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CULTURE AND PEACE BUILDING IN CAMEROON: CASE STUDY OF THE BAMENDA MUNICIPALITY, 1990-2019

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To

My Grandparents Mbuntcha Chantal and *feu* Mbuntcha Joseph for their unwavering financial
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ABSTRACT

Peace and unity are important in human existence. Peace building efforts remain a major trend worldwide towards conflict prevention and conflict resolution. This is the case of Bamenda, the capital city of the North West region of Cameroon. The multi-faceted conflicts in this region pose a threat to development, have strained human relations and continue to torment the people of the municipality and the region. Cultural peace building activities address the root or potential causes of violence, create societal expectation of peaceful conflict resolution, and stabilize society politically and socioeconomically. The general objective of the study is to assess the role of culture as a tool in peace building. The study enables us to critically examine the relationships that exist between culture and peace building efforts in Cameroon. In the development and realization of the research, it was necessary to examine the elements of peace and culture in the region, to shed light on the root causes and consequences of conflicts in the study area, to analyze the role and contribution of culture for peace building in the municipality and, also to present other approaches on a cultural note that can be applied to the promotion of peace building in the study area. The methodology used in this study comprised qualitative and quantitative research methods. Data was collected through interviews, participant observation and questionnaires and the use of narratives. These interviews highlight the contributing factors that culture can provide or serve in the resolution of a conflict, the obstacles preventing its resolution, as well as the individuals or key actors capable of resolving conflicts. Based on the findings, culture is perceived as important and necessary to influence the state and resolution of a conflict. Future implications of this work include opportunities providing alternatives to government approaches to crisis and conflict. This is important because many approaches have been presented by different stakeholders, including international partners, with the aim of achieving lasting peace, but so far some crises remain unresolved.

Keywords: Peace building, Culture, Conflict resolution, Colonial legacy.

RÉSUMÉ

Le sujet de cette étude porte sur l'interaction entre la culture et les efforts de consolidation de la paix dans la municipalité de Bamenda, chef-lieu de la région du Nord-Ouest du Cameroun, un espace où les conflits aux multiples facettes menacent le développement et mettent à rude épreuve les relations humaines. Dans cette optique, l'objectif général a été de déterminer si la culture peut être utilisée comme un outil efficace de consolidation de la paix, en examinant de manière critique les liens entre les pratiques culturelles et la résolution des crises afin de proposer des approches alternatives favorisant une stabilité durable. Toutefois, la problématique a résidé dans le paradoxe suivant : pourquoi la municipalité de Bamenda, bien qu'étant une région dotée d'un riche patrimoine culturel et ancestral diversifié, continue-t-elle d'être le point focal de conflits persistants et de troubles sociopolitiques majeurs ? Pour y répondre, la méthodologie adoptée pour la réalisation de cette recherche a été une approche mixte, combinant des méthodes qualitatives et quantitatives à travers des entretiens, des observations participantes, des questionnaires et des récits, permettant ainsi d'identifier les acteurs clés et les obstacles à la résolution des tensions. En dernière analyse, l'essentiel à retenir est que la culture est perçue comme un levier indispensable pour influencer l'issue des conflits, car elle offre des alternatives concrètes aux approches gouvernementales et ouvre ainsi la voie à une paix durable ancrée dans les réalités sociopolitiques de la municipalité.

Mots clés: Consolidation de la Paix, Culture, Résolution de Conflit.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND SIGLES

AAC	All Anglophone Conference
BCC	Bamenda City Council
BCLT	Bamenda Community Land Trust
CDC	Cameroon Development Corporation
CFA	<i>Communauté Financière Africaine</i>
CNU	Cameroon National Union
CPDM	Cameroon People Democratic Party
CRTV	Cameroon Radio Television
CUC	Cameroon United Congress
DDR	Disarmament and Reintegration program
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
EMCCA	Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa
GIS	Geographic Information System
FAD	Cameroonian Defense Forces
GCE	General Certificate of Education
IRIC	International Relations Institute of Cameroon
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JPC	Justice and Peace Commission
KNDP	Kamerun National Democratic Party
HYDRAC	Hydrocarbon Analysis Control
MOCHAM	Mother of Hope Cameroon

MRC	Cameroon Renaissance Movement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIC	National Institute of Cartography
NLC	National Land Commission
NOWEFOR	North West Farmers Organization
NW	North West region
OHADA	Organization for the Harmonization of Business law in Africa
RVCDP	Rice Value Chain Development Program
SCDP	Cameroon Company of Petroleum Depots
SCNC	Southern Cameroons National Council
SCYL	Southern Cameroons Youth League
SDF	Social Democratic Front
SNH	National Hydrocarbons Corporation
SNWOT	Southwest and Northwest women's task force
SONARA	<i>Société Nationale de Raffinage</i>
SW	South West Region
UN	United Nations
UNVDA	Upper Noun Valley Development Authority
UPC	<i>Union des Populations du Cameroun</i>
WFAC	Women for a Change Cameroon

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

This study addresses culture and peace building in the Bamenda municipality from 1990-2019. Peace building activities addresses the root causes or potential causes of violence, create a societal expectation for peaceful conflict resolution and stabilize the society politically and socio-economically. While Culture, is one of the marks by which a community of people of a nation are normally identified. It is a phenomenon that distinguishes one ethnic group from another. Various cultures can be identified among the people that are found in a particular community setting and it incorporates issues that bother on technological development, marriage, mode of dressing, arts and crafts, food, festivity, religion, social life, education and political system of the people.

The issues of conflict, conflict resolution and peace building since the pre-colonial period among the Grassfields people of Cameroon is not a new phenomenon. In a region with over 150 independent villages of varying sizes and strengths, conflicts are inevitable. During the pre-colonial era, the migratory and implantation trends of Grassfields chiefdoms was done amidst conflict as was their expansion.¹ Most of the conflicts had their roots from competition over the control of land, people and natural resources. After colonialism and independence, various inter-chiefdom conflicts have reemerged, alongside the emergence of new disputes primarily related to boundary issues in the Bamenda municipality. This era, saw the increasing occurrence of chieftaincy and famer-grazier disputes. Following the re-institution of multiparty politics in the 1990s, new state-civilian conflicts emerged presenting the region as one of the highest conflict zones in Cameroon.²

In an attempt to resolve these conflicts, many measures have been taken and implemented upon. In the precolonial era, as *per* oral history, conflict resolution and peace building depended entirely on the culture and traditions of the people in searching for an effective response to conflicts and these mechanisms recorded more successes than failure. During the colonial

¹ E. M., Mbah, "Disruptive Colonial Boundaries and Attempts to Resolve Land/Boundary Disputes in the Grasslands of Bamenda, Cameroon", *African Journal on Conflict resolution*, 2010, p. 12

² W., Dze-Ngwa, "Boundary Dynamics and the search for Geo-Political Space: The Case of the Mbororo in the North West Region of Cameroon" *In Boundaries and History in Africa in Honour of VG Fanzo*, University of Yaounde I, 2011, p. 15.

period, cultural practices underwent significant transformations, and the rituals and traditions that were authentic to the indigenous population were largely overshadowed. Additionally, the conflict resolution methods and peace-building strategies that were introduced were rooted in the culture of the colonial powers, which was often viewed as alien and contradictory to the existing norms of the people. The imposition of colonialism led to a gradual adaptation by local communities, who, out of necessity, began to adhere to these externally mandated cultural frameworks, often at the expense of their own traditional practices. As a result, the repercussions of colonial rule persisted long after the process of decolonization. Consequently, the North West region in Cameroon, alongside other African nations, have continued to embrace the foreign systems and cultural approaches to conflict resolution that were instituted during the colonial period.

Throughout history, European powers have consistently perpetuated the ideology of "white man's superiority," which has positioned them as dominant over the "black race" or Africans.³ One might logically conclude that, following their exposure to European cultural influences, communities such as Bamenda in Cameroon and other African nations would experience substantial growth and development, particularly given the wealth in natural resources they possess. However, the prevailing reality deviates significantly from this expectation. Rather than seeing advancement and prosperity, the Bamenda municipality, Cameroon, and numerous other African nations are confronted with a myriad of challenges, including internal and external conflicts, economic stagnation, and severe underdevelopment. This situation raises critical inquiries regarding the root causes of these persistent issues.

In this context, it was essential to examine the 1990s and 2000s, a pivotal era characterized by the nation's economic and political liberalization, as well as the significant influence of international actors and global human rights discourses. This situation can be attributed to the complexities arising from the processes of decolonization, the quest for independence, and the subsequent struggles for reunification experienced within the country. In 1884, Cameroon was established as a German colony, a status that persisted until the onset of the First World War in 1916. Following Germany's defeat in the war, the territory came under the administration of France and Great Britain, which subsequently partitioned it into French and British Cameroon. The League of Nations officially mandated the territory to Britain and France on 20 July 1919, leading to joint administration until 1945, when it

³ C.A., Diop, *The African Origin of civilization: Myth or Reality*, New York: L. Hill, 1974, pp. 20-43.

transitioned to a Trust Territory under the supervision of the newly established United Nations after the conclusion of the Second World War.⁴

Amidst a rising wave of independence movements across Africa, French Cameroon achieved sovereignty on January 1, 1960, emerging as the Republic of Cameroon. Subsequently, British Cameroon reunited with the Republic of Cameroon on October 1, 1961, following a plebiscite, to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. As a result of its historical colonization by both Britain and France, Cameroon officially recognized both English and French as its national languages, establishing it as a bilingual nation comprising Anglophone and Francophone populations.⁵ Currently, the country is divided into two Anglophone and eight Francophone regions, encompassing approximately 250 distinct ethnic groups. Many of these groups share overlapping cultural and linguistic traits.⁶ However, the diversity inherent within these multiple ethnic formations has also been a source of conflict, particularly evident in the Bamenda municipality, situated in the North West Region of Cameroon serving as a focal point for this research.⁷

The birth of multi-party politics in 1990 led to the awakening of political and ethnic stereotypes which inevitably resulted in flexible and violent social conflicts. The freedom of press and freedom of opinion, resulted to conflicts in the municipality.⁸ The area became home to major uprisings, strikes and violent conflicts resulting from political aspirations as people began questioning and undermining established national and local authorities in power relation. People went in streets to demonstrate against irregular detentions and Economic boycotts were organized. The inception of the initial opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF), took place in the North West region, specifically in Bamenda. The party became the primary opposition to the ruling government and its party, the CPDM, causing significant tension both within the region and on a national level. The primary cause of this tension stemmed from the

⁴ W., Dze-Ngwa, "The First World War and its Aftermath in Cameroon: A Historical Evaluation of a Centenary, 1994-2014", *International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Science*, 2015, p. 80.

⁵ W., Dze-Ngwa, and M., Kpughe Lang, "National Symbols in Cameroon Fifty Years after Independence and Reunification: An Assessment of their role in National Unity" *In Reunification du Cameroun : Hier, Aujourd'hui et Demain, International Review of Human and Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, 2015, p. 88

⁶ W., Dze-Ngwa, "National Unity and National Integration in Cameroon, 1961-2000: Dreams and Realities", PhD Thesis, University of Yaoundé I, 2006, p. 40.

⁷ The words Anglophone and Francophone have little to do with the knowledge of English and French. They refer to the region where the person is from originally.

⁸ An ethnic conflict is a conflict between two or more contending ethnic groups. The source of the conflict may be political, social, economic or religious.

desire to regain complete autonomy and rights that were lost during the period of colonization and subsequent independence.⁹

The 1990s witnessed a surge in violence including land and boundary disputes, which was a prevailing issue not only in Bamenda or Cameroon but also across Sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁰ Land disputes have always been deeply rooted in African societies and continue to persist. The primary conflicts in the Bamenda municipality arise from disputes between farmers and herders, as well as questions surrounding land ownership. These crises are a direct consequence of colonization, where land was either misappropriated or viewed solely as a commodity by the colonial masters. Following decolonization, various ethnic groups in the region started demanding the rightful relocation of their lands, often leading to conflicts. The historical and oral traditions of African societies highlight the intense clashes between communities driven by the desire for more land and property. The European powers, throughout the periods of colonization and its aftermath, exhibited a significant neglect toward the appropriate demarcation of land across the region. This oversight not only facilitated the seizure of territory but also instigated persistent land disputes and boundary conflicts that continue to affect municipalities to this day.

Additionally, the Berlin Conference, which sought to divide the African continent among European powers for efficient colonization, stands as the most significant act of land demarcation and delimitation in Cameroon.¹¹ This division is responsible for the primary land and border conflicts experienced in the municipality presently, as well as in Africa. The conflicts could stem from the search of valuable land needed to contain the socio economic changes and population expansion which were matters of concern. Land is regarded as a crucial element in establishing power and geostrategic positioning; it is perceived not merely as a form

⁹ The multiparty system is a political system in which multiple political parties across the political spectrum run for national elections and all have the capacity to gain control of government offices, separately or in coalition.

