

# Native Authorities In The British Southern Cameroons: Establishment And Contributions To Local Government From 1921-1960

Mercy YIBIRI WACHONG

Doctorate/PhD, University of Yaoundé I, Cameroon

**Abstract:** *The work examines Native Authorities in the British Southern Cameroons. Emphasis is laid on their establishment and contributions to local government. Native Authorities were the traditional rulers the British government used as intermediaries to exercise great authority in their section of Cameroon. They were established under the Native Authority, the native court and the native treasury ordinances. Under these three ordinances, the Native Authorities manifested different functions. The Native authority thus had a native court and a native treasury. The native court and native treasury exercised judicial and fiscal functions respectively. The government of the southern Cameroons was divided into six administrative divisions under district officers. Within these divisions, native authorities provided local administration consisting of democratically elected council, served by a permanent staff. Native authorities were in charged with the maintenance of law and order as well as with the execution of community development in their areas. The realization of this article makes inferences to archival materials from the National Archives of Buea (NAB) and the Bamenda II Council Archives all in Cameroon, not leaving out academic research. The analysis of these sources has produced data that has led to the success of this study.*

**Keywords:** *Native authorities, British Government or Administration, Local Government, District officers, southern Cameroons.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

After the partition of Cameroon into two parts by the British and the French. The British took her own part and divided into two portions, Northern and Southern Cameroons. The disconnected or in coherent nature of the territory made British to administer it as an integral part of Nigeria. Reason being that if they administered it as a separate unit, it would be more expensive to carried out their policies. Again, communication would also be impassable as the territory was divided by a narrow strip of land. The area also was too small to be on its own and the League agreed that Britian should administer it as part of Nigeria. The Northern Cameroon that had a connection to the Hausa and regions of Nigeria was administered as part of the Northern Province and the south was linked will the Eastern province.

British Southern Cameroons constituted the Cameroon provinces during the mandate period. The resident was the

principal executive officer of the governor in the province. He was responsible to the lieutenant governor. Directly under the Lieutenant Governor were district officers who represented the British administration to the people. The Divisional officers (DOs), headed the administrative districts or divisions into which the provinces were divided.

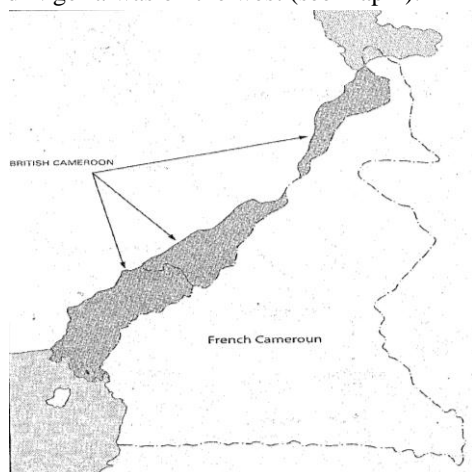
From 1922, these administrators and their assistants were instructed to make investigations into the administrative divisions. They were to collect information about their Fondoms, and Chiefdoms, distribution of the population, political systems, customary law and tenure system. The above aspects were to be used for preparation of the organization of indirect administration in the province and consequently Local government. The tour into the divisions made the administrators to discover that in some areas there were strong tribal consciousness or long tradition of political organization. In such areas the native authorities were the traditional executive authority, but where there was no natural

authority possessing executive power over a wider area than the village, the native authority system was a new construction rather than an adaption of native machinery. The result of the assessment opened the way for the putting in place of indirect rule.

With the indirect ruler system, the British colonial authorities in Southern Cameroons used traditional rulers to exercise great authority in the area. There were four administrative divisions in Southern Cameroons where this indirect rule system was implemented. Victoria, Kumba, Mamfe and Bamenda. When the Bamenda division was later on made a province, Kumba, Mamfe and Victoria divisions were administered together as Cameroon province. The traditional rulers ruled principal tribes in the Bamenda and Cameroon provinces respectively. The tribes that comprised these provinces at that time were Buea, Victoria, Bali, Kom, Bum, Nso, Bangwa, Mamfe, Kumba and Bafut. In the Cameroon province, the traditional rulers were called the "Chiefs" while in the Bamenda province, they were called the "Afon". These Chiefs and Afons became Native Authorities with courts and councils where the Chiefs and Afons meted out punishment more or less according to modified native customs.

## II. THE GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING OF BRITISH SOUTHERN CAMEROONS

British Southern Cameroons first came under French mandate which consisted of the majority of the former German territory, and the second under British mandate named the "British Cameroons", consisting of two territories Northern Cameroons and Southern Cameroons. It was the Southern part of British League of Nations mandated territory of the British Cameroons in West Africa internet source. The Northern portion of British Cameroons was administered as part of Northern Nigeria and the Southern portion was administered as one of the provinces of the Eastern region of Nigeria. The section of British Cameroons that was administered as one of the provinces of the Eastern region of Nigeria (Southern Cameroon) which is our focal point was situated on the coast between the Cross River on the west and the Mungo River on the East. The French Cameroon was on the East and Nigeria was on the west (see map 1).



Cameroons

Source: V.G Fanzo, *Cameroon History For Secondary Schools And Colleges* P.205

Map 1: Cameroon map showing British Southern

In 1938, it had a total area of 16,581 square miles with a population of about 445,753. Since 1961, it has been part of the Republic of Cameroon, where it makes up the North west and south west Regions of the country.

In the south and east part of the Bamenda division lies a high plateau of grassland varying from 3000 to 6000 feet, the highest land being in the north east. To the west and north-west broken country largely forested gradually falling to the head waters of the Cross River and the Katsina Ala River. The headquarters was near the southern border. Kumba to the north east, on the French border, was the Manenguba grassy plateau at about 6000 feet, surrounding two extinct crater lakes. High land stretches south along the international border to Nyassoso. From here there was a gradual fall westwards, broken by the Tumpi Hills and containing several extinct crater lakes of which that at Kumba itself was the largest. In the south west, the division included the creek and swamp country stretching to the borders of Calabar.

