locarno was signed which among other things began to nurse a feeling that the poor treatment of German at the 1919 Treaty of Versailles was not according to normal logic and that this alone created a vacuum in the general fight against communism that was in the dramatic rise in the 1920s and 30s. The change of stance by great powers notably Britain and France during the interwar years found its moral justification from a feeling that Germans and their property at home or abroad needed to be handled with care. It was in this spirit that greater need arose for a proper structure and arrangement on the fate of German property in Cameroon amongst which, the plantations were of prime importance. Within this realm of new thoughts, many Germans returned en masse and bought most of the plantations early abandoned.<sup>24</sup> The resurfacing of planters who were mostly Germans to take over the plantations in Cameroon under a different sovereign power meant in essence that the problem

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<sup>24</sup>J. Epale (1985) *Plantations and Development in Western Cameroon, 1885-1975: A study in Agrarian capitalism*, New York, Vantage Press, pp.114-16. all of these documents are cited in details by A Ndi, (2005) *The Golden Age*, p.43



of labour was going to be repositioned in some absurdities that often went beyond local comprehension.<sup>25</sup>

Repositioning the entire essence of labour recruitment implied so many things at once. It meant first and foremost that those grassfields traditional people who had just been freed from the plantations were going to be re-employed by the new plantation owners if they expressed the need to do so. Secondly, it meant that the new owners of the plantations were going to do everything to improve upon the conditions of the workers so as to avoid the unfortunate death toll that bedevilled plantation labourers prior to the war.<sup>26</sup> The plan to auction out everything connected to plantation had been a live issue behind the scenes from 1921 but this was done in a haphazard manner until 1925 when a formal plan was worked out for it. On the global scale, so many things had happened that were to be in favour of workers. Top among these developments was the creation of the international Labour organization (ILO) which fought among other things to improve upon the lot of the workers. Prior to the War years the treatment of labourers in the German plantations in Cameroon was determined mainly by alien humour and values than indigenous welfare. In the 1920s and 30s things became quite different. Through the British policy of indirect Rule which was carefully worked out to respond to home functional realities, considerable steps were taken to improve upon the lot of natives involved in all sorts of plantation labour. There was a plan for effective supervision of working condition plus their wages and residency condition before the great depression of 1929. This official intention that was accompanied by practical steps to improve upon the natives' welfare in plantation labour attracted envy from French Cameroonians and provoked a mass influx of labourers from these zones to English Cameroon.<sup>27</sup> An interesting development intricately connected to the changing fortunes of plantation economy but which rather occurred in the Grassfields region was the rise and expansion of cash cropping economy propagated mainly by World war returnees and plantation works. The period stretching from 1914 when the War started and 1925 when the

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<sup>25</sup> in Anthony Ndi T. (1986) "The Second World War in Southern Cameroons and Its Impacts on Mission State Relations, 1939-50" in David Killingray and Richard Rathbone eds, *African and the second World War*, London: Macmillan Press Limited, pp.204-32

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> The mass exodus of the natives from French Cameroun for greener pastures (jobs) in British Cameroon can be explained variedly each with its own its own futile and conflicting claims. This notwithstanding, it should be noted that the conditions of work in French Cameroun were ridden with a deal of suspicion and contradictions keeping the natives especially the informed ones quite worried and most of them found it reasonable given that the It was better to deal with the Devil (Germans) they knew better than the Angel (presumably the French) they did not know

auctioning of the plantations was launched kept so many plantation workers in abeyance. This abrupt suspense only went a long way to provoke contemplation and constant displacement of all the people whose survival was chained up to plantation assignments with grass fields natives in overwhelming majority. Interestingly, all of these passions were greatly regimented by poverty and misery. The ultimate thing that was borne out of these passions was the mass return of most Grassfield recruits to their original fiefs. It was in this context that the traditional economy and the people under its support structure found themselves obliged to create space for a symbiotic coexistence with the values of the cash crop economy.