¹⁰ D., Eyoh, "Through the prism of local tragedy: Political liberalization, Regionalism and Elite struggle for power in Cameroon." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 68, no. 3, 1998, in <https://jstore.org>, accessed 10 April 2024, at 2:45 pm, pp. 338-359.

¹¹ The Berlin West African Conference, also known as the West African Conference of 1884-85, was a conference held in Berlin, Germany from November 15, 1884, to February 26, 1885. The conference was attended by European powers, including Germany, Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, as well as representatives of some African states. The main purpose of the conference was to establish rules and regulations for the colonization of Africa and to prevent conflict between European powers over the colonization of the continent. The conference resulted in the signing of the General Act of Berlin, which outlined the principles of effective occupation and the rights and responsibilities of colonizing powers. The act also established the principle of "effective occupation," which meant that a colonizing power had to demonstrate that it had the ability to effectively govern and administer a territory before it could be considered a legitimate colonial power.

of wealth but also as a central hub from which decisions originate, develop, and materialize.¹² This means that the value of land and the problems linked to it continue to define identities, shape policies, and revealing the complexities of and coexistence within the municipality. All land conflicts no matter how peaceful they maybe produces negative consequences for individual people as well as the community.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Peace building is an expansive concept that includes a variety of interventions to restore peace following violent conflicts. All African countries are renowned for their abundant cultural heritage which are known for promoting peace and community oriented values, rather than conflict. Cameroon, in particular is home to a diverse array of ethnic groups, each with its own distinct local cultures. The amalgamation of these diverse cultures within the country reflects its deep-rooted values, beliefs, and norms that are essential for harmonious coexistence in a society. The Northwest region is home to three distinct ethnic groups as well as several minority groups creating a culturally rich area with diverse values and norms. Despite this the municipality continues to be plagued by high levels of conflict and unrest. This raises the question: if the region is so culturally vibrant, why does the area continue to grapple with persistent conflicts when peace should stem from their significant and rich cultural legacy?

The primary inquiry presented by this research is whether culture can serve as an effective instrument for promoting peace, and if so, why and how? In addition to this, several secondary questions are also raised, firstly what is the impact of culture in peace building systems in the area? What are the social, economic, and political factors that contribute to conflicts within the study area, and what cultural mechanisms have been implemented to ensure successful peace building initiatives in the region? Finally, the research endeavors to propose alternative approaches to peace building in Cameroon, as well as in other African countries, that do not solely rely on cultural factors.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The work seeks to examine the role culture may play in promoting peace building, the study puts out series of questions to contribute to a growing body of research in this area.

¹² R. N., Monteh, *Land Grabbing and Conflict in the North West region of Cameroon: An endemic situation, 1958-2017*, New Castle, UK, Cambridge scholars publishing, 2024, p. 36.

The primary objective for this study is:

- To analyze the cultural dynamics of the region, specifically their role as a peace building mechanism within the Bamenda municipality.

The secondary objectives for this study include:

- To evaluate conflicts present in the area and examine the social, economic and political factors contributing to these conflicts and their impact on the society.
- To assess the role and value of culture as a peace building initiative in the study area.
- To analyze the challenges to peace building and to provide novel perspectives on ways in which cultural factors can be leveraged to enhance the effectiveness of peace building initiatives in Cameroon and throughout Africa.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The Primary hypothesis for this study is:

- The primary hypothesis asserts that cultural factors significantly impact the processes of peace building and conflict resolution in societies enduring conflict.

The secondary hypotheses for this study include:

- Culture has often been overlooked and inadequately considered in state-centric peace process initiatives within the municipality and the broader region.
- The region is characterized by a diverse and vibrant cultural heritage that fosters communal living as well as a spirit of peace and harmony among its inhabitants.
- Culture has the potential to act as both a catalyst for conflict and a means for peace.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Culture

People often perceive culture in a variety of ways. Culture is not only about dancing, music, and dressing alone. It is over patterns of social celebration, rituals pertaining to birth and marriage, cuisine or sport. Culture is about people's total way of life; the way people live, eat, worship produce, create and recreate. It is the totality of a set of bequeathed ideas, belief systems, values and norms which constitute the common bases of generally agreed social action. Charles A. Ellwood, an American Sociologist brings out the multifacedness of culture when he encapsulates it to mean.

a collective name for all behavior patterns socially acquired and socially transmitted by means of symbols; hence a name for distinctive achievements of human groups, including not only such items as language, tool making, industry, art, science, law, government, morals and religion, but also the material instruments or artefacts in which cultural achievements are embodied and by which intellectual cultural features are given practical effect, such as buildings, tools, machines, communication devices, art objects, etc

Culture can also be conceived as the collectivity of human activities and general principles that tend to guide ideas of a group of people with shared traditions (general acceptability), which are passed on, instilled into generations and reinvigorated by members of the group.¹³ African societies, had established their own mode of governance, attained their own pace of civilization, evolved home grown political systems and processes of rule-making, a process that guaranteed and sustained the peace on the continent.¹⁴ The point is that Africa is a dynamic continent which has made spirited efforts at democratizing and developing.

Culture is learned, and not a biological inheritance. Culture is learned by growing up with it and this process of cultural transmission from one generation to the next is called enculturation.¹⁵ It is a social heritage because it is hereditary and transmissible from one generation to another. Equally, he presents culture as being dynamic. This is because all cultures change overtime, and changes take place in response to events and phenomena as environmental pollution and crisis, intrusion of migrants and cultural diffusions, or modifications in behavior and values within the social system.¹⁶ Linton opines that cultural dynamism takes place alongside acculturation, which is the emulation of the objects of one culture by another culture. This change can be by the absorption of new ideas or the removal of old ideas or ways of doing things from one culture into another.¹⁷ For instance, Mary Mitchell Slessor a Scottish Presbyterian missionary to Nigeria, successfully fought against the killing of twins at infancy, by sending out twins' missionaries to mission houses to take care of the rejected twins she adopted.¹⁸

¹³ A., Charles Ellwood, Cultural Evolution: "A Case Study of Social Origins and Development." *The International Journal of ethics*, Vol 39:4, 1929, pp. 42-43.

¹⁴ T. O., Ishola, "Beyond the Pedagogy: Indigenous Approaches for peace Practices in Africa", *European Journal of Humanities and Social sciences*, vol 2(3), p. 74.

¹⁵ Enculturation refers to the gradual acquisition of the characteristics and norms of a culture by a group of persons or another culture.

¹⁶ G., Rangel, "Characteristics of Culture, Customs and Traditions", *Journal of Anthropology report*, 2022, p. 1

¹⁷ R., Redfield; R., Linton, and M. J., Herskovits, "Memorandum on the study of Acculturation", *American Anthropologist*, 38, 1939, <https://books.openedition.org>, accessed 14 May 2024, 7:30pm, pp. 149-152.

¹⁸ A. O., Odey, G.A., Onah, "Mary Mitchell Slessor (1848-1915) and her impact on the Missionary Enterprise in Cross River Region", *International Journal of Scientific and Engineering Research*, 10(7);, 2019, p.685

Peace

The challenges of defining peace reside in the different cultures and civilizations and the different interpretations and conceptions of peace. For example, Islam talks about *Salaam* meaning peace, the Jews say *Shalom*, the Indians or *Gandians-Ahimsa* and in Swahili it called *Ubuntu*. Each country and community determines their perceptions of peace on the context of their historical and political structures and traditions. No country and community has the same political structure or history, and so there is bound to be differences in the way things are done and perceived.¹⁹ In this regard, the way people may view their situations and circumstances is also bound to be different. The challenges in defining peace therefore lies in the way different countries and communities understand the concept of peace. The African conception of peace extends beyond the mere absence of war; it encompasses the eradication of unequal and unjust structures as well as cultural practices. This broader understanding includes the promotion of security, democratic participation, respect for human rights, and the advancement of development, social progress, and justice.²⁰

The definition of peace can also be determined by the phase and nature of the violence.²¹ In the context of armed war, the first phase of peace is the cessation of hostilities. The term *pact* describing an agreement to end a war has its root in the Roman word *pax*. At other phases, peace may refer to the processes of reconciliation, justice, development and other practices that seek to address the causes of violent conflict and prevent future violence. Smoker notes the importance of using insider criteria to understand the meanings and realities of a society on its own terms, though he observes that, the culturally contextualized perspectives may not reflect the impact of social structures if participants are unaware of them. While peace may be often conceptualized at the scale of civil wars in international peace building literature, peace is also defined in the context of more localized violent conflicts.²²

Peace building

Peace building is an intervention following violent conflict to restore peace and prevent a return to violence. Like the definition of peace, the definition of peace building is context-dependent. For example the UN's *agenda for peace* describes peace building as "actions to identify and

¹⁹ O., Joakim, "Local Peace-building: Challenges and Opportunities" *University of Gothenburg, Stockholm*, April 2017, pp. 40-43.

²⁰ I.O., Albert, *Understanding Peace in Africa*, University of Ibadan, Nigeria; Insitution of African Studies, 2005.

²¹ P., Smoker, "Small Peace", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 18, n°.2, 1981, p. 150 <https://www.jstore.org/stable/424206/>. Accessed on 10 May 2023, at 3:00pm.

²² Smoker, "Small Peace", p. 153.

support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.”²³ To explain the process of peace building, Galtung describes peace building as the mechanism that works to remove “causes of war and offer[s] alternatives to war institutions where war might occur. [it appears] as a reservoir for the system itself to draw upon just as a healthy body has the ability to generate its own antibodies”. As a movement that works on the causes of violence, peace building uses pedagogical approaches that transform societies for long-lasting peace. In this sense, peace building and culture share common values. Peace building through culture can be defined as the process of preventing violence through culture.²⁴ According to Lum, peace building involves the teaching of values of cooperation, dialogue, collaboration and non-violence, and mediation skills. She equally demonstrates that peace building is effective only if it focuses “upon change at the root systems”. In other words, dialogue and consensus aren’t enough. A transformation should also occur in the traditional schooling system to bring about a culture that value everyone and bring about peace.²⁵

What do we mean when we refer to building peace? We need to consider that, broadly defined; there are two ways to understand the nature of peace. For most analysts there is a distinction between a condition of negative peace and a condition of positive peace. Negative peace is the condition that most people refer to when they are discussing issues to do with peace and conflict, it is the condition in which peace is based on the absence of violence. We need to work more towards the notion of positive peace which means a peace that promotes reconciliation and coexistence on the basis of human rights, social, economic and political justice.²⁶ In this context, therefore, when we talk about peace-building we are referring to the process whereby the goal is to strengthen the capacity of societies to promote a positive peace. Peace building as a concept is quite complex. In spite of its different definitions, the underlying fact remains that peace building is basically targeted towards the realization of atmosphere of positive peace, love and tranquility that is best for human existence which will enable man achieve the best life can bring.

²³ B. B., Ghali, “An Agenda for Peace: Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping”, report of the Secretary-General pursuant to the statement adopted by the summit meeting of the Secretary Council on 31 January 1992, p.11.

²⁴ J., Galtung. *Three approaches to peace: peacekeeping, peacemaking, peace building. Peace, war and defense: Essays in peace research* 2(1), 1997, p. 290.

²⁵ J., Lum, “Peace education: past, present, and future”, *Journal of Peace Education*, 10 (3), 2013, p. 215.

²⁶ J., Galtung, “Violence, Peace and Peace Research”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.6 No.3, 1969, p. 183.

Conflict and Conflict Resolution

It is impossible to talk about peace without mentioning the concepts of conflict and conflict resolution. The word conflict means “clash”, it could be a clash of power, interests, religion, values, culture, etc. Conflict is a common feature of human existence, action and reality, where they are competitions or incompatible aspirations between one or more parties. The nature of conflict is that it could be personal, inter-personal and international. It could be pursued by peaceful means or by use of force that is armed conflict. It could be civil, military, social, economic, political, religious, ethnic, institutional, governmental, moral, inter-state or intra-state²⁷.

Conflict resolution involves the process of bringing harmony among warring parties or conflicting interests, with a view to promoting integration and peaceful co-existence.²⁸ The literature on conflict resolution highlights the importance of effective communication, empathy, and understanding in resolving disputes. Researchers have identified various approaches to conflict resolution, including negotiation, mediation, and arbitration, with each having its own strengths and limitations. For instance, negotiation involves direct communication between parties to reach a mutually acceptable agreement, while mediation involves a neutral third-party facilitator to assist in the negotiation process.²⁹ Empirical studies have shown that conflict resolution strategies that focus on interests rather than positions tend to be more effective in resolving conflicts. Additionally, the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, such as mediation and arbitration, has been found to be more efficient and cost-effective compared to traditional litigation.³⁰ Overall, the literature suggests that a combination of effective communication, empathy, and flexible conflict resolution strategies can lead to successful conflict resolution outcomes.

