



## PRIDES AND PREJUDICES OF TWENTIETH CENTURY FORCED MIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN THE BAMENDA GRASSLANDS OF CAMEROON

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### Abstract

*The Bamenda Grassfield locale is an assembly of social, political and economic entities constituted by/with people of mixed origins who are products of push and pull migratory trends. Their organizations and forms of power tenure vary in form and content but roughly correspond to centralized and decentralized systems of power structures. As mixed by-product of this settlement pattern, no socio-political group can lay claim of aboriginal rights and perceptions since all of them settled almost at the same time. However, there are a group of forced migrant communities notably, Bawock, Baforkum, Fungeih, Nsongwa, Bambili, and the Cattle Fulani (Mbororo) whose migratory history is not only recent but owe its origin to force or push factors. As forced migrant communities, their sojourn to their present sites as well as their survival provides an interesting migration scholarship. This paper is an attempt to use these communities as cases in point to underscore the pride and prejudice of the forced migrant communities vis-à-vis their early counterparts within the Bamenda Grasslands. After positioning the discourse of forced migrants within space and time by summoning and analyzing data from primary and secondary sources, the paper builds a portrait of this forced migrant communities and details their plight and fortunes in this ecological niche from the earliest settlements to the present. Besides enriching the discourse on missing or difficult to be assimilated migrant communities, it submits from the fertility of its thesis that their emigration from their different sites as well as their settlement and evolution within their host environments constitute an adventure of challenging but overwhelmingly fulfilling moments both to their host communities and the settlers.*

**Keywords:** *Pride and Prejudice, Twentieth Century, Forced Migrant Communities, Bamenda Grassfields, Cameroon*

### **Statement of the problem in general outlook and its connection with important scientific and practical tasks**

Migration has been an inextricable part of human existence. In fact, “the entire history of mankind is in fact a chronology of successive movements of people and nations...”. [1] People and communities all over the world have often migrated, sometimes in several waves, from one place to another for various reasons usually categorized as push and pull factors. From this background, migration-related themes have animated scholarly discourses across a wide range of disciplines including history, anthropology, archaeology, sociology and economics. Moore has defined migration as the continuous movement of people from one place to the other in search of freedom and justice. [2] Arguably, the movements of people across regions especially in Africa were largely orchestrated by the desire to have favorable living conditions. [3, 4] It is hardly surprising that, “Africans migrated before, during and after colonization regardless of the natural and political obstacles that confronted them” [5] and “migration has been a relevant feature since the pre-colonial period in Africa in general”. [6] In this context, migration is seen as a permanent movement of people groups from one place to another, on permanent or semi-permanent basis, either because they were attracted to the new site by new interests or pushed away from the old site by some uncomfortable circumstances. [7] The constant search of favorable living conditions made Africans to constantly move from one place to another.

### **Analysis of latest research where the solution of the problem was initiated**

The situation was no different in Cameroon. The territory that became known as Cameroon had its own share of the historical phenomenon of migrations which has spanned across the pre-colonial, colonial to the post-colonial periods. In fact, many years before colonialism, several people groups wandered about the territory that became known as Cameroon generally in search of favorable living conditions. [3 and 4] During the period of colonialism, population displacements continued across the territory. Among the numerous reasons and cases for migrations were movements of labor from the Grasslands to German plantations at the coast; movement of people as a means of resisting colonial policies as well as the voluntary movement of people and people groups to urban areas to seize available opportunities for livelihood and this became particularly common in the post-colonial period. The history of migration and settlement of ethnic communities into the Bamenda Grassfields remains a topical issue which has attracted increasing scholarship from diverse angles. This was because the waves of movements brought in several communities whose settlements in their various localities laid the basis for both strained and cordial relations with the ‘early settlers’. Strained relations were especially common in contexts where the ‘new comers’ struggled either to push out the ‘early settlers’, gain lands or implant their hegemony and/or vice versa. It is worth mentioning at this juncture that by the close of the 19th century, a greater proportion of the Bamenda Grasslands of Cameroon had already been settled. This marked the close of the first wave of Tikar and Chamba migrations of the early 18th and early 19th centuries. It follows that the bands of migrations that occurred in the 20th centuries are referred to as ‘late’ migrations. This

resulted in the phenomenon of 'late settlers' which became subject of academic discourses in the area. The 'late settlers' had to depend on the magnanimity of the 'early settlers' (who for the most part, had successfully established their hegemonies), for settlement, for agricultural land and for trade [7].