### **The Passions of the Returnee Natives in the Cash Cropping Economy**

The idea of an economy whose moral base and legal structure depended on cash and other forms of wealth than traditional elegance emerged in the Grassfields during the 1920s and 30s. This kind of an economy owed its origins to the emergence of long distance trade that was facilitated by colonization with its accompanied improvement in communication infrastructure. The agents of this new economy were mainly those who have been soaked in new forms of worship like Christianity and Islam along with those who had imbibed a new way of life. It should always be borne in mind that in almost all aspect of life these agents were in so many aspects different from African their stock whose reasoning vibrated and blossomed with the ambits of African traditional psyche. Intricately connected to this group were the schooled men along with those who had either served in various capacities of the First World War or in some measure in the plantation economy. In aggregate terms this was an economy in which wealth and money were its main firmaments. It was in by any stretch of thinking an operating framework an invention of new men or old men with transformed minds in traditional societies. Money as form of exchange and as collateral had grown to own an interesting fascination even in the minds of traditional minded native lot not only because it guaranteed a deal of assurance in handling crucial needs but more because of its convenience and wider acceptability. To this should be added the fact that the rising popularity of money buttressed by the increasing need for it by the Grassfields folk had an inverse effect on the relevance of traditionalism. The new or transformed men and women in this liberal orbit of cash veneration had gained roots and admiration for forms of fantasies and vanity that were far-fetched in traditional prescient o power, leadership and dependence. For this reason, the survival and expansion of the search for new patterns of comfort by the

native folk directly meant that dependence on the traditional essence of power and leadership was going to be negotiated and possibly shared at best.

Apart from the fact that the new men in their different seemingly modern ranks and files treated traditional authorities and the powers therefrom with disdain and went most of the time with it, there were other profound fascinations that greatly appealed and won deep admirations among the Grassfields natives. The returnees from plantations most of the time demonstrated enormous strands of lack in terms of property appropriation and mastery of cultural artillery but posed most of the time as agents of amazement in the way they went about other things connected to modernity among the Grassfields native lot. The acculturation received by the plantation recruits in the plantation camps just like Christianity and other elements of alien traditions received by the Ex-German soldiers in their internment camps were exported to the Grassfields almost wholesale. Some of the appealing elements of attraction to the native's folk that yielded passions of fulfillment to the new men were the fact that, they could speak a different language (Pidgin English) and some level of English Grammar. The ability of these semi-transformed individuals to communicate with others especially the church authorities in a different language other than the mother tongue as well as the way they dressed and went about their daily chores bestowed on them an extraordinary societal esteem. To this should be added the fact that upon returning home these men brought along seeds of pairs, sugar cane, pepper, mangoes, Guavas, pawpaw, plantains, coffee, cocoa, bukanga and pineapple to experiment their growth within the grassfields. Though most of these crops survived with difficulties of a disturbing sort their introduction alone extended the yards of native nutrients and improved upon the farming methods. New farm methods implied increasing farm yields and the need to sell some of the surpluses which literally meant the creation of opportunities for money accumulation. More than anything else the introduction of Coffee and cocoa to be cultivated for cash basis kept the new men busy and awakened the local folks unto new responsibilities and opportunities. Somehow, the improvement in communication infrastructure and the growing passion among some of the grassfields folk to indulge in long distance trade during this season also brought along new sources of cash and crops like Cola, Ramie, and Tobacco.<sup>28</sup> With this most men abandoned

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<sup>28</sup>These Ideas were confirmed to us in graphic details by Daniel Ngwain Chou, 89 years (late) at Njinikejem Kom, 22 February 2003. Joseph Chungang 86 years (late) at Kitchuh Kom and lately NdimbuIsaac, 90 years of Ndu 2014. All of them were traders and claimed to have made fortunes in long distance trade most especially through the sale of palm oil and Cola business