In sum total, culture is the intricate tapestry of values, norms, beliefs, and practices that shape an individual's identity and behavior. It is a dynamic and evolving entity that is passed down through generations, influenced by a complex interplay of historical, social, and economic factors. Culture encompasses not only the tangible aspects of a society, such as language, customs, and traditions, but also the intangible ones, including art, music, literature,

²⁷ Examples of inter-state conflict include civil and ethnic conflicts, anti-colonial struggles, secessionists, autonomous movements, religious conflicts, territorial conflicts and battles for control of government and natural resources.

²⁸ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/conflictresolution>, accessed 8 November 2023, at 3:30pm.

²⁹ K. Avruch, P. W., Black, and Scimecca, J. A., “Conflict Resolution: Cross-Cultural Perspectives”, Greenwood Press, n° 28, 1991, p. 30

³⁰ Ho-Won Jeong, *Understanding Conflict and Conflict Analysis*, London:, Cromwell Press, 2008, p. 243.

and spirituality. Through culture, individuals define themselves and their place in the world, and it plays a significant role in shaping their worldview, values, and attitudes. This tends to encourage empathy, tolerance, and cooperation. Effective peace building therefore requires an understanding of these cultural nuances that underlie conflicts, as well as the ability to promote a shared cultural identity that transcends ethnic, religious, or national differences.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Peace studies cannot be complete without the mention of scholars like Johan Galtung, Kenneth Boulding, John Paul Lederach and Edward Azar who are the fathers of peace studies. Galtung in his theory of “structural violence” expressed that, we end direct violence by changing conflict behaviours, structural violence by removing structural injustice and cultural violence by changing attitudes. Furthermore, his landmark conceptualizations of peace and violence differentiates between positive and negative peace, which has transformed the way scholars approach peace building. Negative peace reflects traditional understandings of peace as simply an absence of physical and direct violence caused by one agent and inflicted on another. Galtung defines positive peace by first exploring its opposite that is violence. By considering the various forms of violence, Galtung’s positive peace becomes the absence of not only direct physical violence but also structural and cultural violence. Aiming for positive peace posits the individual citizen’s experience in the peace building process and incorporates the well-being of groups by addressing systemic discriminations.³¹ Peace building, as a professional and academic field, is continually growing and expanding its understanding of peace.

Given that culture is intertwined with conflict for better or for worse, culture not only affects conflict, but conflict influences the cultural content of group identity. During periods of protracted violence, new cultural patterns develop and perpetuate a culture of violence even after the conflict. According to Daniel Bar-Tal, over time, groups within a conflict situation develop certain societal beliefs about the conflict, such as the in-group’s victimization, the delegitimization of the out-group and beliefs related to patriotism and loyalty to the in-group.³²

Johan Galtung, is considered the father of peace studies because of the distinctions he made between ‘negative peace’ and ‘positive peace’.³³ He espoused that peace is not just the absence of overt violence but is also the absence of structural violence, the persistence of

³¹ Galtung, “Violence, Peace and Peace Research”, 1996, pp. 167-191.

³² Ibid.

³³ Negative peace is understood as the absence of violence or fear of violence while positive peace is defined as the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies.

marginalization, inequality and social and economic exploitation. Accordingly, “peace-building is an approach that addresses the culture of violence, by transforming it into the culture of dialogue”. This ‘maximalist notion’ of peace addresses causes of structural violence, embraces cultural approaches to transformation as opposed to the ‘minimalist approaches that work towards cessation of physical violence.’³⁴ In view of this, he implies that culture needs to be introduced to negotiations to foster mutual respect, better knowledge and resolve conflicts.

On the other hand, Kenneth Boulding’s “stable peace” theory has been presented in his various publications where he focuses mainly on the issue of preventing war, partly because of the failures of the discipline of international relations. He proposed the creation of centers that could be used to gather a range of social, economic and political data and produce indicators of social temperature and pressure, and predict “cold or warm fronts” in social relations. His most influential idea had to do with the notion of power. He observed that power can encompass both the ability to command and enforce as well as the capacity to foster cooperation, inspire persuasion, and establish legitimacy. His approaches focus mainly on the issue of preventing war, rather than seeking prominent cure.³⁵ Nonetheless, present times have shown that this theory can be less efficient in resolving conflicts and peace building in war affected countries. Given the nature of conflicts in Africa, the more power is used in suppressing violence, the more the violence increases. In shorts, power has become the major reason for the increment of conflicts in Africa.

To this, Edward Azar’s theory of protracted social conflict (PSC) calls for an end to the traditional distinction between the internal and external models of conflicts. Azar brings the focus of the conflict theory on the evident rather than hidden dimensions of conflict. His concept of “protracted social conflict” depicts intractable, seemingly irresolvable conflicts, which involve sporadic outbreaks of violence resulting from communal and ethnic cleavages and violent struggles by communal groups for such basic needs as security, recognition acceptance, and access to political institutions and economic participation. To him, the term Protracted to identify conflicts that have persisted in African countries and across the globe. As such, his theoretical contribution stresses that the main way to reduce the impact of the

³⁴ The maximalist understanding of peace is closely associated with the concept of positive peace or substantial peace, while the minimalist approach is closely linked to the concept of negative peace.

³⁵ K.E., Boulding, *Stable Peace*, University of Texas Press, 1978, pp. 122-132.

external systemic causes of the protracted social conflict is to build responsive social institutions that could diminish their influence.³⁶

Even more important, Azar warns that traditional peace initiatives, which are largely based on “patron-client relationship”, could further fragment domestic political institutions and aggravate conflict situations. Hence, he suggests that the strategies aimed at altering the usually existing patron-client relationship need to be supported through multicultural efforts. The complexity of protracted social conflict, according to Azar, postulates two important assignments for those involved in peace building undertakings, first tracking of the dynamics of conflict, and secondly focusing on the social, economic and political roots of the conflict.³⁷ Azar insists that protracted social conflict is the most severe challenge for those concerned with peace building, and if the peace approach is too narrowly conceptualized and is failing to address the roots and the underlying dynamics which drive the protracted social conflict, a cycle of violence and despair could be further deepened.³⁸ Therefore, peace building is a holistic and comprehensive process which should include: post conflict reconstruction, improving and building on social relations, provision of aid assistance, reconciliation and entire social and structural changes.

In the light of the above, Lederach’s comprehensive approach to conflict resolution and peace building is the importance of identifying and supporting “the cultural modalities and resources” within the setting of the conflict:

The principle of indigenous empowerment suggests that peace must actively envision, include respect, and promote the human and cultural resources within a given setting. This involves a new set of lenses through which we do not primarily ‘see’ the setting and the people in it as the ‘problem’ and the outsider as the ‘answer’. Rather, we understand the long-term goal of transformation as validating and building on people and resources within the setting.³⁹

John Paul Lederach is the main propounder of sustainable peace building concept. He developed a peace building framework based on an understanding of peace building that centers on sustainable reconciliation within societies. Thus, according to Lederach, peace building can be achieved through the establishment of structures, processes and training of people within a generation-long time frame. In sum, Peace building should create conducive

³⁶ E. E., Azar, *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict: Theory and Cases*, Dartmouth, 1990, p. 8.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 13.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ J. P., Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington, D.C, United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997, p. 107.

conditions for economic reconstruction, development and democratization as preconditions for legitimate democratic order.⁴⁰

The core idea of his long-term conflict resolution strategy is the importance of identifying and supporting “the cultural modalities and resources” within the setting of the conflict:

The principle of indigenous empowerment suggests that conflict transformation must actively envision, include, respect, and promote the human and cultural resources within a given setting. This involves a new set of lenses through which we do not primarily ‘see’ the setting and the people in it as the ‘problem’ and the outsider as the ‘answer’. Rather, we understand the long-term goal of transformation as validating and building on people and resources within the setting.⁴¹

His approach entails the building of an infrastructure for peace, which should involve all levels of the affected population. All strategies should necessarily involve active participation of all segments of the affected population. In Lederach’s work, a conflict affected society is portrayed as a pyramid. Key military and political leaders are situated at the apex of a pyramid. Leaders are in the middle in the sectors such as health, education and those placed high in the military hierarchies, who “hold the potential for helping to establish a relationship and skill-based infrastructure for sustaining the peace building process”.⁴² Finally, at the grass roots level is a vast majority of the affected groups: the common people, refugees and IDPs, church groups and local leaders, among others. For the conflict resolution to be successful and sustainable, the co-ordination of peace building strategies at all three societal levels needs to be undertaken.⁴³

According to Lederach, peace building from below (bottom-up approach) is of decisive importance because peace can be achieved in accordance with the context and not imposed from the outside. Taking into account that in the conventional practice of peace building, the actors coming from outside of the conflict (diplomats, peace builders, etc.) are valued more highly than the peace building resources within the community, Lederach’s approach brought an immense shift in the peace building practice. His approach to peace building as a set of subsystems that have to be properly integrated is significant because it points out in a new and

⁴⁰ Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable*, p. 107.

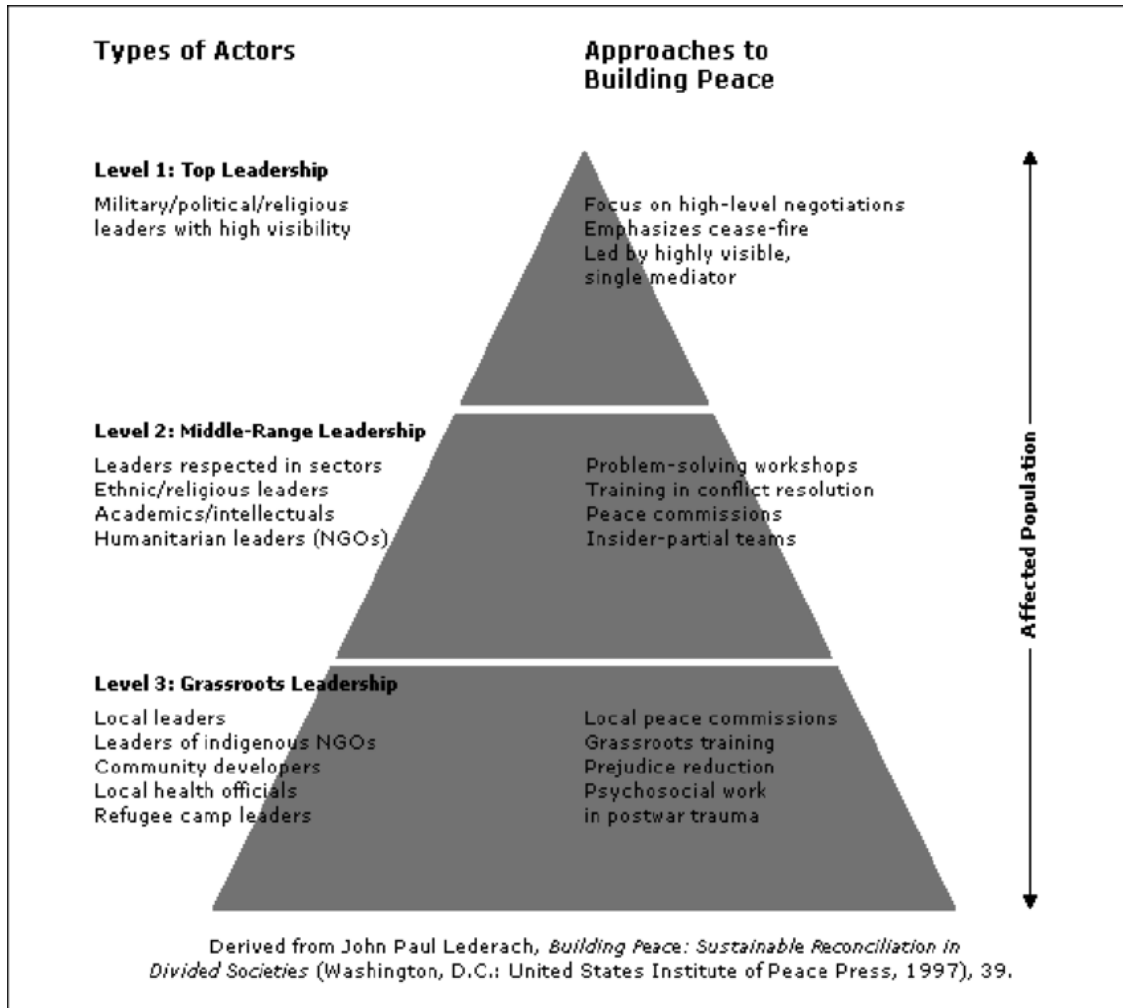
⁴¹ Ibid, p. 25.