### **Aims of paper. Methods**

Representative cases of groups considered as 'late settlers' included Bawock, Baforkum, Fungeih, Nsongwa, Bambili, and the Cattle Fulani (Mbororo) among others. These groups whose migrations were considered to have been 'late' vis-à-vis the 'early settlers' had mixed fortunes in the process of insertion and implantation in the host communities. This in part has been responsible for alternating cases of conflicts and cordiality throughout the entire Bamenda Grasslands. This is what is captured in this paper as pride and prejudices of the twentieth century forced migrant communities in the Bamenda Grasslands of Cameroon. The nub of the present study thus hinges on the mixed fortunes of the 20th century forced migrant communities ('late settlers') in the Bamenda Grasslands. As late settlers, the various communities' development and peaceful co-existence were left at the mercy of the host communities who in some cases built friendly relations while in others, relations were strained by various circumstances.

### **Exposition of main material of research with complete substantiation of obtained scientific results. Discussion**

#### **An Overview of Twentieth Century Forced Migration in the Bamenda Grasslands**

As early mentioned in the foregoing parts of this paper, people groups in the Bamenda Grasslands migrated in waves to their present settlements. Most of the movements took place in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries such that by the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a greater proportion of the Bamenda Grasslands had already been occupied and settled. As a result, migrations that took place in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were generally considered to be 'late' migrations. Interestingly, the bands of movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were generally associated with forced circumstances. Consequently, the aforementioned groups that migrated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were generally referred to as forced migrant communities. Some of these circumstances that forced groups to migrate in the 20<sup>th</sup> century included population pressure which increased pressure on land and other resources as well as conflicts especially of political nature.

Among the forced migrant communities was Bawock. This group left the West Region, precisely in the present-day Bangangte in the Nde Division to settle in Bali Nyonga due to population pressure. Arguing from this background, Nfi maintains that; Population pressure in the Bamileke Grassfields was higher than in the Bamenda Grassfields. The Chiefdoms in the Bafoussam sub-division in particular attained figures of over 800 persons per square mile. Annual increase in population was due to polygamous marriages, early marriages and high fertility of the Bamileke women. Many Bamileke moved to the Bamenda Grassfields with similar traditions and customs but with low population density. In fact the case of the Bawock was glaring. Although provoked by succession disputes within the Bangangte royal family, the Bawock led by Prince Nana migrated and settled

in Bali Nyonga in 1905 because of succession laws and population pressure over available resources [8]. Bawock was given the land which they now occupy when another group (the BaTi) left Bali in 1911. [9] In actual fact, the 20<sup>th</sup> century also coincided with the mandate period in Cameroon. The French administration in French Cameroon was harsh leading to the dethronement of some traditional rulers and their replacement with ‘artificial’ chiefs. This was the case among the Bamileke and Bamum Kingdoms where rebellion against the French broke out forcing more groups to migrate to the Bamenda Grasslands. The foregoing submission suggests that highhandedness in colonial administration during the mandate period in Cameroon was a determinant factor in the 20<sup>th</sup> century forced migrations. Outstandingly, the harsh French administrative policy caused the spewing of people groups from the Bamileke region into the Bamenda Grasslands. In supporting this largely undisputed claim, Nfi contends that; The first wave of migrations from the Bamileke Grassfields to the Bamenda Grassfields during the mandate period was caused by the dethronement of legitimate chiefs and the appointment of artificial chiefs by the French. This policy injured the cultural pride of the Bamileke and Bamum forcing the crowned princes and princesses and their followers to escape to the Anglophone Grassfields. This was the case in 1924 when the French dethroned and exiled the charismatic Sultan Ibrahim Njoya of Bamum and he died in Yaounde in 1933. This resulted in a rebellion and the migration of more than 2000 Bamum notables and their subjects under the leadership of Prince Musa Njoya to Bambalang and Bagam in the Anglophone Grassfields (Fanso)<sup>3</sup>. The revolt rapidly spread to the Bamileke chiefdoms causing such apprehension that large number of people from Dschang entered Bamenda. Since these migrants settled in the Ndop chiefdoms of Bambalang, Bamessing, Bamukumbit, Babungo and Babessi they integrated the communities fully because of cultural and languages similarities and can only be traced through their names such as Sidiki, Sobseh, Njigum, Salifou, Njoya, Musa, Seidou etc and their Islamic conservatism. [8].