the traditional economy that depended essentially on hunting gathering and some form of farm cultivation that hallowed shifting cultivation to engage in cash cropping adventures. The introduction of these kinds of crops that were not grown only for consumption and limited exchange but mainly for cash had very grim attraction to the local folk in the grassfields. This was particularly so because Cocoa, Coffee and to some extent palms unlike the crops grown earlier were not direct consumables but were a kind that failed within the fringes of primary products whose end products and relevance were often classed far beyond local ordinary comprehension for the native folk. This notwithstanding, the new men had developed such infatuation for cash issues and products that such unpopularity was constantly waved aside in favour of cash crop production. Their determination to sustain the cash crop economy and any other issues associated with cash flow continued to grow and with time attracted a non-negligible chunk of the natives to it. Such attractions technically tilted the balance of power and direction of command mainly because these new assignments and tasks required skills and a pattern of belonging that did not ensure blind submissions to the tenets of tradition that permeated from royalty and its acolytes and refocused it on cash and other ecstasies of prestige that came with modernity.

The growing of cash crop and cash essence were further sustained by the missionaries of mainly the Baptist and Catholic religion who were vectors of change and transformation in the Grassfields. The missionaries (men of God patterned on Christian dogma) had been fighting in the background with limited success for a little long to as they claimed; remove the local folk from adherence to an economy that had all the attributes of blind traditionalism. It was therefore their joy to see the Ex-service men and the returnee plantation workers to negotiate an outlet of change borne within an economy of cash. With this, they equally open so many outlets to encourage the natives to engage in cash cropping ventures. By the 1920s and 30s the traditional economy that was graduated and glorified in/by some odd figments of traditional production and some grim chances of exchange was fast fading away.

Candidly, it was not only the cash crop plantation economy that was working for the fading fortunes of the traditional economy. It was a combined pressure of colonial policies that had worked hard to replace peasant methods of farming with some kind of European agriculture plus the above mentioned cash issues especially cropping. Under the Policy of indirect Rule, Britain realized the potencies of the new men and decided to use them as vectors of communication for every new idea linked or concerned with the improvement of their

welfare. By so doing shifting cultivation plus slash and burn along with the use of seeds of low yields were systematically pushed out of use and those of high yields qualities gradually introduced. The Botanical garden set up by the Germans in Victoria (now Limbe) for experimentation of a wide range of tropical crops was extensively used in this direction to enrich both the methods of farming and the crops grown. The effect of these changing times that had profound repercussion in the Grassfields traditional societies especially those of very firmly centralized administration was that many opportunities were created in or around the notions of cash ownership that diverted the chieftain's attachment to the traditional notion of power and leadership. In the first place the new crops introduced had quite contrasting ways of planting and harvesting. This contrast was mainly situated on the fact that the notion of traditional blessings which the natives attached great importance did not find its relevance in this type of farming. In Kom, Nso, Bum, Bafut and Babanki where traditional notions of farming prevailed, people mind-sets on property ownership as well their disposition in time and space began to witness amazing dwindling fortunes.<sup>29</sup> Secondly, the cash/money passions exercised by the new men to some extent began to expose the nudity of traditional administration especially the belief that anything connected to human wellbeing was only guaranteed within the bosom of traditionalism that reserved abundant space for the veneration of ancestors. Intricately connected to this were the fissures of liberty created and preached by the Christian missionaries that were involved with the evangelization of the Grassfields.

In fact, in the 1930s and 40s Christian doctrines and way of life had intrinsically percolated almost every facet of the Grassfield traditional economy. Coincidentally, the teaching of Christianity often clashed with that of the colonial administration especially in the area of power and leadership. Within the Colonial circuit of power the Fons and other authorities connected to tradition were very much esteemed and held to be potent auxiliaries of anything connected to development and welfare. The missionaries notably those of Catholic mission found little of relevance in this kind of thinking. This gave them the guise to castlegions of doubts on a kind symbiotic ownership of power wherein tradition shared an

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<sup>29</sup>Franchis Chia Ngam Fundong Belo-Kom 2009. He never minced words to ascertain that Coffee, Bananas, Plantains, Paw Paw and Pineapples' that formed the nucleus of this new economy gradually rendered the traditional blessings that accompanied each planting season almost obsolete. To him people were attracted to the growing of these crops not only because of the money but more because it was fashionable for every man to every man to venture into such new deals. This idea seemed to have been a living testimony among Grass field natives at the time because greater; details of this nature were confirmed by Martin Atanga and Thaddeus Chi when we interviewed them earlier in 2007.

indispensable part. The contrasting apprehension of power between these two groups of alien abstraction produced conflicts of a disturbing sort on the traditional administration. With this constantly in a dramatic rise among the tribal units, many people who only depended on the traditional methods and authorities for survival began seeing the need to diversify their dependency and this only helped to weaken the grip of traditional leadership on the natives.