⁴² Ibid, p. 37.

⁴³ According to Lederach, the different types of actors (levels) have to be matched with the different peacebuilding methodologies. The peacebuilding methodologies, in Lederach’s opinion, have to be adjusted to the three level system. He has created different methods for each level of the affected population. At the top level, a “top-down” approach should be applied. This approach should involve intermediaries or mediators backed by the foreign governments or international organizations and the goal of it is a negotiated settlement. The second level is where the problem solving workshops, conflict resolution trainings and the development of peace commissions should take place. The third level demands grass-roots, bottom-up approaches.

qualitatively different way to the importance of a long-term strategic planning. This can be seen in the diagram below.

Figure 1: Illustration of Lederach's level to peace building



Source : www.researchgate.net, accessed 28 March 2024, at 11:30 am

As per the pyramid, the top level approach aims to achieve a negotiated settlement between the principal high-level leaders of the parties involved in the conflict. At this stage, negotiations are mainly conducted in the public limelight, top level leaders face the difficult challenge of maintaining publicly articulated goals while at the same time moving towards compromise. However, reaching an accord is hardly sufficient to maintain peace. At the second stage, the middle range leaders are brought together in training sessions, to share their perceptions of the conflict, analyze their own roles in it, and develop approaches that will promote reconciliation. These participation allow for increased communication at the national, regional and local levels. However, these middle range efforts are more effective in the light of peace building efforts undertaken at the grassroots level. Leaders at this level can be involved in local peace

conferences, peace programs and local seminars and may also form part of broader community and public-health programs for dealing with trauma, or participate in workshops that aim to reduce prejudice and enhance community decision-making.⁴⁴ These grassroots level programs are crucial in helping people deal with the violence associated with war and repairing damaged relationships.

Indeed many of the conditions that generate conflict, such as colonial and economic insecurity, political discrimination and human rights violations are experienced primarily at the grassroots levels. Contemporary conflicts typically arise around issues of ethnicity, religion and regional geography, rather than class. As a result, leaders at each level usually have connections with their “own people” at other levels of hierarchy. It is also important to note that while a greater position in the pyramid means greater access to information and more decision making capacity, it also means that the individual is less affected by the day-to-day consequences of those decisions. Conversely, a lower position increases the degree to which individuals directly experience the consequences of decision making, but limited access to decision making power.⁴⁵

Clearly, culture permeates conflicts regardless of the conception of conflict, or the scale, because conflicts are, first and foremost, a human experience. From this starting point, conflict is connected to meaning, meaning to knowledge, and knowledge is rooted in culture. In order to re-establish sustainable peace building in war-affected communities, a key step would be to find a way for members of these communities to re-inform' themselves with a cultural logic that emphasizes sharing and equitable resource distribution. This, in effect, means emphasizing the importance of reviving progressive cultural attitudes and values that can foster a climate within which peace can flourish.⁴⁶ Interestingly enough we find that in Africa there are indigenous traditions for peace building that can teach us a lot about healing and reconciliation, which create the basis for re-establishing social solidarity.⁴⁷ The challenge today is for us to find ways of learning lessons from the local cultural approaches to peace building.

Peace building theories should address the underlying causes of violent conflict so that they become less likely in the future. In the available literature, peace-building is recognized

⁴⁴ Lederach, *Building Peace*, 1997, p. 39.

⁴⁵ J. P., Lederach and Appleby, R.S., *Strategic peacebuilding: An overview. Strategies of peace: Transforming conflict in a violent world*, Academic Press, New York, 2010, p. 28.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 35.

⁴⁷ W. I., Zartman, *Traditional Cures for Modern Conflicts: African Conflict “Medicine”*, SAIS review 20, lynne Rienner publishers, 2000, pp. 153-167.

as dynamic, having something to contribute in every phase of a conflict, and always moving or changing in response to the situation and the stage of the peacemaking efforts. More recently, it has been discovered that conflicts do not end and that they are seldom resolved. It may not be desirable to stop a conflict if it is at the expense of justice, and the best way to guarantee the durability of any agreement is to be proactive and allow for higher mutual participation by the conflict groups.⁴⁸

In conflict, people have to look or take a step back in the past to discover the genesis and the truth about the source of the conflict in order to come up with possible peace building solutions to effect peace. And this can mainly be done through culture as it makes use of the past to affect the present and future. Though Galtung presents peace as a state of no violence, it cannot be completely real because every society developed or underdeveloped manifests conflict in one way or the other and is part of our day-to-day life. In this regard it is necessary to create a sense of awareness which allows the ground for possible peace talks and way of effecting peace. Most often, culture usually comes into play only when reconciliation talks are on the ground. But we should seek to introduce culture within and during conflict situations.⁴⁹ Culture plays a great role in sensitizing and changing perspectives on how people envisage a conflict which could in turn result in reformative tendencies and put an end to conflict. To this, our research seeks to bring out the strengths and necessity as to why culture is important for peace building.

This work therefore upholds the theory of Positive peace whereby peace building dwells not only on the absence of violence but also the presence of key societal characteristics such as dialogue, participation, and recognition of a multiplicity of identities. It is a process that works towards what is referred to as a healthy society, or a society that is capable of managing internal, social and political disputes through nonviolent collaboration while promoting human rights norms.⁵⁰ A healthy society is not necessarily a perfect *utopia* of human rights, but there must be ongoing efforts to promote peace through the development of human dignity, equality, and mutual respect for differences. Sustainable peace demands that the peace building process promotes the growth of a healthy society that has the essential capacity to compromise rather than resort to violence.

⁴⁸ C., Nordstrom, R, Antonius, *Field Work under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Culture*, California, University of California press, 1995, p. 4.

⁴⁹ Galtung, "Violence, Peace and Peace Research", 1996, p. 185.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 187.

LITERATURE REVIEWED

Understanding the notion of culture is very primordial in setting it as an instrument for peace building. According to the magazine Time2, the popular Merriam-Webster Learner's Dictionary chose "culture" as its word of the year for 2014. It was the word that saw the biggest spike in look-ups on their website, and this reflects the general confusion about this term.⁵¹ We can think of culture as some kind of roots upon which we keep building all sorts of human relationships and experiences. It relates to the symbolic dimension of life, where we are constantly making meaning and enacting our identities. Cultural messages from the groups we belong give us information about what is meaningful or important, and who we are in the world and in relation to others – that is, our identities.⁵²

In the context of peace building, culture serves as a foundation that shapes interactions and relationships among people. The cultural elements significantly influence how communities respond to conflict and foster peace. Peace building involves efforts to prevent conflict, manage disputes, and create a stable environment through dialogue and cooperation.⁵³ Understanding the role of culture in peace building is important because it helps identify how local customs, traditions, and social norms can contribute to resolving conflicts. For instance, traditional practices and community gatherings often promote dialogue and reconciliation, allowing conflicting parties to find common ground. This cultural dimension becomes especially relevant in Bamenda, where multiple ethnic groups coexist, each with unique traditions that can either divide or unite.

Kevin Avruch opines that after years of relative neglect, culture is finally receiving due recognition as a key factor in the evolution and resolution of conflicts. Unfortunately, however, when theorists and practitioners of conflict resolution speak of culture, they often understand and use it in a bewildering and unhelpful variety of ways. With sophistication and lucidity, *Culture and Conflict Resolution* exposes these shortcomings and proposes an alternative conception in which culture is seen as dynamic and derivative of individual experience.⁵⁴ His book explores divergent theories of social conflict and differing strategies that shape the conduct of diplomacy, and examines the role that culture has (and has not) played in conflict

⁵¹ www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture, accessed 7 January 2024, at 9:30 am.

⁵² C., Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books. 1973, p. 33.

⁵³ N., Hanane, "Cultural Approaches to Peace Building: An Introduction to building a Culture of Peace", *Journal of Politics and Law*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2021, pp. 708-714.

⁵⁴ K., Avruch, *Culture and Conflict Resolution*, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998, pp. 23-27.

resolution. He goes as far as criticizing those who would dismiss or diminish culture's relevance as he is trenchant in advocating conflict resolution approaches that make the most productive use of a coherent concept of culture.⁵⁵ This work challenges both scholars and practitioners not only to develop a clearer understanding of what culture is, but also to take that understanding and incorporate it into more effective conflict resolution and peace building processes. A vital point for our research.

According to Michelle LeBaron, the task for peace building practitioners is to find ways of incorporating the culture into the work of peace building. Yet still posits that, culture is an essential part of conflict and conflict resolution. He observes that culture are like underground rivers that run through our lives and relationships, giving us messages that shape our perceptions, attributions, judgments and ideas of self and other.⁵⁶ Though cultures are powerful, they are often unconscious, influencing conflicts and attempts to solve conflicts in imperceptible ways. He points out that cultural dimensions are often at the heart of peace building practices. This in all is to say that the study of culture is the key component of any community along with the associated notions of development and peace. This work has helped the study as it supports the argument that culture is a primordial component for building peace.

More to this, Lisa Schirch notes that cultural groups develop a common memory of what they interpret as traumatic experience. They choose specific moments in history, which are passed on from generation to generation, becoming symbols worth fighting for. Cultural groups also develop their own ways to handle conflicts, and best describe their experiences. Schirch argues that using the existing cultural frameworks could offer peace builders a range of powerful tools in dealing with conflicts.⁵⁷ This research significantly contributes to this discourse by analyzing the role of language in fostering unity and peace, a critical aspect of our study.

Johan Galtung, a sociologist and a forerunner of establishing peace and conflict resolution studies reflects on the notion of peace in relation to violence. For him, “peace is the absence of violence”. He explains that the absence of violence emanates from a social agreement and presents violence as any influence that limits people’s somatic and mental realizations. It includes actions, ideologies, threats and dominance that can hurt both individuals and

⁵⁵ Avruch, *Culture and Conflict*, p.24.

⁵⁶ M., LeBaron, *Bridging Cultural Conflicts: A New Approach for a Changing World*. Jossey-bass, San Francisco, CA. 2003.

⁵⁷ L., Schirch, *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning handbook*, Lynne, Rienner, 2013.

communities. However, Galtung understanding of peace as the absence of violence that is today acknowledged as “negative peace”, is questioned by authors such as Reardon. According to her, while it is significant to abolish nuclear mentality, intervene in conflict areas, and eliminate all causes of violence, it is equally important to prevent violence by educating people to bring about change in their culture. This education to acquire peaceful values and transform societies is “positive peace”. In the same vein, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) promoted an education that “redefines peace by moving away from its dominant conception as the absence of war to one of creating a culture of peace.”⁵⁸ This book was then pertinent to our study as it addresses the significant themes highlighted in the research.

John Paul Lederach supports this position and opines that it is generally agreed that the central task of peace building is to create positive peace, a ‘stable social equilibrium in which the surfacing of new disputes does not escalate into violence and war.’ Sustainable peace is characterized by the absence of physical and structural violence, the elimination of discrimination, and self- sustainability. Moving towards this sort of environment goes beyond problem solving or conflict management. Peace building initiatives try to fix the core problems that underline the conflict and change the patterns of interaction of the involved parties.⁵⁹ They aim to move a given population from a condition of extreme vulnerability and dependency to one of self-sufficiency and well-being. In particular, four major areas of activity can be identified, namely: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peace keeping and post-conflict peace building. This book is relevant to our study because it gives a broad knowledge about peace building; most importantly it shows the various steps involved in peace building.

In the journey of culture and peace building, several challenges and opportunities emerge that shape the community's response to conflict. Alex Perullo records that many peace building organizations and institutions do not have a cultural dimension and even many government policies do not consider culture as an important tool that can be used for conflict management and peace building. argues that, culture remains marginalized within the peace building field, perhaps because they are seen as "soft" approaches (within an already "soft" field) to the "hard" issues of conflict and violence, or because peace building practitioners frequently originate

⁵⁸ By Culture of Peace UNESCO means set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that rejects violence and prevents conflict by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiations among individuals and nations.

⁵⁹ J.P., Lederach, and R.S., Appleby, *Strategic peacebuilding: An Overview in Strategies of Peace: Transforming Conflict in a Violent World*, Oxford, Academic press, 2010, pp. 19-41.

from social and political sciences rather than the arts and humanities fields, or because the methodologies are not readily available.⁶⁰ This allows us to understand the dynamics between cultural practices and state oriented approaches to peace building.