These groups having been implanted in their respective geo-political settings invariably established relations of varied degrees with the ‘earlier’ settlers.

Other aspects of French administration which compelled people groups to migrate from the Western part of the country to the Bamenda Grasslands was the various aspects of the French colonial administration including forced labor (*corvee and prestation*) and the obnoxious legal practice of *indigenat* in French Cameroon. In the 1920s, a good number of people left Dschang to establish settlements in the Bamenda Grasslands because of force labor. [10] Some had reportedly settled in Pinyin, Santa, Widikum and Batibo. [8] Those escaping the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC) rebellion in French Cameroon as well as the economic crisis of the 1980s from the Bamileke and Bamum regions also established permanent settlements in different parts of the Bamenda Grasslands. Even much later, up to the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, difficult circumstances continued to cause Cameroonians to move to new locations deemed more favorable than the areas left. The phenomenon of force displacements however became crucial and preoccupying in Cameroon in the early years of 1990s. This is largely because “many Cameroonians are dissatisfied with the country’s ‘cosmetic democracy’ [and] in the absence of valid prospects of a decent future...many Cameroonians have [tended to move] [11]. Generally

speaking, Cameroon's nascent democracy has largely left many a Cameroonian with the feeling of dissatisfaction [12, 13] and most recently has led to conflicts that have provoked both internal and external force displacements of people from the various regions of the country. Most indicatively, the political system of Cameroon which had since the 1970s been viewed with contempt by a cross section of Cameroonians who tended to move to different parts of the country to better their lots. Among the groups that migrated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and perhaps considered one of the 'latest' migrant population were the cattle Fulani generally referred to as the Mbororo who established settlements among the numerous 'early' settlers of the Bamenda Grasslands. The Mbororo migration is in fact surrounded by a number of forcible circumstances traceable to the very exordium of their migrations. In his submission, Dze-Ngwa argues that, Fulani legend hold that the Mbororo refused to assist Uthman Dan Fodio in his jihad against the "infidels" and were cursed with nomadism. The Mbororo; Were asked to take part in the Jihad, but consulted their wives before committing themselves. The women counseled non-participation [on grounds that] there were many rich herds to be lost and there was but little prospect to gain. The men did as their wives advised. Dan Fodio cursed them in his anger at their refusal [declaring that] 'they would forever wonder without lands of their own and would always be subjected to domination by their womenfolk'. [14]. This legend provides an understanding of the nomadic lifestyle of the Fulani which did not only take them to other parts of the Bamenda Grassland but also as far as to the Nkambe Plateau. Apart from this, other circumstances including the quest for pasture for their cattle and security pushed them to seek settlements among the 'earlier' settlers of the Bamenda Grasslands. It is in that light that Njeuma has maintained that; The number of years they [Mbororo] stayed on one spot was dictated by two conditions- the reaction of the earlier settlers in the locality to their presence, and how satisfactory the conditions, for example, availability of pasture, were for their cattle. [16].

Besides, the question of security is important to the Mbororo because they; Look upon themselves as the bird people: they are wild and free and easily scared away. Like all nomads, they prize liberty above earthly possessions. This can be appreciated: the welfare and safety of their herds- and subsequently of themselves- depends on the continued freedom to move whenever the circumstances demand.[14]

Evidently, the peaceful stay of the Mbororo in the Bamenda Grasslands was partly because the indigenous populations generally accepted them; Not [as] alien intruders but genuine, though late-coming, members of the indigenous populations... [and] are here to stay for the simple reason that there is nowhere else for them to go. So taking the long view they are going to be, if they are not already, part of the indigenous population. [14]. As a result of these circumstances, the Mbororo are found in large numbers in different parts of the Bamenda Grasslands where they have established large settlements in places like Sabga in Mezam, Wum in Menchum and Mbumland in Donga/Mantung.