A crucial development borne out of this atmosphere of conflict between alien contraptions which by a very large margin indicated the depth of decay in traditional power tenure was the problem of women more especially royal women. High profiled polygamy constituted the trust of power for the grassfields monarchies throughout the pre-colonial era and for a very long time during the colonial and post-colonial eras. By traditional esteem the ownership of women and the children therefrom were directly synonymous to power. The rising traditional regard to polygamy was sustained by the fact that bride price was almost symbolic and more so because parental and husband responsibilities over wives or children essentially remained an individual issue of men and to some extent that of the extended family. For these reasons and many more, polygamy had a firm grip among the local grass fields chieftains and was celebrated by the royalty. The problem with this was not only that those men veiled themselves under such covers and bundled women en masse into their harem but rather that those women were most of the time never consented as to which men they could idly love to have as husbands. Another obscure issue tied with this was the fact that in their marriage fiefs most of the women were only glorified as far as child bearing and kitchen chores were concerned. This odd practices and conceptions were not only considered askance but drastically threatened and occasioned the extinction of the emerging new economy dominated by the ideas of the new men throughout the colonial era. It created avenues of doubts and burdened African Women in these fiefs with responsibilities without corresponding rights within the marriage realm.

The liberation theology preached and practiced by the new men plus the opened condemnation of polygamy and forced marriages along with some other odd systems of succession opened the eyes of many local folk to begin questioning the whole essence traditional powers. In the 1940s and 50s, the Catholic church more than anything else created opportunities of sophistication and dependence through and within which, local women notably those of the royal stalk found the liberty to put off their marriage strings. Women were startled with the way the new men treated their wives and children. In almost everything

the women and relatives of the new agents of change and those in cash chain were different in their comportment, outfit and approach to basic needs. Though Christianity did not completely change every aspect of their lives, the very fact that most of them upon baptism took different names and freely intermingled with the new men and women attracted enormous degree of envy from the folk under the lock and key of patriarchy. The simplistic lifestyle of the missionaries plus the selfless nature of those who profess and practiced Christianity only added weight to the growing envy/admiration to these new agents of change. There was in all a gender dichotomy with regards to general response to growth of the change factor. With regards to cash and the opportunities accrued therefrom, the men were generally very fast but most of the time very conscious when it came to Christian teachings and open disregard for tradition. Most grass fields women swallowed the liberation scheme anchored by the teachings of Christianity hook line. In this obsession, the social impact on their marriage responsibilities was enormous with the height being mass divorce. Cash from trading of cash crops and other items produced by women, handicraft by other women in the missionary centers plus new forms of dressing and singing vibrating and taking steam were just few of the many aspects of attraction brought about by these agents of change. Indeed, all of these avenues served as strong points of serious attraction to women who were burdened with elastic domestic responsibilities. Interestingly, royal women were the ones leading in this new obsession to emerging standards of comfort and liberty. With the powers of fons virtually curtailed by the modern administration, royal women en mass abandoned their palace fiefs and marriage responsibilities and sought for refuge under the missionaries premises. Besides standing as a serious challenge to the whole essence of patriarchy and a dead blow to royal elegance, the mass departure of royal women from their marriage homes to the missionary yards created a chain of very bitter conflicts between the church men and the traditional authorities on one hand as well as the Church men and the colonial administration on the other. The emergence of these new trends that ostensibly put the essence and power of traditional to test got a deal of applause from the new men because such challenges only created space for ideas that were reserved just ceremonial regard to tradition to blossom and flower in the grassfields.