The peculiarity of culture and peace building in Cameroon and Bamenda in particular has been the comprehension of both modern governance institutions and traditional approaches. While the former were meant to put an end to conflicts and serve as a veritable replacement to the latter, its application has rather fuelled more conflicts rather than contain them. This research holds that addressing the root cause of a conflict, and considering the relevance of culture in conflict resolution and peace building would increase the chances of resolving the conflict. In light of this, Billy Agwanda and Uğur Yasin Asal presents internal colonialism as a major source of conflict in Cameroon. They denote the structural, social, cultural, and political inequalities between different geographical regions in a particular state. These differences are usually characterized by conspicuous unequal distribution of economic resources, by political domination, and by cultural marginalization.⁶¹ They add that there can be additional factors such as language and religion that contribute to internal colonialism and the continuing uneven interactions between the core and the periphery. As a consequence, this unbalanced interaction eventually leads to the emergence of less advanced and more advanced groups within a society. While the more advanced groups strive to maintain the status quo through the institutionalization of mechanisms, the less advanced groups struggle to change their circumstances, and this may reflect in the emergence or rise of a nationalistic consciousness. This research is pertinent to our study as it provides insights into the penetration and colonization of Cameroon and its specific impacts on our study area.

According to Isaac Olawaye Albert, the colonial period saw the imposition of European values and institutions on the traditional societies of the region, which has had a lasting impact on the cultural identity of the colonized people.⁶² The suppression of many traditional institutions and practices by the colonial powers, lead to a loss of cultural heritage and identity that has been felt for generations. This loss of cultural heritage has contributed to a sense of disconnection and disempowerment amongst people in the society, which has in turn

⁶⁰ A., Perrullo, "Hooligans and Heroes: Youth identity and hip-hop in Dar es Salaam Tanzania", *Africa Today*, Vol. n° 4, 2005, pp. 75-101.

⁶¹ B., Agwada, U.Y., Asal. "The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon-The Change from Crisis to Conflict, and a possible way forward to Resolution", *African journal on Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 21, no.1, 2021, pp. 9-34. Accessed 22 February 2024, at 5:25 pm.

⁶² I.O., Albert, "Understanding peace in Africa", University of Ibadan, Nigeria: *Insitution of African Studies*, 2005.

contributes to conflict. This information is relevant to this document as it helps in understanding the impact of colonialism on culture and identity.

According to Walter Gam Nkwi, the Europeans' arbitrary lumping of people and the complete ignorance of ethnic composition caused differences in boundary understanding of most of the African States. In some instances, these boundary misunderstandings resulted in inter-village or ethnic crises.⁶³ The Bamendankwe contesting their common border with the Nkwen in Bamenda is an excellent example.⁶⁴ In circumstances marked by crisis, the maintenance of peace was predominantly achieved through the coercive measures employed by police and military forces, a system that was both foreign and detrimental to the African people. This analysis is essential for understanding the intricate dynamics of land and boundary disputes, which constitute a fundamental aspect of our research.

The quest for sustainable peace is the primary objective of every nation or society. For any society to progress, peaceful co-existence becomes imperative. Akon Ernest Taki examines peace building mechanisms employed by peace actors in efforts to promote peace among the Widikum of the Bamenda Grasslands in Cameroon.⁶⁵ He denotes that though several actors to promote peace have been deployed to scale down the multifaceted land and chieftaincy conflict, their efforts have registered limited success as the conflicts kept resurfacing after peace agreement. Mainly because most peace efforts were constructed from "top to bottom" rather than from "bottom to top" to include the indigenous mechanisms, their customs, traditions and primarily the use of powerful and skillful experts as mediators. An analysis of the data reveals that the British approach was the best for using alternative methods of both conventional and indigenous mechanisms.⁶⁶ The British scaled down chieftaincy and land conflicts as justice was dispensed based on the native customs and traditions, to which sustainable peace was observed. This work is important for our study as it looks at the role of traditional authorities in peace building, a theme that runs throughout this study

Kuenou, in his work titled, "The Role of traditional authorities in peace building: case of the Menoua Division of west Cameroon, 1919 to 2015", presents the types, causes and manifestations of conflicts in the Menoua division, the intra-chieftdom conflicts and inter-

⁶³ W. G., Nkwi, *Sons and Daughters of the Soil: Land and Boundary Conflicts in North West Cameroon 1955-2005*, Langaa RPCIG, 2011, pp. 23-38.

⁶⁴ Bamendankwe and Nkwen are both villages belonging to the Bamenda I and III municipality of the Mezam division respectively.

⁶⁵ A.E, Taki., "Peace-Building Mechanism Among the Widikum of the Bamenda Grasslands, Cameroon, 1870-2014", *International Journal of African Society, Cultures and Traditions*, Vol.11, no.2, 2003, pp. 16-26.

⁶⁶ Taki., "Peace-Building Mechanism", p. 32.

chiefdom conflicts. He examined the political, socioeconomic and geographical causes of conflicts bringing out the consequences like the disintegration and formation of new chiefdoms. His work also examined traditional institutions and peace building mechanisms like the *fon* or chiefs and “men of power” involved in peace building.⁶⁷ The work made further clarification on the influence of colonialism and the mandate system in Cameroon, the role of Christian religion and the chieftaincy reforms. From such a review, one can effectively understand the impact of both the traditional authorities and its power in establishing peace.

Susan Thomson presents another practical example in Rwanda, where the government is making use of the traditional justice and reconciliation system known as Gacaca to enable it to judge some of those who are accused of having been among the perpetrators of the genocide in 1994.⁶⁸ The interesting lesson to learn from this Gacaca system is that it is largely organized on the basis of local community involvement. The local community is involved in encouraging the perpetrators to acknowledge what they have done and the victims are involved in determining what reparations need to be made so that the perpetrators can be re-integrated into the community. But the fact that the Rwandese government has resorted to using the Gacaca approach is the most clear illustration that there is a role for African indigenous approaches in efforts to consolidate and restore peace.⁶⁹ Making reference to these examples is just to show that culture is never a hindrance in building peace.

Nuvah Deyeb Charity presents the dracaena locally called ghim and nkeng respectively, as a fundamental instrument in the preservation of peace and resolution of conflict amongst the people of Bali Camba in the North West region. These plants have, have cultural, moral, spiritual, economic and political implications. Planted around shrines, graves, boundaries and used in performing rituals, the serve also as symbols of traditional authority, source of economic growth, traditional medicine health and peace. According to him, the introduction of foreign cultures amongst these people during the wave of migration, settlement and colonial

⁶⁷ G. C., Kueno, “The Role of Traditional Authorities in Peace Building: Case of the Menoua Division of West Cameroon, 1919 – 2015”, Masters Thesis, university of Yaounde 1, July 2021.

⁶⁸ Susan Thomson “Rwanda’s Gacaca Courts”, *Témoigner. Entre histoire et mémoire* {online}, 2015, <https://journals.openedition.org/temoigner/3537,DOI:https://doi.org/10.4000/temoigner.3537>. Accessed 12 February 2024, at 6:00 pm, pp. 143-144.

⁶⁹ The Gacaca courts were a system of transitional justice in Rwanda following the 1994 genocide. The term can be translated as “short grass” referring to the public space where neighborhood male elders used to meet to solve local problems. This court permitted the speeding up of trial processes, bringing the truth about the genocide out in the open, punishing perpetrators and bringing about reconciliation between Rwandas.

rule, greatly diminished the symbolic values assigned to these plants.⁷⁰ Although the deep cultural and moral implications of these plants are fading away as a result of religious influences and western secular culture, their significance have not been completely eroded especially as the plants are still used in Bali and most communities in the region for different reasons. This review is important to our research work as it is based on traditional conflict resolution strategy, a major cultural factor for peace building.

James Albert Banks presents his well-known and widely used concept of Dimensions of Multicultural Education to help build an understanding of how the various components of multicultural education are interrelated. He then provides vital information on preparing students to function as effective citizens in a global world, discusses the dimensions, history, and goals of multicultural education, presents the conceptual, philosophical, and research issues related to education and diversity, examines the issues involved in curriculum and teaching, looks at gender equity, disability, giftedness, and language diversity and focuses on intergroup relations and principles for teaching and learning.⁷¹ While this work places less emphasis on peace building, it is nonetheless significant as it serves as a framework for comprehensively understanding the diverse societal factors that shape individual identities essential for fostering peaceful coexistence within our area of study.

John Mukum Mbaku's work encapsulates Cameroon's rich indigenous and modern customs and traditions in depth. The narrative emphasizes those aspects that define its modern nation, its peoples, the unique societies, their institutions, and various lifestyles. The origins of Cameroon's diverse culture are traced back to the various ethnic groups and languages as well as the influence of European colonialism, Christianity, Islam, and other external factors, including globalization. In each chapter, examples from ethnic groups are presented to give some sense of the variety of experiences. Cameroon has had a turbulent and eventful modern history with German, English, and French incursions, and students and general readers will be able to understand the current struggle for democracy post-independence.⁷² The history colors the substantial coverage of the many topics examined, from education, to marriage and women's roles, sports, and holidays, daily life, the arts, and much more. His work serves as a

⁷⁰ C.N., Deyeb, "Signification of Plants in Traditional Peace Building in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon: The Case of Fig Tree and Dracaena amongst the Bali Chamba Polities", *Deyeb Charity Peace Lady*, Cameroon, 2023, doi: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRIS.2023.7517>, accessed 12 February 2024, at 7:15 pm.

⁷¹ J.A., Banks, *Cultural Diversity and Education: Foundations, Curriculum, and Teaching* (6th ed.), Routledge, 2015, pp. 199-225.

⁷² J.M., Mbaku, *Cultures and Customs of Cameroon*, London, Greenwood press, 2005.

comprehensive and accessible introduction to Cameroon, vital for understanding the intricate cultural diversity of its people and its potential role in peace-building strategies.

On the whole, it is evident that there is diverse literature on the role of traditional authority in conflict resolution in Bamenda. However, it exposes a critical gap in the recognition of the broader cultural dimensions essential for effective peace building practices in the Bamenda municipality from 1990-2019. Most studies focus generally on cultural practices and traditions, without examining specific initiatives that promote peace and social cohesion. Moreover, more attention is given to government policies and international relations at the expense of local initiatives. More to this, peace processes tend to focus more on conflict resolution and management, rather than conflict transformation. This overlooks the importance of transforming the underlying structures and systems that contribute to conflict, and instead focuses on managing and resolving conflicts as they arise.

Looking ahead, future directions for peace building should focus on enhancing community engagements and addressing the underlying issues that contribute to conflict. This involves creating spaces where diverse voices can be heard and valued. Through fostering an environment of understanding and respect, the community can harness its cultural richness to promote lasting peace. Ultimately, the journey toward cultural integration and peace building in Bamenda is ongoing, but with commitment and collaboration, there is hope for a more harmonious future.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Seeking to analyze the role culture plays in peace building in the study area, the method used in the project is a mixed approach, comprising both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth study on the role of culture in peace building from the constructivist perspective on research founded on documentation and interactive research sessions. On the quantitative approach, a case study research design was explored⁷³. This was to respond to the “why” and “how” questions. According to Creswell, “case study research is a quantitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection and involving multiple sources of information (observations, interviews, audio/visual material, documents, and reports) and a

⁷³ J.W., Creswell, T.C., Guetterman, *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (6th ed.). New York:, Pearson, 2019, p. 69.

case description and case-based themes.”⁷⁴ Data was collected through interviews, participant observation and the use of questionnaires and software tools for analysis. Culture is a valuable source of unity fostering a strong sense of belonging and shapes identities.

The study used questionnaires as the main instrument for primary data collection. The usage of questionnaires in this study was supported by four reasons: It ensured total confidentiality, took less time and was affordable, and it was easy to administer. Its application gave a more noticeable opinion subsequently encouraging open responses to fragile questions and was free from bias, guaranteeing accuracy and significant data. Convenient sampling techniques were utilized to identify study participants for interviews. An interview guide was equally used and was administered orally, that is face to face. Additionally a common question guide on the importance of culture as a peace building tool was administered followed by group discussions with some members and representatives of local institutions like schools, churches, and development center.

Secondary data was collected in various documentation centres. These include the library of the University of Yaoundé 1, library of the department of History-Geography-Archeology, University portals, government reports, national archives, scientific journals, research centers, IRIC, the library of ANICHR in Yaoundé and other public and private libraries that could inform the study as appropriate. Notwithstanding, internet sources were equally necessary for collection of data. All the data collected was categorized for easy analysis. A qualitative technique to analyze the resultant data was used. Careful screening was carried out on all the data collected to ensure only meaningful responses were analyzed to be more objective. Analyzing techniques like classification, tabulation and editing techniques were equally used.