That part of the Mamfe division to the east lying between the Bamenda and Kumba was mountainous and falls to the Cross River and to the west of Mamfe. To the North of the Cross River was the area known as "Over side", rocky and rugged and almost impossible of access during the rains owing to the many rivers running from east to west. The Victoria Division was one of contrasts. In the Centre, running roughly north and south was the Cameroons Mountain (Mount Fako (13,350 feet), the upper 8000 feet or so of which was treeless but the lower slopes were covered in dense forest and fell gradually to the Rio del Rey swamps in the North West and the Tiko swamps and the Mungo River on the east. On the south, the mountain rises steeply out of the sea near Victoria, 13 miles north of which was the provincial headquarters, Buea, 3500 feet up. The mountain was volcanic and last erupted in 1922, the lava flowing into the sea near Debundscha. An earth tremor was experienced in 1946 which did some slight damage to houses in Victoria. These were the areas where Natives Authorities exercised their rule.

## FACTORS THAT MOTIVATED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TRADITIONAL RULERS AS NATIVE AUTHORITIES.

Certain factors motivated the British into using these traditional rulers as native authorities. The first reason was to transform the colonized peoples. In order to achieve this, ethnic divisions were taken into consideration in constituting Local government. For this reason, the British divided her sphere into autonomous native authorities.

Second, the Cameroon's economic production was designed to satisfy the needs of the British, so native authorities were needed in order to facilitate this.

Third, the inaccessibility of the roads system in southern Cameroon became a serious problem and this therefore means that only the local rulers could exercise control over certain areas which the British officials could only reach with difficulty.

Fourth, native authorities could help reduce the cost of administration, due to the fact that to reach to those local areas was difficult.

Fifth, native authorities and their institutions were needed to uphold colonial rule that is, easy exploitation of the territory. For this reason, the chiefs were educated at government or native authority schools.

Sixth, native authorities were necessary because the British lacked personnel to work in the local areas and also due to the little knowledge of the interior of British southern Cameroons. The traditional rulers knew their subjects better and given the fact that most local people were illiterate at the time, the native authorities were preferable. These native authorities had different functions to carry out which was tantamount to colonial imperialism and served to create an environment for maximum economic exploitation.

#### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIVE AUTHORITIES IN LOCAL ADMINISTRATION.

The base of indirect administration that the British applied in Southern Cameroons from 1922 was hinged on three ordinances: the Native Authority ordinance, the native court and the native treasury ordinances. Under these three ordinances, the Native Authorities were established into different functions as will be seen below.

According to the Native Authority ordinance of 1916, chiefs as native authorities were mandated by the British authorities to maintain law and order and to appoint native police to assist them in such a purpose. They collected taxes where part of such taxes was used for village projects such as schools, halls, payment of workers and sanitation while the other part was paid to the British treasury. They also paid those who assisted them from the taxes collected. Native authorities recruited labour and issue orders relating to public health and community development. The proceedings of the customary or native courts were supervised by the district officer who sat in courts during cases of criminal and civil nature and managed boundary disputes between villages and clans.

Throughout the provinces, headmen responsible for collecting tax drew a proportion of what they collected, varying from 2 ½g, which is paid to a number of quarter heads in the Bamenda Division, to 12 ½g which is paid to village heads in the Mamfe Division, who shared such amounts with their quarter heads by independent arrangement. The types of taxes they collected included the direct taxes, Jangali especially in the Bamenda Province, court fees and fines, land rents especially in the Victoria Division. Native authorities also administered legislations as they have themselves made, generally with the aid or under the supervision of administrative or technical officers. (See table).

##### *Victoria Division*

1) Victoria Federated Native Authority (Registration of marriages) order, 1947.

2) Victoria Federated Native Authority (vehicle license) rules, 1947

3) Bakweri Native Authority (Native liquor) rules 1947

4) Balong Native Authority (Native liquor sales) rules 1947

5) Victoria Federated Native Authority (Native liquor sales) 1947

6) Application of licensing provisions to certain areas in the Eastern provinces (Victoria Division)

7) Bakweri Native Authority (Depounding of animal) rules 1933

8) The dogs ordinance (Licensing provisions-Eastern provinces) Application order, 1943

9) Victoria Market rules (Amendment order 1947

*Kumba Division*

10) The Kumba Native Authority (control of Domestic animals 1946)

11) The Kumba Native Authority building rules, 1947

*Bamenda Division*

12) The Bansa Native Authority slaughter rules 1947

13) The Ngemba Native Authority (control of cattle order 1947)

14) The market rules (Bamenda Division) order in council 1936

*Mamfe Division*

15) The Mamfe Native Authority hawkers and pett, stall holders and market rules 1943 (p-136)

*Source: NAB, Jala (1945) N°1479, vol II, Native Administrations. The General Subject, 1945 p-10.*

##### *Table 1: List of Native Authority Legislation in force*

The British Authorities instituted direct administration where it was impossible to set up any apparatus of indirect rule. For example, the Mbembe were administered directly until the Second World War broke out in 1939. Each Native Authority was responsible for the smooth-functioning of the administrative machinery in its area of Jurisdiction as well as the provision of health and educational services. They also dealt with criminals and provided funds for the overall advancement of the area. The Native Authorities worked in close collaboration with the colonial administration. Since the British colonial administration wanted British Southern Cameroon to be integrated with Nigeria, the Nigeria Richards constitution of 1945 allowed two native authority representatives from the Cameroons, Chief Manga William of Victoria and Fon Galega II of Bali to be appointed to the Eastern house of Assembly. By 1951, the government of Southern Cameroons was divided into six administrative divisions under district officers with headquarters at Victoria, Kumba, Mamfe, Bamenda, Nkambe and Wum. Within these divisions, local administration was provided by native authorities consisting of democratically elected council, served by a permanent staff

Under section 5 of the Native Authority Ordinance, the commissioner of the Cameroons also appointed as a NA any chief or other person, any chief associated with a council or any group of persons and specified the composition of such a body. Every NA so constituted was charged by this law with the maintenance of order and good government over the area within its Jurisdiction, exercise over the African population within its borders all the powers vested in it by this or any ordinance or by a native law or custom. The ordinance set out its duties in relation to the prevention of crime and gave any individual member of the NA the powers to arrest or directs the arrest of any one about to commit an offence, if it appeared that the offence could not otherwise be prevented.