#### **Mixed Fortunes/Experiences of the Twentieth Century Forced Migrant Communities**

One of the groups with the 'early' settler status was Bambui. Bambui proved very attractive to many of the 'late' settler groups because of the hospitality of the people as well as

the availability of abundant fertile lands. While some of the groups settled only temporarily and left, others persisted and were either integrated or assimilated into the Bambui traditional system. In spite of their assimilation, most groups, especially the Fungieh and Baforkum, still practice some of the customs and beliefs they brought with them. Amongst these waves of late migrations, it is known in Bambui that Nsongwa was the first ethnic group to request and be granted settlement in Bambui. [7] Their settlement was at present-day Masoh Quarter, about half a kilometer from the Bambui palace. The Nsongwa only settled in Bambui for a short time, before leaving for their present site close to Bali Nyonga and Chomba [17] in the Mezam Division of the North West Region of Cameroon. Sources have not stated exactly the historical time period when this happened but it could estimate that it was at the same time when the Fungieh left Kom in the early 1920s. Apart from the Nsongwa, Bambili is also said to have initially arrived Bambui before settling in the present neighboring location to Bambui.

Bambili, also known as Mbeli, was the second 20<sup>th</sup> century force migrating ethnic group to be granted settlement in Bambui. As was the case with most of the Kingdoms in the Western Grasslands, this group migrated from Tikar, settling temporarily at Ndog before moving to Bambui. Arriving in Bambui shortly after the Nsongwa had left, the Chief of Bambui allocated to them the same piece of land at Masoh which had been allocated to the Nsongwa. As time went by, they realized that they were not comfortable in Bambui because of their second-class status. As a result, they started searching for an alternative place that would allow them enjoy their sovereignty to the fullest. Through their search, they discovered a virgin kolanut forest to the south of Bambui where they settled with the permission of the Chief of Bambui. [18]

Another ethnic group to enter Bambui was the Baforkum, literally translated as people of “Forkum” or people of Chief Akum. They are said to have arrived the area in about 1910. Originally from Santa Mbei, they were led by one of their princes, called Akum. Prince Akum and his brother Prince Ndifor were both sons to the Chief of Santa-Mbei, Chief Ngufor. [17] When their father Chief Ngufor died the two brothers quarreled over succession to the throne, and Prince Akum took his faction out of Santa-Mbei and they wandered across the region for some time before finally settling on a piece of land allocated to them by Chief Asoghogo II, of Bambui. The area was then known as Mendeng, and later as Alaakuba before the Germans changed its name to Baforkum. Prince Akum was crowned Sub-Chief, answerable to the Chief of Bambui. Prior to the arrival of Prince Akum and his followers, Mendeng was a farming site punctuated by raffia palms (mostly in the valleys) that were owned by Bambui notables such as Tarh Fo-Manju, Taform, Fornimoh and Azubuh. [17] The allocation of the area to Prince Akum and his people, however, did not affect the Bambui citizens who owned land in the area. [18]

In addition to the aforementioned ethnic groups that immigrated into Bambui was a massive presence of the cattle Fulani or Mbororo who came to Bambui around the early 1930s. They migrated from Adamawa and moved along with their cattle in search of grazing land with salt ponds. Fortunately, they discovered vast grazing land at lower Fonta and upper Alegefor-Bambui. Their leader was called Sabga Abdulai. The area is presently called Sabga in honor of the leader. In 1968, part of Fonta was given to the

Presbyterian Church for the creation of the Presbyterian Rural Training Center (PRTC). Consequently, some of the cattle Fulani left for other villages. The Fulani settlement was however not only in Bambui. They settled in large numbers, building huge communities in different parts of the entire Bamenda Grasslands. The Mbororo settlements typify the alternating experiences of the 20<sup>th</sup> century forced migrant groups of the Bamenda Grasslands. In some cases, Mbororo settlements were characterized by much cordiality and conviviality resulting in peaceful coexistence. In other cases, however, their experiences were marked by strained relations with host communities.

In an attempt to analyze cases of peaceful coexistence between the Mbororo and their host 'early' settler communities, it would be important to analyze Njeuma's assertion on the general behavior of this 20<sup>th</sup> century force migrant group. According to him, the Mbororo generally; Avoided conflicts especially in those areas where they were in the minority, or where the local populations were organized in a strong centralized government around a divine chieftainship, or fetish. The Fulani *Ardo'en* developed good working relations with the local peoples even before they moved into the neighbourhood, and this sometimes involved giving and sometimes exchanging presents with the neighbouring village leaders [16].