1. Sample and sampling strategy

Sampling is a predetermined number of a group of people taken from a larger population to test the hypothesis of the research. The informants were put into three categories. The first group included the opinion leaders or village elders, religious leaders, community based organizations and the youths. The second category included Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), regional administration and government officials in the region. And the third group consisted of traditional authorities. These key informants were residents from the Bamenda municipality and were men and women who ranged from 30-60 years.

⁷⁴ Creswell, T.C., Guetterman, *Educational research*, p. 73.

The snowball sampling technique was used permitting us to identify key informants and well-known information for this research topic. Also, random sampling technique was used which helped choose diverse informants and information from the various quarters in Bamenda.⁷⁵

2. Data collection

➤ Interviews and surveys

In our proceedings, 30 persons were interviewed, the interview participants were men and women age 25 to 80. Additionally, 60 persons were served structured questionnaires. These people were randomly selected from every sector of the community. The snowball method permitted us to reach out to participants. Due to the ongoing tensions in the regions since the war, talking about peace was a sensitive subject. Thus, we made our participants read a consent form that explains the reason for the study and guaranteed that the collected data will be used only for the purpose of the study. These participants were not exposed to any risk. They expressed their desire for their ideas to be heard and more if could it contribute to the promotion of peace in the region and put an end to the conflict which has penalized the region in terms of growth. The interviews lasted 30 minutes highest per person.

For the survey, unstructured questionnaires were used and at most times did not require a one-on-one session nor the disclosure of participant identity. This permitted the researcher to gather more information, experiences, opinions, attitudes and the feelings of the people concerning the topic.⁷⁶

➤ Observation

Observation is a way of gathering data by watching people, events or noting physical characteristics in their national setting. Some observation are overt where the subject knows they are being observed and others covert where the subject does not know they are being watched. Observations were made during certain events like cultural festivals which permitted the research to visualize the strength and/or grip culture has on peace in the community.

⁷⁵ Snowball sampling is a research technique where research participants recruit other participants for a test or study. While random sampling is a technique in which each person in the population is equally likely to be selected for a test or study.

⁷⁶ Unstructured questionnaires are more open ended-questions which do not limit responses of the respondents while structured questionnaires are standardized close questions requiring of respondents to choose from a set of predefined answers.

➤ **Review of document**

The researcher utilized a variety of research centers and university libraries to identify pertinent studies concerning contemporary conflicts, conflict resolution, and peace building. In addition, the researcher conducted a thorough review of relevant literature, drawing from online journals and articles associated with the research topic. The utilization of search engines such as Google Scholar and JSTOR facilitated the discovery of insightful articles that were significant to the investigation. During the field studies conducted in Bamenda, the municipality provided the researcher with access to files containing relevant information related to the topic, as well as guidance when necessary. This endeavor yielded valuable information that substantively supplemented the findings of the study.

➤ **Data analysis**

The data was well preserved to ensure the accuracy of participants' answers, since they were audio recorded. While interviewing participants, we took some of the quotes from the conversations, which we transcribed, and did a content analysis of the transcripts. For each transcript, we grouped under the themes of: marginalization, assimilation, dialogue, culture-value, poverty and brotherhood, and others were tabulated for better comprehension. Our objective was to sort and organize or identify whether participants would come up with the same hypothesis about the proposed theme and dialogue needed to be done, and especially the extent to which culture contributes to the establishment of peace and the barriers limiting its effectiveness.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Research on peace building in Africa predominantly centres around international interventions in post-conflict scenarios, while investigations into peace building within non-civil war contexts remain relatively scarce. In Cameroon, where violent conflict has sporadically escalated over the past two decades, there is an imperative need for early peace building interventions to mitigate the potential for conflict to escalate to more severe levels. Although there exists a body of scholarly work focused on UN peace building initiatives, there is a notable lack of academic research regarding nationally led peace building processes aimed at the prevention of violent conflict. This gap is crucial to address, as it is instrumental for the attainment of sustainable peace. The Bamenda municipality has been experiencing significant violence, which has adversely affected the political, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions of the area. In this complex and challenging context, it is pertinent to explore the contributions

of culture to peace building efforts. The primary aim of our research is to analyze the integral role that culture can play in both establishing and maintaining peace within peace building practices.

Choosing to research on the value of culture in peace building is a very critical subject as culture involves every aspect of society directly related to man. In recent times, major conflicts have been characterized as culturally-led whereas from time memorial culture has always played the role of a unifying factor between men, especially in African societies. So then one is tempt to ask, how can it be that culture which is particular rich in values and norms serves as a catalyst for conflict in societies, and even if there should be an ounce of reality in this, how then can it be remedied. Thus the choice of this study.

The academic value of this research highlights the importance of respecting cultural diversity as a means of promoting social cohesion, trust and understanding in the Bamenda municipality. By acknowledging the unique histories, values, beliefs and practices of different groups, peace builders can create an inclusive and participatory environment that encourages dialogue, negotiation and compromise. Additionally, it brings into emphasis the need to critically examine and challenge the cultural norms, values and practices that perpetuate violence, inequality and injustice in the municipality. Thus the study attempts to deconstruct the cultural logics of conflict, which will help peace builders identify and address the root causes of violence and develop alternative narratives, discourses and practices that promote peace and justice in the municipality.

From a scientific perspective, and in the context of peace building, culture is a critical factor in addressing and understanding the root causes of conflict as well as promoting peace. By recognizing and respecting the cultural diversity of people in the Bamenda municipality, peace builders can foster greater understanding, empathy and trust which are essential ingredients for building sustainable peace. Additionally, this study of culture in peace building is a multidisciplinary endeavor that draws on insight from fields such as anthropology, sociology, psychology and political science. These disciplines provide a rich nuanced understanding of the complex and dynamic relationships between culture, conflict, and peace, and highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity and competence in peace building interventions.

On a personal level, culture holds great significance in peace building, as it influences how individuals perceive themselves, their relationships with others and their place in the

world. Thus, by fostering a deep appreciation for one's own cultural heritage, individuals can gain a heightened sense of self-awareness, self-esteem and self-efficiency which are all crucial components for building a peaceful and inclusive society in our area of study. Moreover, this work is important to people in the municipality as it creates awareness enabling individuals to better understand and empathize with others, particularly those from different backgrounds, thereby promoting intercultural dialogue, mutual respect and understanding. Equally culture can provide a common language, symbolism and narrative that can help bridge divides, heal wounds and foster reconciliation in the Bamenda municipality.

Politically, we hope to draw conclusions on how parties can improve their negotiation strategies in any cross-cultural negotiation scenario in Bamenda. Representatives to international organizations could even apply the lessons learned from this study to the communications within their organizations, as these organizations (like the African Union and NGOs) themselves are comprised of nationals of different cultural backgrounds and may disagree on how to address the conflicts they are trying to resolve. The government may find the study findings important and useful inputs applicable in policy formation especially on matters of peace building and conflict management in the Bamenda municipality and other areas of the country where applicable. Currently, there are no clear and specific government policies on culture in relation to peace building in the municipality. From the finding of these studies, the government and other cultural organizations in the municipality can get an in depth understanding of how various cultures can be used as a tool for peace building.

SCOPE OF THE SUBJECT

The work is delimited in space and time. Spatial delimitation refers to the specific geographical area where the research was conducted. In this case, the study took place in Bamenda, which is located in the Western Grassfields of Cameroon. Bamenda is the capital city of the North West region of Cameroon and has a population of approximately 2 million people. The reason for focusing on this area is because it has been identified as a major centre for political tensions in the country, particularly since the reintroduction of multiparty politics. This has resulted in a series of significant conflicts in the region, which have had a profound impact on the political, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of the community.

To conduct the investigation, a specific time-frame from 1990 to 2019 was chosen. This period was selected due to the numerous conflicts and clashes that occurred in the region during that time. The year 1990 marked the resurgence of a multiparty system, leading to the

emergence of new political parties, which became an opposition party to the central government. This resulted in uprisings, strikes, and conflicts within the region. The continuous tension during this period eventually led to the present crisis, known as the Anglophone crisis, which has had a socio-economic impact, not only on the municipality but also on the entire region and neighboring areas. Additionally, land boundary and ownership disputes that were previously addressed by the colonial power and post-colonial government resurfaced, causing further strain between communities and the government. Similar to the Anglophone crisis, efforts for peace building and conflict resolution for land/boundary disputes have had limited effects. The year 2019 stands to represent the Grand National dialogue which was conducted to address all conflicts in the region and develop strategies for peace building. And inclusively the outcome of the dialogue.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

This research work did not go through without some problems. The first of such problems was the security challenges faced in the collection of information and interviews of participants needed for the case study research. The crisis had rendered certain areas inaccessible making the researcher to focus more on certain areas than others in the municipality, and the destruction of roads had rendered certain places inaccessible by cars making bikes the only means of transportation on the rough shady roads. This made the whole research cumbersome.

Equally, some of the informants were not cooperative as many were either indifferent or lukewarm. They regarded the questions as political issues which they did not want to meddle with, coupled with the fact that the researcher was considered as a spy either from the government or separatists. As such, many were reluctant and suspicious to partake in the interview sessions while some refused to be identified for fear of the unknown.

Additionally, some of the people the researcher interviewed did not keep to their appointments, making the researcher to remain longer on the field than expected, as the participation of most of these people was deemed important for the development of the research.

Furthermore, the ghost towns phenomenon that defined daily life in the study area had a negative impact on the research. At times, we were compelled to remain at home during working days due to the closure of business establishments and institutions. The insecurity in Bamenda made fieldwork challenging, particularly in light of the brutal killings of both civilians and military personnel in the study area.

Another significant challenge faced during this project was the condition of archival materials in certain documentation centres, which were often found to be in a deteriorating state. In several instances, pages were either missing or torn. The inadequate preservation of these archival materials resulted in the loss of numerous valuable documents that could have played a crucial role in our research.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The study is organized into four chapters, it begins with a general introduction and ends with a general conclusion. The first chapter of this study critically examines the ethnographical and historical context of the Bamenda region, elucidating the cultural elements that facilitate peace as well as the historical and social dynamics that may incite conflict. By recognizing this potential sources of peace and conflict, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complexities and challenges faced by the Bamenda people in their pursuit for peace.

Chapter two dives into the intricate web of conflicts that plague the study area, seeking to uncover the underlying sources and dynamics at play. By examining the political, economic, and socio-cultural factors that contribute to these conflicts, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex landscape of discord. Specifically, we will explore the contentious issues surrounding land and boundary disputes, as well as the escalating tensions of the Anglophone crisis. Through a detailed analysis of their origins, root causes, and far-reaching consequences, we hope to shed light on the profound impact these conflicts have had on the community at large.

Chapter three highlights the crucial role of culture in community peace building. It begins by critiquing traditional government-led peace building methods, which often overlook the root causes of conflict. The chapter then explores culture as a powerful tool for promoting peace and reconciliation, emphasizing the importance of understanding and respecting a community's cultural norms and values. By tapping into the municipality's cultural heritage, peace builders can foster unity and belonging, contributing to sustainable peace. However, the chapter also acknowledges challenges in using culture for peace building, such as navigating cultural sensitivities, addressing historical grievances, and ensuring inclusivity in the process.

Chapter four offers a comprehensive analysis of the challenges facing culture as a peace building mechanism, not just within a specific region or nation, but across the entire continent of Africa. It provides data-driven recommendations that emphasize the importance of

embracing culture to promote peace effectively. By recognizing the invaluable contributions of individuals with African heritage, the chapter encourages a more inclusive and diverse approach to peace building, paving the way for a sustainable and harmonious society.

CHAPTER ONE: ETHNOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL PRESENTATION OF THE BAMENDA MUNICIPALITY IN THE NORTH WEST REGION OF CAMEROON

Introduction

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the ethnographical composition and cultural heritage of the Bamenda municipality. By understanding the historical context, ethnographical composition, cultural expressions, and cultural challenges, we can better appreciate the role of culture in peace building within the municipality. This chapter will begin by providing a geographical and historical overview of the Bamenda municipality, highlighting its significance as a regional capital and a meeting point for diverse communities. The chapter will then explore the rich tapestry of cultural expressions and traditions that define Bamenda, and the influence of these cultural elements will be examined to understand their significance in shaping the cultural landscape of the municipality. Finally, the chapter will touch on the challenges facing culture as an instrument of peace in the municipality. This comprehensive overview lays the groundwork for a deeper analysis of how cultural resources can be leveraged to promote peace and social cohesion within the municipality.