NAs were also invested with certain legislative powers. These were divided into two categories, orders and rules but before publication in the Gazette, the latter required the consent of the commissioner of the Cameroons who also had the power to direct any NA to issue, revoke or enforce any order, or to revoke any rule. Penalties up to 25 pounds fine or imprisonment were provided for contraventions against NA legislation. By this ordinance, every NA was a body corporate with perpetual succession, a common seal, the power to hold land and to sue and be sued. Each made standing rules covering the minimum number of members constituting a meeting. They also made rules regulating conduct and procedure at meeting and with the approval of the commissioner they appointed committees and delegated to such committees certain powers.

According to part eight of the ordinance with the prior approval of the Governor-General, NAs established police forces and provided regulation and conduct of such a force. Part nine made similar provision for the establishment of a NA prison. The ordinance also set out financial provisions for NAs and declared the sources from which their revenue and funds may be derived. With the approval of the commissioner of the Cameroons, NAs were empowered to make advances and to operate deposit and suspense accounts.

Under the native court ordinance, the chiefs and Afons became native authorities with courts and councils where the chiefs and Afon meted out punishment more or less according to modified native customs. These native courts according to the native courts ordinance of 1914 were divided into four grades of courts, A, B, C and D. The grade A courts had full judicial powers over all civil and criminal matters but could not pass the death sentence. The grade B courts, settled civil cases which did not require a fine above 50 pounds and criminal cases which did not exceed 2 years of imprisonment, 24 lashes or a fine of 50 pounds or its equivalent in native laws and customs. The grade C courts had rights over civil cases which claimed below 10 pounds and criminal matters below 6 months of imprisonment or a fine of 10 pounds. The last, Grade D courts had jurisdiction over matters which claimed between 5 pounds and 10 pounds and criminal cases below 3 months of imprisonment, 12 lashes or 5 pounds fine.

These native courts had vital functions in maintaining law and order, and enforcing legal sanctions by the decisions of the NA. Such native courts were regulated in accordance with the native court ordinance (NCO), Cap 142 laws of Nigeria. By this legislation the commissioner of the Cameroons could by warrant constitute a native court, determine the area of its Jurisdiction, define its grade, and therefore its powers and nominate its members. The courts were established on a clan basis to ensure uniformity of language and custom throughout the area of its jurisdiction. Such courts had unlimited jurisdiction over land matters, inheritance and matrimonial matters other than those arising from or connected with Christian marriage.

In other civil matters, the jurisdiction of a grade D Native court was limited to actions in which the debt, demand or damaged does exceed 25 pounds. In criminal cases, their jurisdiction was limited to those matters which could be adequately punished by imprisonment for 3 months, or in the case of theft of livestock or farm produce, by imprisonment

for 6 months, twelve strokes, or a fine of 5 pounds or the equivalent by native law and custom. Capital cases and certain felonies were expressly defined as being beyond the competence of such a court, but they are specially authorized to enforce the provisions of certain Nigeria ordinances, including the Direct Taxation ordinance, the building lines regulations ordinance, certain sections of the criminal code and certain sections of the public health ordinance. Such courts normally administered the native laws and custom of the area for which they were established, provided that it was not repugnant to natural justice or morality. Legal practitioners were debarred from appearing in these courts. Records were kept by the court scribes who were also the court messengers who executed the processes of the court. The court fines and fees were appropriated to the NA revenue. Administrative officers at all times had access to records and may suspend, reduce or modify sentences or order rehearing. There were special provisions for the transfer of cases to the magistrate's court or the High court and for the submission of appeals. The native court system was therefore fairly elastic and could easily be adapted to the capacity of its members and the degree of development of the community over which Jurisdiction was exercised.

The grade C and D courts were more active than the other grade of courts. The appointment of court members differ from division to division. In Victoria area, courts members were selected and nominated by village communities and appointed by the chief commissioner on the recommendation of the Resident. In Kumba, members of native courts were selected by the communities they represent. Selections were accorded recognition by government. In Mamfe, native court members were normally selected by the people and appointed by warrant under the hand of the Resident. In the case of the Bamenda Division it was according to hereditary and only the chiefs or Afons sat as members of the native courts.

From the beginning, the number of courts was usually small but on the improvement of the staff position, new courts came into existence in 1921, example of the Bamenda area courts. The chiefs attended all court sessions and some attended even when they were not supposed to. The native court presidents were usually accurate in all their responsibilities but for fact that other chiefs in council would want to make them ineffective. This angered the British Authorities who decided to dismantle these native courts and replaced them with native authorities, each carrying its own court. It should be noted that such native courts were local courts placed under the authority of chiefs responsible for the settlement of local disputes. With the abnormalities created in these courts, efforts were made by the colonial authorities to transform tradition authorities (chiefs) and councils into native authorities with more extensive powers. A chief was the chairman of a native authority, elected into it post by different sub-local chiefs that constituted each native authority.

Native Authority in the Bamenda Division was headed by the Afon or chiefs of Bali, Kom, Bum, Bafut and Nso who constituted executives of native authorities, assisted by courts and councils. The chiefs were hereditary but there was no law of primogeniture, for when the chief was dying he appointed his successor from among his sons or brothers. They were legally sole native authorities. They consulted their council's

effectively. These councils consisted generally of the elders and sub-chiefs and in Bansa it included the 'Yas' or chief's mother. The Fons were members of the customary courts which provided peace and justice in their areas of jurisdiction. The Administration did not intervene in such affairs except when there was a dispute as to the native custom of selection. These courts played an important economic role as most local public funds came from it in the form of court fees and fines.<sup>28</sup>

The increased trade, commercial and other activities in the division rendered the powers of all courts inadequate to handle crimes in the territory. Because of this, the D.O. for the Bamenda Division, Hawkesworth increased the powers of some courts in the province. These courts included the Bali, Nso, Ndop, Bafut and Kom courts. It should be pointed out that the British wanted to abandon the constant handling of disputes between the Pegans and Christians which was a burden to them<sup>29</sup>. They decided to hand over this burden to the NAs and this pressure was now supposed to rest on these native courts whose powers were raised. In collaboration with the Resident, the five aforementioned courts were upgraded to grades "C" in 1928. This was because, the cases handled by these courts were encouraging and were better than many in the other areas.