Ordinarily, the colonial administration and those who were still firmly attached to the traditional conception of power stood at a better angle to arbitrate this sort of jig-saw tug of war between the traditional authorities and the Christian missions but unfortunately all of

them had their concerns pegged elsewhere. For the colonial administration, the church was somehow wrong in disgracing traditional authorities especially the problem of incubating royal women but any opened disregard for the church by the colonial administration could mean alienating itself with a civilising agency that was so useful in implanting colonization among the local folk. For those of pure traditional fabric, the sophistication and tempting offers injected into the daily menus by the new men were too attractive and apparently useful to be brushed off. With no intension or possibilities of opened challenge either to the church or the traditional authorities, both of them played for time and succeeded at last to push through a symbiotic society where both were bound to strife. All of this patently worked in favour of the new men because it created another new group of people who were no longer ready as before to bow completely to the tenets of tradition. In this atmosphere becoming a Christian got increased popularity among the local folk more so because of the many advantages that were associated with being in one or in it. This accounted for the dramatic rise both of the population of Christians and churches in the grassfields during this time.

An outgrowth of these new developments that tied a bond of unity between the new men and the critical mass of those who were escaping from the weakening strings of traditional leadership was the fact that the new system and philosophy of survival required responsibilities and functions that could only be performed by schooled or civilized men. Civilization in this realm did not imply a complex of full blown sophistication that outright rejection of every reasonable facet of tradition but barely an understanding that traditional authorities were auxiliaries of the colonial administration on the ground. In such graduated profiles, these authorities were as a consequent seen to be limited in function and power when faced with alien culture. To this should be added the fact that those who accepted Christianity were given or took up new names and learnt a new kind of language which together with a submission now to the head of the church and not the traditional authorities made them exceedingly happy. All the aforementioned scenery was overwhelmingly connected to the new landscape and pattern of behaviour introduced by the cash cropping economy. Towards the end of the 1940s precisely in 1946, the British colonial authorities understood that a joint coordination of all plantation activities and its products was necessary. It was in this connection that the Cameroon Development Cooperation (C DC) was formed. The new twist only went along way to make the need for labourers from the Grassfields and their plight or comfort in such assignments acute. Though traditionalism that expressed itself in the form of



patriarchy and extensive regard to ancestral worship remained in force still existed in a greater part of the colonial and post-colonial era, life in British Cameroon even in the remotest areas of the grass fields still moved in consonance to cash flow majoring essentially and Christian ordering. Besides providing a job market into within which all classes of people could find job the CDC plantations acted like a steam center where every aspect of social and economic survival of the people depended. This was particularly true in the Grass fields polities in the 1970s where at least one out of every three children in the family was involved.<sup>30</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This paper has attempted to zoom the changing matrixes and the responses of African people notably those of the Cameroon grassfields in the context of change using the plantations and cash crop economy as examples. Without claiming wholesome contribution to the plight and fortunes unleashed by the economy of plantation and cash cropping to this native stock, this paper submits that more than anything else, the fascination of cash that came with this economy incidentally instilled individual and collective worth pattern that threatened blind submission to traditionalism and forced in a symbiosis of power ownership and its disposition in place and time. From its evidence, it goes further to argue that the agents of change born by this new economy where cash held supreme authority brought into fore and elite class that animated the political era when independence loomed. The spirit of the new men that became the substance of change even in far remotest areas of the grassfields is indicated to have formed the nucleus of political awareness that shaped political developments in Cameroon. Another agency of change identified that fertilized the cash mentality and approach to basic needs. Without doubts; the present configurations of power, politics, religious compartment, and reverence for cash issue plus female emancipation trend in the present grassfields geopolitical niche owe its origin to this far distant economic offering. However, the special mutations brought about by the creation of the CDC in 1946 and its evolution constitutes another window of research begging for insights which this paper has opened.

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<sup>30</sup>Francis Chia Ngam Interviewed 10 August 2008 in Fundong. He submitted that almost every family in the grassfields depended on the fortunes of the plantations and cash crops. He went further to say that rural exodus in traditional grassfields in the 1970s and 80s was provoked by the opportunities offered by these cash flow opportunities and that the people of Kom, Kambe and Nso were in the overwhelming majority