1. ETHNOGRAPHICAL PRESENTATION OF THE BAMENDA MUNICIPALITY

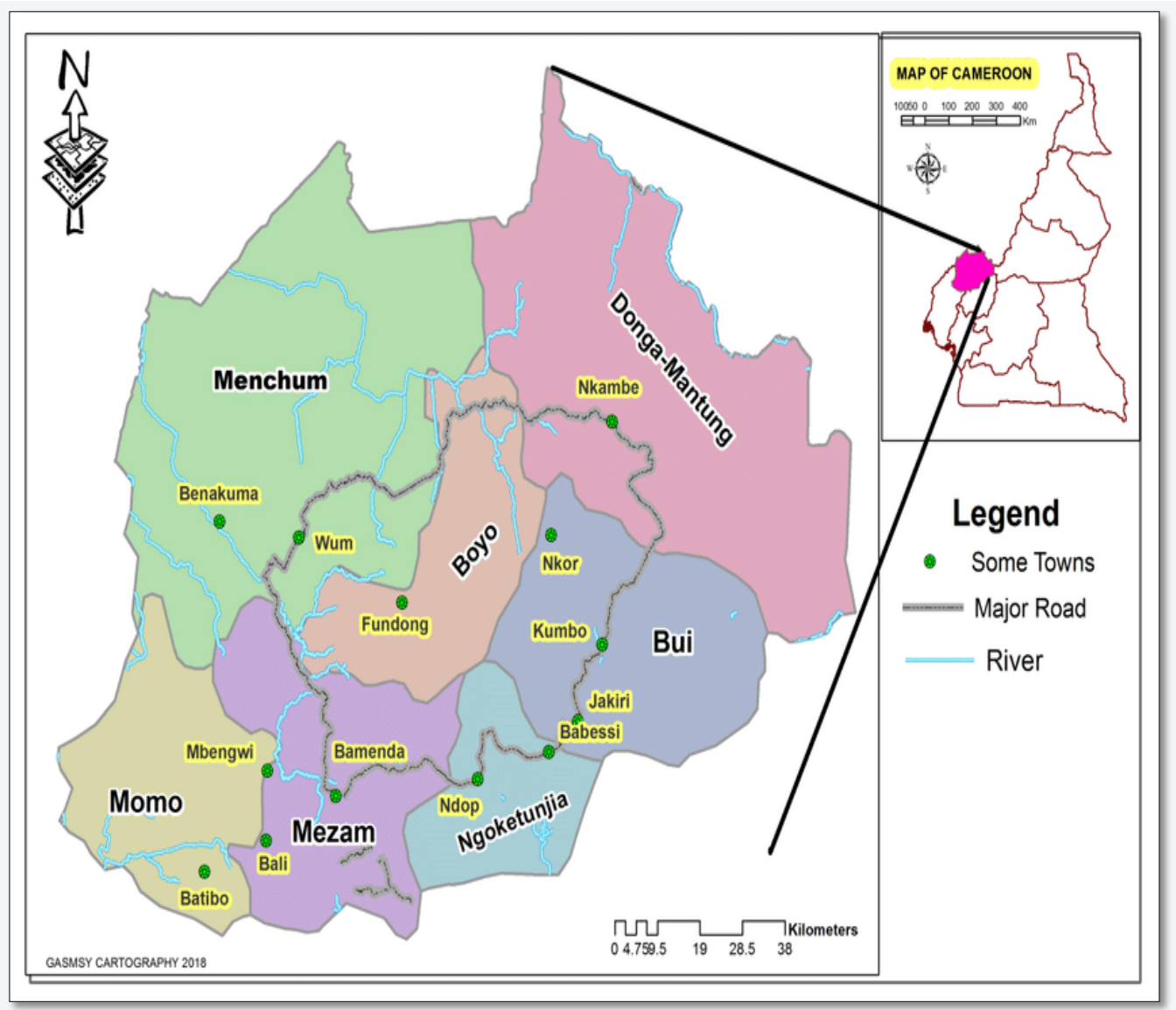
The Bamenda Municipality, often referred to as the heart of the Cameroon Grassfields, represents a unique convergence of ancestral tradition and rapid urban evolution. As the capital of the North West Region, it is not merely a geographic coordinate but a vibrant socio-cultural hub. This chapter provides a comprehensive ethnographical mapping of the municipality, situating it within its physical, historical, and socio-political context to better understand the cultural dynamics that influence peace and conflict in the region.

1.1 Geographical Presentation

Bamenda, is a primate city in the North West region (NWR) of Cameroon. It is the capital city of this region, the administrative seat of Mezam Division and the Regional Headquarters of the North West Region. It has a surface area estimated at 30 kilometres square, a total of three Sub-

Divisional Councils and a population of about 755602 inhabitants.¹ Bamenda lies between latitude 5°94'N and 5°98'N and longitudes 10°15'E and 10°18'E. It sits along the Cameroon volcanic line with two distinct relief features, a High Lava Plateau of about 1,400m, and the Lower Plateau, with an average altitude of 1,100m above sea level both separated by a vast escarpment.

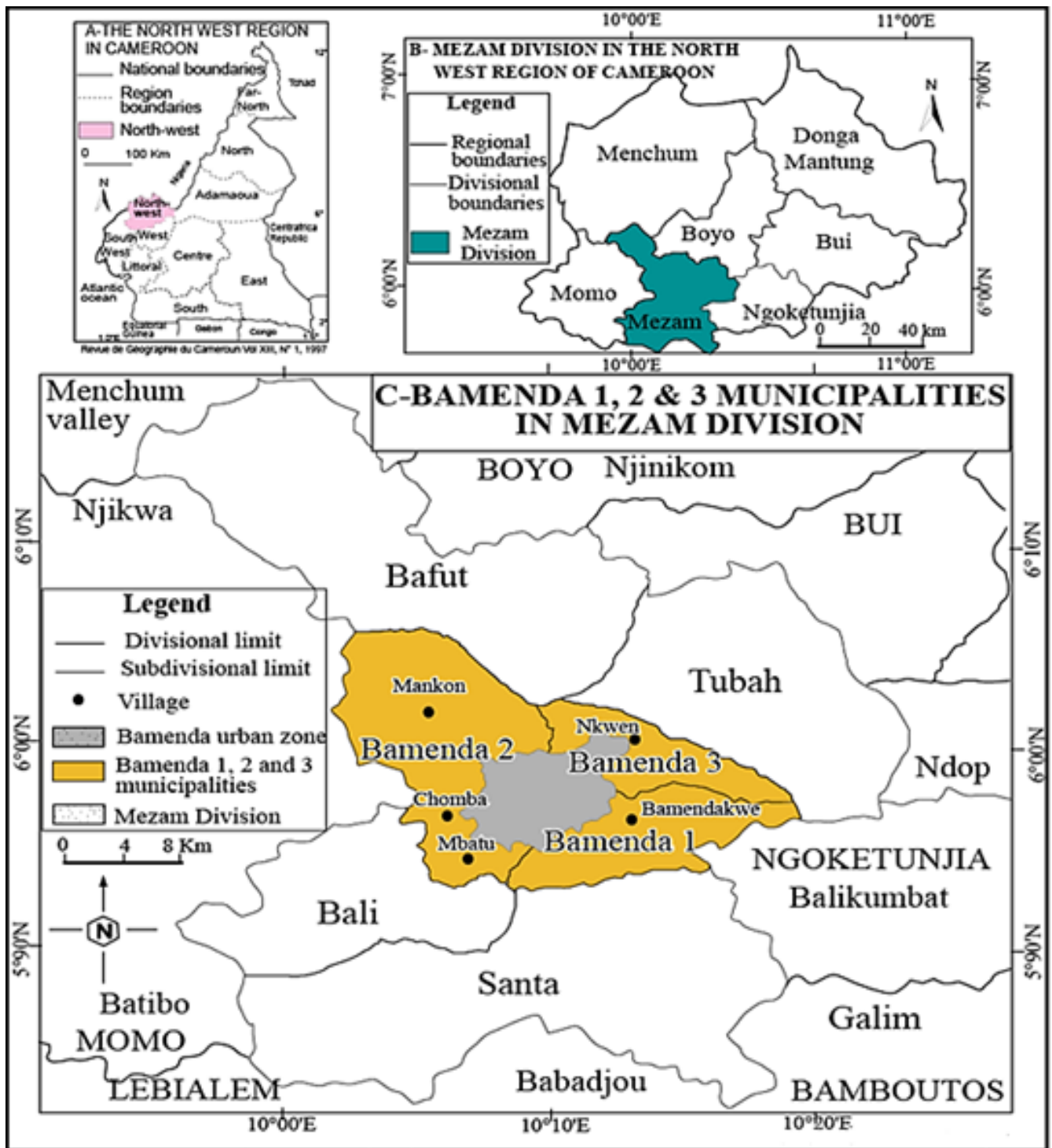
Map 1: Map showing the location and divisions of the North West Region in Cameroon, 2024.



Source: www.researchgate.net accessed 22 February 2024, at 7:30pm.

¹ BUCREP, 2005 and 2010 projections and Bamenda MASTERPLAN, 2011.

Map 2: Map of the Bamenda Municipality in the North West region of Cameroon, 2024.



Source: www.researchgate.net/figure/mapofBamendainmezam.2016, accessed 22 February 2024, at 7:30pm.

Bamenda is a cosmopolitan city which is the bedrock of Cameroon's politics with a very strong traditional system and extremely powerful *fons* and fondoms.² The population though cosmopolitan has a greater majority of ethnic groups which include, Bamendankwe, Nsongwa, Chomba, Mankon, Mbattu, and Nkwen who practice subsistence farming. The town is endowed with touristic potentials owing to its landscape characterized by waterfalls, craters and traditional palaces. Given the latitude, prevailing rainfall and general climatic conditions, the vegetation of the municipality can be classified under the savannah (Guinea Savanna), which lies immediately adjacent to the Equatorial rainforest.³

It is divided into three sub-divisions which are Bamenda I, Bamenda II and Bamenda III sub-divisions, representing the cities of Bamendankwe, Mankon and Nkwen respectively, which make up Mezam Division. Each of these zones has a council independent of the other. However they are all answerable to the Bamenda City Council (BCC).⁴ Demographically, Bamenda is considered as one of the most urbanized towns in Cameroon, making it a relevant case to explore. Considering its population density, cities and districts, the proximity of these communities fosters between them a sense of connectedness and interdependence which promotes communication, cooperation and collaboration. Equally, the presence of different cultures helps in promoting cultural exchange, understanding and dialogue, which then breaks down misconceptions, stereotypes and prejudices among the people, thus promoting mutual respect and tolerance. All this plays a crucial role in the state of peace in the area.⁵

1.1.1. Vegetation and Climate

The Bamenda municipality is endowed with vegetation that is strongly influenced by the rainfall that favors agriculture and grazing. The natural vegetation of the region consists of short and tall grasses with raffia and oil palms growing along the courses of the rivers and streams and banana trees. The oil and raffia palms serve as raw materials to weavers who use them for the production of baskets, bags, caps, chairs, tables, cupboards and thatches. This abundant vegetation helps to improve air quality, reduce pollution, and regulate temperature, creating a more pleasant and healthy environment for people to live in.⁶ The presence of green

² “Fon” was the title given to a chieftain or king in the Grassfield regions of Cameroon. And a fondom is a geo-historic community constituting a large part of a region formed as an amalgamation of different ethnic groups. And it is ruled by a *fon*.

³ E.M., Chilver and P.M., Kaberry, *Traditional Bamenda: The Pre-colonial History and the Ethnography of the Bamenda Grassfields*, Government Printing Press, Buea, 1967, p. 2.

⁴ <https://www.en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bamenda>, accessed 21 March 2024, at 1:00pm.

⁵ Tegum Daniel, 75, retired teacher, Old Town Bamenda, 12 November 2023.

⁶ Chilver and Kaberry, *Traditional Bamenda*, 1967, p.34

spaces and well maintained vegetation also enhances the beauty of the area, making it more attractive for residents and visitors. This tends to create a sense of pride and attachment in the community, fostering a positive and peaceful atmosphere.⁷

The area is found within the Equatorial climate zone characterized by a tropical climate with two seasons – a long rainy season of eight months (March to mid-November), with the highest rainfall usually registered in August, and a short dry season which does not last more than four months. It often begins from late November to early March and is characterized by cold and sometimes frosty mornings and evenings, hot afternoons, a misty atmosphere during the day and clear skies at night. The Harmattan is greatly felt through dry winds during this period. Temperature varies between 15-32°C.⁸ This implies that the temperature is much more stable and regular making the area conducive for hard work. The prevailing climatic conditions facilitate the cultivation of food crops, thereby enhancing food sufficiency and contributing to a decline in conflicts related to resource scarcity.