However, in 1934, the grades "C" powers of these courts were withheld and reverted to their previous status according to government policy. Representation in NA and Courts was limited and as a result in 1935, courts started sending in their representatives. This was necessary because the Division had grown in size and was now regarded as a province. In 1938, the Bamenda Division had 18 officially registered NAs with their courts and by 1944, the number stood at 23 which included Bali, Wum, Nso, Befang-Beba, Bafut, Bum, Esimbi, Fungom, Kom, Mbaw, Mbem, Mbembe, Menemo, Mfumte, Misaje, Mogamo, Ndop, Ngemba, Ngie, Ngwaw, Tang, Wa and Wiya. See table 3

Designation of Native Authority	Members of Native Authority	Area
Aghem	The Aghem Clan Council	Aghem Clan Area
Bani (Bali)	The chief of Bani	Bani Clan Area
Beba-Befang	The Beba-Befang Clan Council	Beba-Befang Clan Area
Bufu (Bafut)	The chiefs of Bufu, Babanki, Babanki-Tungaw, Bambui, Bafreng, Bamenda	Bufu Clan Area
Bum	The chief of Bum	Bum Clan Area
Esimbi	The Esimbi Clan Council	The Esimbi Clan Area
Fungom	The Fungom village group Council	Fungom village Area
Kom	The Chief of Kom	Kom clan Area
Mbaw	Village group Council Mbaw	Mbaw Village group Area
Mbem	Mbem Village group Council	Mbem Village group Area
Mbembe	Mbembe Village group Council	Mbembe village group Area
Menemo	The Menemo Clan	Menemo Clan

	Council	Area
Mfumte	Mfumte Village Group Council	Mfumte village Group Area
Misaje	The Misaje Village Group Council	Misaje village Group Area
Mogamo	The Mogamo Group Council	Mogamo Group Area
Ndop	The Ndop Council	Ndop Native Court Area
Ngemba	The Ngemba Council	Ngemba native Court Area
Ngie	The Ngie clan Council	Ngie Clan Area
Ngwaw	The Ngwaw Council	Ngwaw Native Court Area
Nsaw	The Chief of Nsaw	Nsaw Clan Council
Tang	The Tang Clan Council	Tang Clan Area
Wa	the Wa Clan Council	Wa Clan Area
Wiya	The Wiya Group Council	Wiya Group Area

Source: NAB, Ja/a(1945)1, No. 1479, Vol. II, Native Administrations: The General Subject, 1945, p. 5

Table 3: Designation of Native Authorities and Members in the Bamenda Division

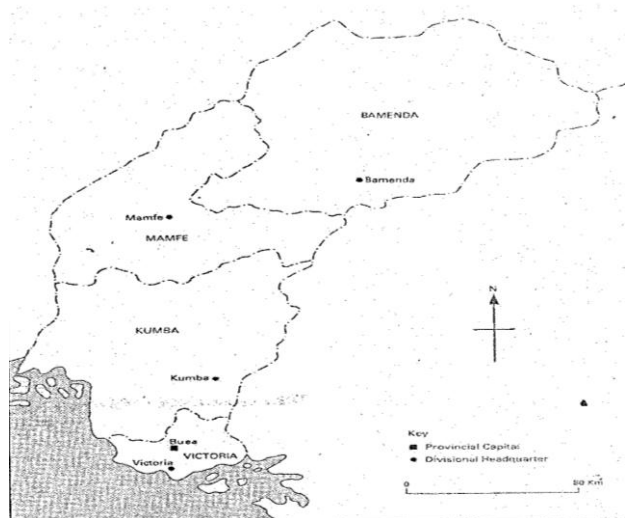
This table shows the 23 officially registered NAs in the Bamenda Division, the members of NA and its area of jurisdiction. Apart from Nso and Bafut NAs, the others had no control over their finances since they could not be consulted at every stage in the preparation of their budget estimates and expenditures. The D.O.s controlled the funds from the native administration treasury at Bamenda, a long distance away from many NAs. Four NAs, the Fon of Nso and the Fon of Kom, Bali Nyonga and Bum were helped by councils which had advisory powers while in other areas the chiefdoms were too close together to offer a convenient and financially viable unit of administration as in the Bafut Native Authority area (BNAA).

In some places, the British found no paramountcy to lean on and were confronted by chiefdoms of different sizes and scope. In others the units were almost all small. Thus in Wum, Bafut, Ndop, Fungom, Ngemba, Meta and Ngie where there was a single recognized paramount or senior chief, a composite native authority and native courts were created. By 1936, the administration had created a wide variety of native authorities. In 1946, some fundamental constitutional changes took place in Nigeria. The Richard constitution that divided Nigeria into three regions and this affected the Cameroon province and in Bamenda Division, divisional councils (DC), composed of the representatives from NAs, elected persons to represent them in the councils. The Bamenda Divisional council therefore held its first meeting in Bamenda in August 1946. The NAs were represented by their chiefs and this kind of administration was later reinforced in 1948 when the NAs were replaced by local councils.

The Native Authorities in the Bamenda division were all grouped into four Federations with exception of Bali. These federated councils included the North Eastern Federation made up of Misaje, Mbembe, Ndu (Wiya), Tang, Mbaw (War), Mbem, Mbaw and Mfumte. The South Western made

up of Ngemba, Meta, Ngie, Ngwaw and Moghamo. The South Eastern, Bafut, Ndop and Nso, and finally North Western made up of Kom, Wum, Beba-Befang, Esimbi and Fungom. Each created federation, controlled and direct the political, social and economic development of the concerned area.

After these constitutional changes, the British Southern Cameroons after 1948 was divided into the Bamenda province made up of the former Bamenda divisions and the newly created Wum and Nkambe Divisions and the Cameroon province made up of the Kumba, Mamfe and Victoria Divisions (see Map 2).