By such spirit of cordiality, the Mbororo did not only live peaceably with the indigenous peoples but also gained lands for settlement and for their cattle. As such, Mbororo settlements spread and expanded greatly in different parts of the Bamenda Grasslands. They firmly established and integrated into the socio-cultural, political and economic life of their host communities. In some areas, they intermarried and adopted indigenous names as much as the indigenous populations adopted Fulani names. However, Mbororo experiences were not all rosy in all the parts of the Bamenda Grasslands. Thorny relations sometimes developed between the Mbororo and the indigenous people groups. Ostensibly, there have also been cases of strain relations especially emanating from conflicting interest in socio-cultural values as well as economic activities. This strain relation was a result of a number of factors. In fact; [The] factors that fuelled the Mbororo-Indigenous boundaries have been socio-cultural. The initial inability of the Mbororo to freely interact with the local populations elicited stigmatisation from the non-Mbororo. Wherever they settled, clear-cut distinctions were made between them and the 'natives', be it in religion, language, level of literacy or in their *Pulaaku* Code. Generally, the Mbororo speak *Fulfulde* and practice Islam as a religion....On the other hand, the indigenous people spoke the different indigenous [languages]. [15]

These socio-cultural factors created mutual suspicion between the indigenous peoples of the Bamenda Grasslands and the Mbororo which in some cases resulted into bloody confrontations. In fact, cultural values tended to create geographical apartness between the Mbum and the Mbororo thereby hindering integration [19]. It is no surprising that in Mbumland, Mbororo settlements are quite distinct from the rest of the indigenous populations as is the case in Menchum, Donga/Mantung and Bui Divisions. This has made the local people of the Bamenda Grasslands to often times regard the Mbororo with prejudices and as strangers in their lands as argued by Alhadji Musa Nyako; We interact freely with the natives, but they do not consider us as part of them despite all our efforts. Many

of the native people of [the Bamenda Grasslands] share the Islamic religion with us and even get married to our children, . . . , but they treat us as strangers whenever there is a small misunderstanding among us. [20].

Such suspicions have led to mutual distrust between the Mbum and the Mbororo and created an unhealthy relations characterized by disputes and conflicts.

Both groups have also developed a siege mentality and have tended to emphasize their apartness, regarding and describing each other and their activities derogatorily and with contempt and disdain. As such, Davis has averred that; The dichotomy allows the 'Fulani' to maintain their claim of racial and cultural distinction (as for the more derogatory Fulfulde term *haabe* for farmers), and allows the 'Natives' to regard the 'Fulani' as foreign immigrants with less rights to land than themselves. The Mbororo have traditionally maintained a distance from their settled 'black' 'Native' neighbours, viewing their farming activities with silent disdain. The distinctive physical appearance of the Mbororo (pale skinned, tall, slender and long nosed) is an important feature of their traditional identity and they are at pains to distinguish themselves from other neighbouring ethnic groups. They have been largely endogenous, marrying often within their own clan to prevent division of their wealth and protect bloodlines. [21]

Such circumstances have for the most part created in some cases mutual prejudices which have manifested in the form of conflicts. The most common of conflicts between the local peoples and the Mbororo in the Bamenda Grasslands has been those created by conflicting economic activities and divergent interests. This has been what was referred to as farmer-herder conflicts which is a result of pressure on limited land resources and suspicious tendencies that have developed between the Mbororo and the indigenous peoples.

Another force migrant group of the Bamenda Grasslands whose relations with the autochthonous populations were marked by alternating periods of prides and prejudices in their relations with host communities was Fungieh. Fungieh originated from Kom and settled in the present-day Belo Sub Division, precisely above the Mbingo Baptist Hospital. [22]