Source: V.G Fanzo, *Cameroon History For Secondary Schools And Colleges* P.206

Map 2: showing the Cameroon and Bamenda provinces 1948

LG in the Bamenda province was then based on tribal affiliations with suitable representation for minority groups. There were therefore five statutory NAs which were as follows: Bamenda division made up of South-Eastern Federation (SEF), South-Western Federation (SWF) and Bani native authority, The Wum Division called Wum Divisional Council and Nkambe Division called Nkambe Divisional council. The formation of a new Bani Native Authority council (BNAC) was accomplished successfully during the year. For the first time in the Bamenda area, secret ballot voting for the election of LG councilors was employed. Added to this, an Hausa who had been a resident for many years, was co-opted to the newly elected council to represent Fulani and Hausa interests. The Bamenda South-Western native Authority and the Wum Divisional Native Authority converted their clan councils into subordinate native authorities and also introduced the principle of secret ballot voting. This reorganization was completed in 1957.

The financial position of each Native authority of the area was generally healthy but with increasing demands for more services, tax rates in some areas had to be raised to meet the added expenditure. The largest native Authority, the SEF, had an estimated revenue and expenditure of approximately £43,000 (pounds) and £ 39,000 respectively and an estimated surplus sum of £ 27,000.

Division	Native Authority	Approved rates of tax 1955 - 56 1956 - 57
Bamenda	Bani	20 0 20 0
	South Eastern Federation	15 0 15 0
	South – Western Federation	15 0 20 0
Nkambe	Nkambe Divisional	12 0 14 0
Wum	Wum Divisional	11 6 20 0

Source: *Cameroons under United Kingdom Administration report for the year 1956, colonial office, London 1957.*

Table IV: Approved Rates of tax for Native Authorities in the Bamenda province

The Bamenda Widekum native authority was vested in a council which met quarterly and conducted its business through the committee system. The Bali council conducted its business without any committees in the Bamenda Tikari council and appointed caretaker committee which met monthly and conducted all business. In this situation, government officers supervised such committees. Two new subordinate native authorities were established in order to replace the existing Bamenda Tikari Native authority. The new subordinate native Authorities were designated the Ndop /Bafut and Nsaw councils and each was more closely integrated than the large and rather loosely Federated Native Authority. The Bali Native Authority council was reorganized in 1958 and elections were carried out. The New subordinate native authorities were embodied in a Bamenda Divisional Native Authority. The latter became a county council while the former became district councils and powers were granted to each council according to accepted LG practice.

In the Mamfe Division, LG was coordinated by the District head and Native Authorities. These NAs were made up of village heads and quarter heads. In 1948, there was only one salaried sub-chief, Ekumo, the village head of Tinta Assumbo, who received £ 30 per annum. There were 288 other village heads in the Division who were unsalaried but received payment up to  $12\frac{1}{2}\%$  of the gross tax collected in their villages. Out of this sum, However, a share was usually paid to the quarter Heads of the villages. The amount was also reduced in particular cases as a penalty for late payment of tax. The village Heads were usually appointed by Native laws and customs as NAs and were dismissed by the chief commissioner in case of any mishap in their responsibilities.

In the native courts each member paid some rates of tax per day for the average number of days sat by each court per month. These rates of pay were calculated at 2/6 per member see table. The amount was paid to the court in a lump sum and in some cases, the president of the court received a greater share. The president of a court received a maximum salary of £1 per month and by a member 133/6, but the total amount varied from time to time according to the volume of work carried out by the court. In 1956, there was a reorganization of three Native Authorities. The Banyang amalgamated with the

Mbo Native Authority, the subordinate NAs of the Kembong NA amalgamated to form one NA and the Takamanda NA changed the rules governing its composition. In each case, electoral regulations provided for election of council members by secret ballot. The elections carried out resulted in the return of a number of young, literate members in the places of old unlettered men. This however brought into council affairs men with a surer grasp of the more complex aspects of LG, particularly in respect of financial matters. The task of LG in Mamfe Division was therefore entrusted to ten major NAs which were; the Mamfe town and area NA, the Mundani NA, the Banyang Mbo NA, the Bangwa NA, the Assumbo NA, the Mbulu Federal NA, the Menka NA, the Takamanda NA, the Wiekum NA, and the Kembong NA.

A problem came up from the grouping of these native authorities into four native treasury areas, but this problem was solved during the year by the amalgamation of the four treasuries into one divisional treasury. A joint committee, upon which all the NAs were represented, was formed to administer the Divisional estimates. This committee, seventeen of whose nineteen members were literate, had tackled its tasks with realism and a live appreciation of the need to subordinate parochial and vested interests for the good of the financial stability of the NAs as a whole. The merger was accepted as a temporary expedient pending the training of sufficient qualified treasury staff to man independent treasuries and when this was accomplished the four independent treasuries were re-established. In 1956/1957, the financial position of the NAs in this Division was generally healthy and all round increases in tax, recommended by the native authorities were introduced and the approved rates were as follows:

Native Authority	Approved rates of tax			
	1955 - 56		1956 - 57	
	s	d	s	d
Assumbo	14	0	18	0
Bangwa, Mbulu, Menka, Mundani and Takamanda	15	0	19	0
Banyang-Mbo				
Banyang	17	0	21	0
Mbo	15	0	19	0
Kembong and Mamfe Town	17	0	21	0
Wiekum	16	0	20	0

Source: *Cameroons under United Kingdom Administration report for the year 1956, colonial office, London 1957.*

Table V: *Approved Rates of Tax in the Mamfe Division*

In 1959, NAs were displaced by councils and rules were later passed which include slaughter rules, market rules and maternity fees rules. The reorganization of councils was now under active consideration. The tax rates remained the same but the number of schedule II payers was decreased to 3523.

In Kumba Division, in the 1940s, the only chief recognized as NA was the District Head of Kumba, Abel Mukete. There were no chiefs so recognized in the Division. The district head was legally sole NA but he himself recognized the need for reform and only lack of administrative staff had prevented reforms from being worked out. He

consulted the council an ad hoc body formed by the administration with the approval of the people whose members were chosen by the people. The District head earned £ 98 per annum and 20 vice presidents or sub chiefs earned an average salary of £13 per annum. If a sub-chief was convicted for a criminal offence, his dismissal was automatically approved by government.

The joint committee established by NAs in 1955 continued to work satisfactorily and no progress was made in dividing the one divisional treasury into three, due mainly to the lack of trained staff and the desirability of completing the planned roads programme before this measure was introduced. The NAs introduced the "pay as you earn" system of taxing the incomes of the employees of the plantation and commercial forms. The tax rates in the Division was as follows:

Native Authority	Approved rates of tax			
	1955 - 56		1956 - 57	
	s	d	s	d
Bakossi south and West, Muambong	16	6	16	6
Upper Balong and Bafaw, Bakossi North, Mualonge and Muahune-Aku and Bassosi	15	6	16	6
Bakossi, North (except Mualonge and Muahune-Aku), Elung, Nkia and Ninong	14	6	16	6
Bima, Korup, Batanga and Ngolo	12	6	15	0
Balundu Badiku	14	6	16	6
Bambuko, Balue and Tsangele	15	6	16	6
Bai-Dieka, Mbonge, Bakundu North and Balandu	16	6	17	0
Bakundu South	15	6	17	0

Source: *Cameroons under United Kingdom Administration report for the year 1956, colonial office, London 1957.*

Table VI: *Approved Tax Rates for Kumba Division*

The reserves held by the Kumba Divisional Treasury was in excess of the prescribed minimum and financial position of the Treasury was healthy.

The 1959 saw the quorum of the Divisional Joint committee which was raised to eleven members. Two Native Authorities were not represented. But at the end of that year Bafaw and Balong settled its differences and was awaiting elections while the composition of the Kumba Town Council was agreed finally based on arbitrary representation, with the combined minority groups of 'Natives' (those whose fathers were born in Kumba Division) were being allocated sixteen out of thirty elected seats. With a single set of estimates, control over all NA staff and the District Officer sitting as adviser. The Divisional Joint committee continued to meet once every three months, to act as the executive body and to function with remarkable ability despite considerable handicaps. The NAs proposed for a NA reform which was finalized with the intention of their being implemented before the beginning of the 1960/61 financial year. Based on the

English LG system, a Divisional Council, four District Councils and the Kumba Town Council were all legally constituted as Native Authorities and the last two being subordinate but with widely delegated powers. The existing NAs were relegated to the position of Local council and functioned mainly as electoral colleges, with direct representation to both the district and divisional councils. All district councils were entrusted with their own treasuries.

In Victoria Division, there were only three stipendiary chiefs; they were the District Heads of Victoria, Buea and Balong NA areas respectively. There were no titular chiefs in the Division and only traditional distinction enjoyed by individuals in the social organization was that due to heads of kindred's and extended families. Such persons were appointed and if necessary deposed by their families. There were not paid by either NA or government. The court members were paid in the following way; Victoria Native administration, fixed rates of £15 and 12 respectively per month, Bakweri Native Administration, 5 each on basis of 8 cases per sitting, Balong Native administration, fixed rates of 7/6d each per month. Due to incapability, Babuko court was close down in 1948 (the court hardly functioned for two years and was very unsatisfactory.) case from this court were transferred to be heard in Victoria lower court. Chief Gabriel Ethe was placed on the Mongo bench instead of the appeal court bench. Court clerks were usually stubborn sending their case books for monthly checks and because of this they were sanctioned.

Throughout the province, headmen responsible for collecting tax drew a proportion of what they collect varying from 21/2 % which was paid to a number of quarter heads in the Bamenda Division, to 12 ½ % which was paid to village heads in the Mamfe Division. The method of appointing and deposing members of NAs varied with the NAs constitution. Generally speaking, the approval of the Resident at least was necessary, unless membership went by headship of a certain village. Village and quarter heads were appointed by public consent, the administration adjudicating in case of disputes.

In 1955, four independent NAs were created: the Bakweri, the Victoria Federated, the Balong and the Bakolle authorities. The two latter NAs were very small and shared a treasury with the Victoria federated NA and they also met with the Victoria Federated NA to discuss matters of common interest. Apart from their independent status and the power to make rules without reference to the Victoria federated authority, there was little difference between them and the Mungo and Tiko NAs which was subordinate to the Victoria federated Authority. The reorganization of LG in Victoria Division in 1955 put in place new proposals into effect. These proposals were to take into account the special considerations arising from the settlement in the Division of a large migrant population attracted there by the plantations. Each interest was given the fullest opportunity to present its views on the question of representation in the proposed reformed councils, the membership of which was designed to provide for the interest of "strangers" as well as of the indigenous inhabitants. These proposals were implemented in 1957, which envisaged the establishment of one Divisional NA and five NAs subordinate to it. The Bakweri, Balong and Bakolle native authorities remained substantially the same but the Victoria federated council was divided into the Victoria and Tiko NAs.

Elections to each NA was carried out by secret ballot, every tax payer registered as a voter being eligible to vote. Each subordinate NA council elected a stipulated number from amongst its own members to form the Divisional NA. The tax rate of this area increased based on the recommendations of the NAs. It was increased from 14s 0d to 20s 0d. In 1958, there was the reorganization into a two-tier system of LG. The term of office in the subordinate councils was three years. The Victoria Divisional Council met for the first time in October, 1958, with the District Officer as chairman. It was later found that this was not a very satisfactory arrangement and the District Officer gave way early in the year for a chairman to be elected from among the members of the council. The District Officer therefore sat as an adviser to the council. Two members of the traditional ruling elements were appointed president and vice-president of the divisional council by the Commissioner of the Cameroons but the president, chief J Manga Williams, died on 14<sup>th</sup> April and a successor was appointed. The reformed councils worked very well particularly so in the case of the divisional council. The tax rates remained unchanged. Taxation of women wage-earners in the division was considered but a decision was deferred until April 1960.