At the turn of the twentieth century, some of the Fungieh indigenes left Belo because they sought autonomy from the main Kom Kingdom. In fact, they wanted to have their own *Kwifon*, the regulatory society in most or all Grassfields Kingdoms, but this privilege was never granted. After Kom, they settled at Kifem, a region in Kedjom Keku (Big Babanki), but this did not last either as their host Big Babanki also refused them the right to the autonomy they desired. As a result, they started searching for a new area until one of their leaders called Ngam visited Bambui for traditional treatment at Ndzembue Quarter and used the opportunity to ask Chief Acheyifor (the Chief of Bambui at the time), if his people could be allowed to relocate there. [7] Because Ndzembue at the time was essentially virgin land made up of kolanut forests and raffia palms for the Chief and his notables, Chief Acheyifor granted Ngam's request and his people left Kifem in Big Babanki in about 1925, settling in Bambui under the same name of Fungieh and retaining the Kom language. Prior to their relocation, Ngam and his people entered an agreement with the Chief of Bambui in which they accepted that they would obey and respect the Chief of Bambui and all its institutions, such as the *Kwifon* and *Takembeng* societies. This agreement meant that Fungieh was not to create rival societies throughout their stay in Bambui.

Hence, the terms of the agreement were to be strictly followed. Chief Ngam of Fungieh, pledged and indeed respected the terms of the agreement until his death. After his death, his successor Chief Waze began going against the terms of the agreement. Shortly after taking over Chief Waze created a rival *Kwifon*, which greatly annoyed Chief Acheyifor of Bambui. Chief Waze's actions were interpreted not only as a violation of the terms of the agreement but also as an indication that Fungieh was going to act in insubordination. Hence, Chief Waze and his people were advised to leave Bambui in about 1932. From Bambui, they settled at Kedjom Ketingoh or Big Babanki, situated precisely between Mile 14 and Mile 16 on the Bamenda-Kumbo Highway, part of the Bamenda Ring Road. [7] At their new site, Chief Waze and his people thought they had found a solution to the problem of autonomy because they were not answerable to anyone as their host. For once, the Chief of Kedjom Ketingoh and his people pretended to be different from Kedjom Keku and Bambui, by remaining silent, thinking Chief Waze and his people had learnt lessons from their previous encounters. However, this was short-lived because Chief Waze tried again to re-establish his *Kwifon* at the new site. Kedjom Ketingoh saw this as a threat to their sovereignty and cautioned Chief Waze about the implications of his actions. Besides, Chief Waze and his people soon realized that the region did not possess most of the resources that could support their survival. Life was unbearable at their new site due to poor soils. It was only good for Irish potatoes, cabbages and herding. Farmer-grazier problems also affected them at Sabga. Sabga was inhabited by the Fulani whose livelihood is cattle rearing. Climatically, the area was cold and windy. There was also the serious problem of lack of firewood for domestic purposes, it is an almost treeless location characterized by shrubs and bushes. [17] As a result of this, Chief Waze and his people started the search for a new site, which also extended to a reconsideration of some of the previous sites. Eventually, Ndzembue, the previous site in Bambui came up as one of the most suitable, resulting in Chief Waze sending some of his men to appeal to the Chief of Bambui and ask if he could allow them to return. This was followed by successive pleas until Chief Acheyifor decided to reciprocate by also sending two of his notables, Mbunuo Mayah and Solomon Beloke, to Chief Waze. [18] As royal messengers, the two notables took with them two calabashes of palm wine "stocked with raffia palm leaves" as a symbol of royalty. [18] Their message was simple and straightforward; it stated, "[Chief] Acheyifor and the Bambui *Kwifon* had heard the Fungieh plea with great sympathy and therefore granted their request" [18].

The return and eventual resettlement of Chief Waze and his followers is described by Fubah in the following statement; Upon their arrival in Bambui, some of the Fungieh people such as the parents of Aban Mbu took refuge with old friends while [Chief] Acheyifor housed their leader Chief Waze at his former compound at Mandzembang. A new site, called Ndzemesang, an area that was used in cultivating guinea corn was allocated to Chief Waze and his people. The new site was rich in agricultural resources such as raffia palms and kolanut trees planted by Bambui people such as Pa Ngeh Langsi, Pa Asogofa, Pa Yigha-a, Pa Zoghochu, Pa Chiembife and also the [Chief] of Bambui at the time. [18] Upon their return, the relationship between the people of Bambui and Fungieh was quite