### III. THE CONTRIBUTIONS MADE BY NATIVE AUTHORITIES TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Native Authorities carried out socio-economic activities in their various areas in the British southern Cameroons. In the domain of agriculture, NAs encouraged the cultivation of local foodstuff in the areas of jurisdiction like yams, cocoyams, plantains, maize, egusi and groundnuts. They recruited labour in the plantations. This labour came from Nigeria, the Western grassland, French Cameroon and the Hausa land. Through this labour a lot of plantations were created in southern Cameroons especially in the Victoria area. As far as trade was concerned, traditional and long distance trade was promoted by the NAs. Natives carried salt from Mamfe and sold in Nigeria, kolanuts from NSo to Northern Cameroons and Nigeria. Through this trade, the NAs collected taxes that were used for other community projects and for the colonial administration. The NAs divided their limited funds with the British government. As if that was not enough, they used their own share of revenue to pay the sitting fees of councilors and court members as well as NA staff salaries. Another part was used to develop local services like the construction of roads, dispensaries and schools. This was done without a helping hand from the British government. In the domain of roads, NAs constructed and maintained few roads and the major road was the one that run from Tiko to Victoria to Mutengene to Kumba and to Mamfe. Smaller ones were maintained in the Bamenda province especially the ring road and that was between 1948 and 1949 which was done out of \$57,511 that was granted as grants by the British to the Cameroon province. With this help, each NA was responsible for constructing new roads and maintaining old ones in their respective areas supervised by the colonial department of public works.

In the domain of education, elementary education was provided by Native Administration schools supervised by NAs. Most primary schools in the area were operated by the NAs and missions.

Educational facilities in British Cameroons were far behind other sectors of the Native administration and British educational policies in this area suffered from neglect. The British colonial administration regarded education as a forum of training temporary civil servant for colonial exploitation as well as clerks who could work in the administration, business, plantations and security service. The missions regarded education as a means of spreading their religion by training natives as catechists, teachers, pastors and clerks while the native administration saw education as a means of serving ethnic groups, clans and villages thereby promoting LG.

In 1927, the memorandum on the place of the vernacular in native education was introduced by the NAs which allowed the use of vernacular as a medium of instruction in the first stages of primary education. For this reason, Mungaka and Pidgin English were taught in the Bamenda and Cameroon provinces respectively. Subjects taught in the primary schools include: hygiene, Agriculture, reading, writing, arithmetic, singing and religious instruction. In 1932, the educational cycle was reduced from 9 to 8 years; 2 years infant class (I and 2), 4 years primary education (standard 1, 2, 3 and 4) and 2 years middle (middle 1 and 2) commonly called standards 5 and 6 by natives. There were almost about 300 primary schools in British southern Cameroons in 1949. Out of this 300, 137 primary schools were found in the Bamenda province and out of this 137 primary schools by 1947, only one was a government school, 7 belonged to the NA schools and 129 schools were to the Christian missions. The remaining 163 primary schools were situated in the Cameroon province and out of this 163, 4 were for the government, almost 10 to NA schools and the bulk to the Missions. By 1957, the numbers of primary schools had increased in southern Cameroons to almost 450 in which 16 were owned by the NA schools and the rest to missions (the Roman Catholics, Cameroon Baptist mission and the Basel missions). The British government owned only a few primary schools.

Apart from elementary primary schools, NAs also trained natives in various Services in the area, particularly in sanitation, agriculture, health and also promotion tests were organized for native administration employees. Native administration tests were given to motor drivers at Kumba, carpenter (Kumba road overseers (one at Bamenda and one at Mamfe, forest guards at Kumba, veterinary assistant at Bamenda, court clerk (Victoria 12, Bamenda eleven, clerical staff (Kumba 7, Bamenda 5, Victoria 7, Mamfe 1) four printers at Buea, one market master at Victoria. These promotion tests were organized every month in a year for Native administration employees. If a NA employee fails to pass his test, he automatically fails to get his increment. (see table)

Date	Treasury	Administrative	Judicial
30 <sup>th</sup> August	CA: 1 ½ hours B(1) ½ hour 2 hours	A: 1 ½ hours B: ½ hour 2 hours	A: 1 ½ hours B: ½ hour 2 hours
31 <sup>st</sup>	C: 1 hour	C: 1 hour	C (1): 1

August	D: 2 hours 3 hours	D (2): 2 hours 3 hours	hour D (1): 2 hours 3 hours
Result of tests			
	Bamenda	Kumba	Victoria
Medical	4	-	2
Health	1	-	1
Forestry	-	4	2

Source: NAB, Ja/a(1946)1, No. 3647, Vol. 1, Provincial Tests for NA Employees, Southern Cameroons, 1946, p. 167.

Table VII: Native administration tests, Cameroon province, 1945

Looking at the table, one can see that the promotion tests were written in grades (A, B, C, D) and also the various hours located for each paper. The second table showed the results of the Medical, health and forestry exams that were taken by the Bamenda, Kumba and Victoria NA administration. Bamenda had 5 persons that passed 4 in medical, one in health, Kumba none in medical and health and 4 in forestry and Victoria had 2 that passed in medical, one in health and 2 in forestry. The promotion tests were written for confirmation and to enable an employee to pass his bar at £30 per annum. It was to qualify an employee to proceed to a higher grade when a vacancy occurs in that grade. Such tests were not written by all, for instance, Mr J.J.N. Kemba, market master and his salary remained at £30. These tests were usually set on arithmetic, English Grammar, essay on aspects of their duties, general knowledge paper, accountancy and punctuation. The following District Officers were the one setting exams for the native administration employees: Mr Stapleton, District Officer (Bamenda) for accounts and typing, Mr Harcourt, D.O, Kumba, for office routine, Mr. Walker, assistant D.O Kumba, for general orders applicable to NA staff, Mr. Brayne Baker D.O Bamenda, for precise writing and Mr. McCall, D.O, Mamfe for general knowledge. In 1950 native administration sent persons for training as Midwives, sanitary Inspectors, dispensary attendants, agricultural assistants et cetera.

Primary education was financed from the sale of produce from school farms, school manual labour, grants-in aid from native authorities, few government expenditure and mission funds. The British government did not encourage secondary schools, so the NA schools managed to send their pupils for secondary education to the East of Nigeria at Umuahia. But it was not an easy task since most of the schools had limited finance for far distant schools. Those who went for secondary education and technical education in Nigeria were mostly the chiefs and it was only in 1939 that the first secondary schools were opened in southern Cameroons which was done by the mission.

Health wise, British Cameroons was characterized by outbreaks of epidemics especially between 1916 and 1945. These epidemics included: small-pox, yams, influenza, dysentery and chicken pox with malaria. In order to fight these epidemics, the NAs provided health facilities even though their resources were limited. The colonial medical directors help the NAs in fight of epidemics, but as from 1933, the British administration began withdrawing her financial support and medical aids from the medical services of the NAs. The NAs managed to construct their own health services. They started

by running welfare clinics, undertaking vaccination against the epidemic as mentioned above, trained mid wives and maintained public hygiene by a mobile staff. As some areas were very remote, NAs established way-side clinics for them. They also opened a twelve-bed hospital and an out-patient dispensary in Buea.

Midwives were trained at Ilorin, Nigeria. NAs paid cost of housing and uniforms and £2 subsistence allowances were given them a month, a system recommended by hospital authorities. They ones trained at Aba received £42 per annum. Sanitary Overseers were trained at Aba and they received £1 a month for subsistence allowances. NAs paid £35 for each person in training. Those already in service and confirmed received their salary and NAs paid £35 for their training in accordance with S.E.P circular of 1949. The NA Boundary men were paid £3 monthly as subsistence allowance at land settlement. Officers course Kano as recommended by Director of savings. Veterinary assistants' men already in service were trained at Vom Vet School. The dispensary attendants were sent to Bamenda hospital for training and received their salary in grade V in accordance with educational qualification. (Agricultural Assistants were trained by NA in Bamenda in 1943). In 1938 after twenty-two years of British administration, Southern Cameroons had only twenty-three male native authority staff and three female NA staff. The NAs happened to train some few nurses who handled the dispensaries and clinics in their various areas of jurisdiction. This was done from various sources of revenue which included the direct and indirect taxes.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The objective of this article was to examine NAs in the British Southern Cameroons. Their establishment and Contributions to Local Government. Through the indirect rule system, the British used local chiefs as agents of administration. These local chiefs later became NAs with courts and councils through which they administered their areas of jurisdiction. The article pinpointed the establishment of these NAs in local government according to the NA ordinance, the chiefs as NAs were mandated by the British government to maintain law and order, appoint native police to assist them, collected taxes where part of such taxes was used for village projects such as schools, halls, payment of workers and sanitation. They also administered legislation under the native courts ordinance, the NAs meted out punishment more or less in their courts according to modified native customs. These native courts according to the native courts ordinance were divided into four grades of courts A, B, C and D. The British Southern Cameroons after 1948 was divided into the Bamenda province made up of the former Bamenda divisions and the newly created Wum and Nkambe divisions and the Cameroon province made up of the Kumba, Mamfe and Victoria Divisions. NAs continued to carry out their role separately in their various divisions within their courts and councils up 1960. In 1961 after the reunification of British and French Cameroons, the local councils replaced NAs headed by a chairman who was assisted by an executive committee. The Elites in British Cameroons controlled these

local councils. They were made up of sons of the soil who had attained a certain level of education mostly in the west (Europe and America). Local government areas were created. Chiefs (NAs) had less influence as the power vested on them to manage their resources and affairs was transferred to local councils. This pattern also gave rise to the formation of an electoral list which elected Municipal councilors.

#### REFERENCES

##### BOOKS/ARTICLES/THESIS

- [1] Abiabag, I., "l'Administrateur maire au Cameroun (Etude Historique)" BA dissertation, Universite de Yaounde 1, 1975.
- [2] Cameroon Under United Kingdom Administration Report for the Year 1959, p.22.
- [3] Cameroon Under United Kingdom Administration Report for the Year, 1956, published for the Colonial Office by Her Majesty's Stationery Office London, 1961.
- [4] Evelyn, E. M., "Local Government and Rural Development: A Case Study of Buea in Cameroon", Master of Philosophy, University of Oslo Blindern, Norway, 2007.
- [5] Finken, M., *Communes et Gestion Municipale au Cameroun*, Paris, Acheve D'Imprimer, 1996.
- [6] Forkusam, A.L., "The Evolution of Health Services in the Southern Cameroons under British Administration, 1915-1945," (DES Dissertation, University of Yaoundé, 1978).
- [7] Geschiere, P., "Chiefs and Colonial Rule in Cameroon: Inventing Chieftaincy, French and British Style", *Africa Journal of the International African Institute*, 1975.
- [8] Hart, W.O., *Introduction to the Law of Local Government and Administration*, Butterworth, The Last Summary of the Legal Framework of English Local Government, 1978.
- [9] Ndongko, W.A., "The Political Economy of Development in Cameroon", New York, Praeger, 1986.
- [10] Ngoh, V. J., *Cameroon 1884-1985: A Hundred Years of History*, Yaounde, Navy Group Publishers, 1987.
- [11] Protus, M.T., "Local Government in Wum Division 1949-1972: Evolution and Socio-Economic Development. A Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the Award of a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Degree in History, November, 2011.
- [12] Smith, S. B., *Recollection of British Administration in the Cameroon and Northern Nigeria, 1921-1957, But always as Friends* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1969).

##### ARCHIVAL SOURCES

- [1] NAB, Ba (1938), file No. 24457, Cameroons Province: Notes for the League of Nations Report, 1938.
- [2] NAB, Ja/a (1945)1, No.1479, Vol.II, Native Administrations: The General Subject, 1945.
- [3] NAB, Ja/a (1944)1, No.1480, Vol. II, Southern Cameroon Native Authority Ordinance, No. 43 of 1933.
- [4] NAB, Ja/a (1945)1, No. 1479, Vol. II, Southern Cameroons Native Administration, 1945.

[5] NAB, Ja/a (1957)1, No. LG 979, Southern Cameroons  
Local Government Reform, 1957.

[6] NAB, Ja/a (1945)1, No. 1479, Vol. II, Native  
Administration, 1945.

IJIRAS