cordial until the passing away of Chief Waze in 1943. Matthew Mbengwe Lobti succeeded him while Chief Acheyifor died in 1947 and was succeeded by Amuhngwafo II in 1947. By 1950, Chief Lobti of Fungieh began claiming ownership of land in Bambui but these claims were to introduce radical phases in the relations between Fungieh and Bambui. Difficult circumstances bordering on population pressure also led to force displacements of people groups in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as indicated earlier. The Bawock settlement in Bali Nyonga is also linked to this phenomenon. Bawock who had migrated from Bangante in the present-day Ndé Division of the West Region of Cameroon were settled in an area already inhabited by Bali Nyonga many years before the latter's arrival. As captured by Chilver, "Around 1905 a group of people moved from the town of Banganté (some 60 miles away) in Ndé Division in the southern part of the Francophone West Province to the area of Bawock". [23] Though they settled on land claimed by Bali Nyonga to be part of theirs, increasingly in recent years the village has emphasized its historic connections with Banganté. For example, it has sent dance groups to participate in cultural events in the West Province and campaigned for a bilingual secondary school in Bawock teaching in both English and French. Most of the population of Bawock are Anglophone, but they are happy to identify with French speakers (for example, their public signage puts French first and their Fon sometimes chooses to speak in French during public meetings). In so doing they signify affinity to the predominantly Francophone national administration and also assert their claim to minority status. [9]

This emphasized affinity with their ancestry in the West Region formed the basis of conflicts that was to mark their stay in the Bali Nyonga country. Page et al have further intimated that the continuous ethnic differences were at the background of the Bali Nyonga-Bawock dichotomy. They declare that; The differences between Bawock and its neighbours are mostly organized around ideas of ethnicity. Most people in Bawock now identify themselves as Bamiléké. Most people in Bali Subdivision identify themselves as Bali Nyonga...[9]. In fact, the Bawock case has been a prejudiced experience largely predicated on the fact that they happened to have migrated and settled right within the Bali Nyonga territory in what the Bali describes as "Lesotho would be asking that a boundary be demarcated between herself and Namibia on the one hand and between herself and Botswana on the other hand and pretending that there is no South African Territory between" [24] each time Bawock requested that their boundary with Bali Nyonga be demarcated. Boundary issues and the thorny question of Bawock sovereignty built up into outright bloody confrontations with Bali Nyonga in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The conflict between Bali Nyonga and Bawock had had a dramatic twist on March 6, 2007 [25, 26] owing to persistent claims by Bali Nyonga that Bawock was within Bali territory. From this background, *Fon Doh Gah Nyonga III* of Bali Nyonga intimates that; Bawock is right inside Bali. If you want to go to Mbu, Baforchu you have to pass through Bali Nyonga village. So there is no way we can make a boundary for Bawock including Mantum. This is why an attempt [...] to create a fictitious illegal boundary was done behind my back. We went to the administration to let them know that such an exercise was out of place. It did not help. That is why we have decided to take the matter to court....if there is any justice, we expect justice. [27]. Evidently, the relations between

Bali Nyonga and Bawock had turned sour resulting in confrontations, and casualties recorded on both sides. The issues of strain relations between these two people groups cannot be isolated from the fact that Bawock migrated and settled in Bali Nyonga country much later after the latter had established claims on all lands in the area. The foregoing instances are eloquent testimonies to the fact that the 20<sup>th</sup> century force migrations in the Bamenda Grasslands creating alternating phases of peace and conflicts between neighboring villages/people groups. While the numerous cases examined are topical, the cases of Fungieh, the Mbororo and Bawock have particularly gained attention in this paper partly due to their intensity and also for the sake of case study.

### Conclusions

The 18th and 19th centuries were characterized by migrations throughout the Cameroonian society in general and the Bamenda Grasslands in particular. The various groups who generally left the northern parts of Cameroon wandered through the Western highlands, establishing semi-permanent and permanent settlements in areas where living conditions were deemed favorable. Among these groups were the Tikars, Aghem, Tiv and Chamba who were attracted to the Bamenda Grasslands by favorable conditions largely bordering on climatic and edaphic factors. These groups were later to be considered 'early' settlers. However, in the 20th century, another wave of migrant communities made their arrival in the Bamenda Grasslands and underwent diverse procedures of insertion, integration and adaptation. These groups including Bambili, Baforkum, Nsongwa, Fungieh, Mbororo and Bawock among others came to be referred to as the 'later' settlers and had to depend on the 'earlier' settlers for settlement and agricultural lands as well as trade trading ties.

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