1.1.2. Topography and soil

The topography of the Bamenda municipality can be classified into three main zones: the low altitude (less than 900m), the average altitude (900-1500m), and the high altitude (above 1500m). The area has several soil types on which crops are cultivated. The most common type of soil found here is the volcanic soils. Their nature is as a result of weathering over the years of volcanic rocks. It is generally littered with basal stones, rich in humus, dark and of good structure and texture⁹. The soils are gradually being modified by weathering and human activities like farming, construction and burning. The major topography of the area are the hills with gentle steep slopes. These slopes lie on the high mountain chain of the region and have rich brown fertile soils. Apart from this soil type, mineral soils, depositional soils and humid soil types permit the rural people to evolve in agriculture¹⁰. Shared natural resources such as water sources and arable land, brings the communities together through cooperation and collaboration in managing and utilizing these resources. The physical barriers like mountains, rivers helps delineate borders of different communities reducing the likelihood of conflicts over land.

⁷ Emile Bemirla, 37, advisor at Integrated Agriculture Association, Commercial Avenue, 23 November 2023.

⁸ I. N., Mbu, "Climate Variability and Change in the Bamenda Highlands of North Western Cameroon: Perceptions, Impacts and Coping Mechanisms", *British Journal of Applied Science & Technology*, 2016, p.3.

⁹ P., Hawkins and M. Brunt, *The Soils and Ecology of West Cameroon (with special reference to the Bamenda Area)*, Rome, FAO, 1965, p. 56.

¹⁰ Ibid, p.56.

1.2. Economic presentation of the Bamenda Municipality

More than 60 percent of the population is engaged in subsistence agriculture for livelihood as a result for rupture from gathering and hunting. This is because the later that is hunting was no longer productive and most people turned to agriculture. In the past, food crop production was done mostly by women while men cultivated cash crops like coffee, tobacco, raffia palms. However, during the last decades the situation has undergone drastic change with anyone engaging in the production of any crop type. Hence the economy of the area is agricultural based with the existence of organizations which are charged with improving seeds of highly yielding crop varieties, constructing and the rehabilitation of water schemes was well as preserving livestock.¹¹

The Rice Value Chain Development Project (RVCDP) is one of the organizations in charge of boosting the economy of the municipality with the cultivation of rice.¹² Most of the population are engaged in one way or the other; there are people who plant crops, others keep animals while some keep bees. There are equally people who are engaged in all three. Areas have being increased by 10,000 hectares and creating employment for most youths in the municipality. Due to the hardworking nature of farmers, the town can boast of a rich variety of food crops which include potatoes, cabbage, tomatoes, beans, cocoyams, leeks, celery and corn. These food crops are exported to other towns in the region, the South West, Littoral and other regions which produce them in insufficient quantities.¹³

Besides agriculture, animal husbandary is an income generating activity of the people. Goats, sheeps, pigs, fowls among others are bred by the indigenes. Cattle rearing is solely reserved for the indigenous people and minority groups like the Fulani, Mbororo or the *Aku*. The limited and poor land demarcation has often led to farmer/grazier disputes like the conflicts in Mbwabgang between farmers and Danpullo and in Abongfen between farmers and Alhadji Youssouffou¹⁴. But these disputes have always being tackled judiciously by the native authorities who were able to establish relative peace over the disputed area. Contrarily, in cases where the government had handled the disputes, very little of the initiatives set in place to

¹¹ Chilver and Kaberry, *Traditional Bamenda*, 1967, p.38.

¹² MINADER, "Rice Value Chain Development Program (RVCDP)," www.rvcdp.org, accessed 15 Febraury 2024, at 9:15 pm.

¹³ T. E., Ngengong, "From Friends to Enemeies: Inter-Ethinc conflict among the Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields (North West Province of Cameroon) C 1950-1998", Master dissertation in Philosophy, University of Tromso, Norway, 2007, p. 23.

¹⁴ V. K., Ngwoh, "The Dynamics of Farmer-Herder Conflicts across the Bamenda Grassfields, 1947-2006," Ph D Thesis, University of Buea, 2014, pp. 365-380.

restore peace had far reaching effects. Local initiatives like the creation of the Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association-MBOSCUDA which saw more positive effects to the resolution of farmer/grazier disputes.¹⁵

The work of art of the local populations is worth emulating as it projects the Bamenda culture nationally and internationally. The colorfully designed traditional attire worn by both men and women depicts a culture which has stood the test of time. The people of the Bamenda municipality are engaged too in basketry.¹⁶ The people's creativity here is seen in the ways they turn raffia bamboos, cane and Indian bamboos into tangible objects which demonstrate a lot of ingenuity. Both sexes are actively involved in this activity producing varied articles ranging from basket, thrones, chairs, mat, jars are very invaluable in the lives of the local people.¹⁷ This leads to a sense of pride and identity in the local culture. On 17 January 2003, the Bamenda Crafts People Association (BACPA) was renamed as North West Crafts Association (NOWECA) in a bid to expand its scope to all the seven divisions of the NWR. This initiative had even attracted foreign assistance from nations like Germany which provided technical assistance to the development of craftwork.¹⁸

All these activities help to preserve and promote the communities heritage. By supporting these activities, cultural traditions can be passed down to future generations thereby ensuring a sense of continuity and moral uphold necessary for peace in the society.¹⁹ More so, this leads to economic growth which creates opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship, and investments thus reducing poverty and inequality thereby addressing some common roots and sources of conflict.

1.3. Socio cultural presentation of the Bamenda Municipality

The Bamenda municipality is a strong cultural legacy with traditions and practices which are strictly adhered by the people. Their traditions such as initiation ceremonies, ancestral worship, respect for traditional leaders, traditional medicine and community celebrations provide a sense

¹⁵ MBOSCUDA was created in 1992. Its formation began in 1987 and became a reality in 1992 when the Fulani Social Development (FUSUDA), the Fulani foundation of Cameroon (FUFOUCAM) and the Mbororo Development Association (MDA) met in Bamenda, Kumbo, and Yaounde respectively. These merged in 1992 in Yaounde to form the Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association- MBOSCUDA, www.MBOSCUDA.org, accessed 14 February 2024, at 1:30 pm.

¹⁶ E.T., "Moffor, People in receptacles: The case of the Indigenous Basket of the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon", *International Journal on Education and Social Science Research*, Vol. 5(2), 2022, p. 87.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 89.

¹⁸ North West Craft Association, 2015, <https://www.noweca.wordpress.com>, accessed 14 February 2024, at 2:25 pm.

¹⁹ Chiwoo Emeld Ntebe, 48, worker at MINAC, Up Town Bamenda, 16 December 2023.

of identity, belonging and continuity within the community.²⁰ Through their beliefs and values the Bamenda people find common ground and shared experiences that serve as a foundation for communication, reconciliation and conflict resolution. Their rituals and ceremonies such as birth rituals, marriage, harvest and divination rituals, bring people together to celebrate common values and beliefs.²¹ These gatherings provide opportunities for dialogue, reconciliation and the building of relationships between individuals and communities in the municipality

In the Bamenda municipality, the king is known as *fon*, *mfon*, *foyn*, *efo*, and more. The *fon* is regarded with infinite respect and surrounded with carefully guarded secrecy. Depending on the community concerned, the people are usually governed by *Fons*, *ArDOS*, or Chiefs who are responsible for the implementation of law and order and the preservation of peace.²² Apart from the *fon*, the village court also maintained law and order and those who tried cases were senior officials of the regulatory society such as *Nagangsoumkum*, *Nda Kwifor*, *Mukuumsis*.²³ Many of the fondoms are independent and the political structure of most, if not all the fondoms are basically similar. The *fon* has very great executive authority followed by Chiefs and notables. The quarter heads also make up part of the political structure of these fondoms. The political system is based on hereditary and traditional authority and access to power is highly determined by direct descent. On the political strata of these fondoms, the *Nkwifon* comes first followed by the *fon*, notables and quarter-heads. And only him (the *fon*) and a few notables have the privilege to an enthronement ceremony, which involves the entire fondom.²⁴

Education has equally played a major role in ameliorating the social status of the people. A good number of them have a sound knowledge of political and socio-economic trends in the country and have occupied strategic positions in both the public and the private sector. This promotes inclusivity, equality and democratic values which reduces social tension and division.²⁵ Their culture has also provided them with the necessary skills and knowledge in resolving conflicts in peaceful and constructive manners, these includes communication skills, negotiations techniques and understanding of non-violent conflict resolution strategies.

²⁰ Mr. Charles, 43, palace Secretary, 13 December 2023, Bamendankwe palace.

²¹ Idem.

²² An Ardo is the traditional political leader of an agnatic lineage group of Fulani pastoralists in the Grassfield, who either inherits this title from his father or gains recognition on the merits of his personal abilities and prosperity.

²³ Chilver and Kaberry, *Traditional Bamenda*, 1967, p. 47.

²⁴ P. N., Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy: A Study of Inter-Chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfields, North West Province of Cameroon*, Department of Sociology, University of Yaoundé. 1987, p. 36.

²⁵ Kum Francis, 45, Teacher (GHS Mankon), Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

The people in the Bamenda municipality are polytheistic. They have varied religious beliefs: some are animists, others are Christians while some are Muslims. Those who are animists believe that supernatural powers reside in objects and such spiritual beings which could be benevolent (nice) or mischievous (naughty) or downright evil. The natives deal with these spirits according to the mentioned down qualities. Sometimes, these spirits could be reached through specific rituals performed. But, Christianity is the major religion of the people of the Bamenda municipality. The Islam religion is noticeable mostly in Sabga in the Tubah sub division.²⁶ These religious systems in the municipality also provide moral frameworks which guides the people on how to behave towards others and resolve conflicts peacefully. But nonetheless, religion has been a significant factor in causing conflict, particularly between Christians and Muslims. For example, in the municipality, Christians have been accused of opposing the construction of mosques or Islamic schools, while Muslims have complained about the perceived bias of Christian-dominated institutions against them.²⁷ These tensions have occasionally boiled over into violence, with reports of attacks on mosques, churches, and religious leaders.²⁸

Moreover, the demographic composition of the municipality comprises of a variety of ethnic and linguistic groups. The ethnic groups are of the Tikar origin, and the *Ngemba* among others languages like the *Beba*, *pidgin* and *Pinyin* is widely used as the main vehicle of communication. The *ngemba* language has four dialects *Nkwen-Bafreng*, *Mendankwe*, *Mandankwe* and *Munda* spoken throughout the municipality. Language is a primary tool for communication, allowing individuals and groups to express their thoughts, feelings and needs to one another.²⁹ Thus it plays a crucial role in fostering understanding and empathy among individuals and communities. Effectively utilizing language contributes to the establishment of a more peaceful and inclusive society.

²⁶ E. T., Moffor, "People in Receptacles: The Case of the Indigenous Basket of the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon", *International Journal on Education and Social Science Research*, Vol. 5(2), 2022, p. 88.

²⁷ The majority Christian population have traditionally held power and influence, which has led to feelings of marginalization and resentment among the Muslim minority. Tensions have escalated over issues such as political representation, access to resources, and cultural practices.

²⁸ In 2009, a clash between Christian and Muslim communities left several people injured and properties destroyed. In August 2010, a group of Christian converts attempted to convert a mosque in Nkwen neighborhood, leading to angry protest by Muslim locals. Between 2017 and 2018, clashes were sparked by political and social tensions surrounding the Ambazonia separatist movement, were both sides were accused of cultural assimilation. A group of Christian youths attacked a Muslim prayer center destroying windows and disrupting prayers. This led to retaliatory attacks on Christian churches and businesses by Muslims.

²⁹ M., Ayotte, and M., Lamberty, *Rapid Appraisal Sociolinguistic Survey among the NGEMBA Cluster of Languages: Mankon, Bambili, Nkwen, Pinyin, Awing: Bamenda, Santa and Tubah Subdivisions, Mezam Division, North West Region of Cameroon*, SIL International, 2002, p. 6.

1.4. Political presentation of the Bamenda Municipality

From a political standpoint, Bamenda is the town that gave birth to two main political parties in Cameroon.³⁰ The Cameroon's People Democratic Movement (CPDM), which is the leading political party in Cameroon, and the Social Democratic Front (SDF), which is the main opposition party in Cameroon. There is a large military presence throughout the territory.

Furthermore, Bamenda is one of the hotspots of separatist movements, like the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC) activists. This group is advocating for the separation of the English-speaking regions from the rest of Cameroon. The SCNC was born in Bamenda in 1994. The All Anglophone Conference (AAC2) issued the Bamenda declaration in which it had asked the government of President Paul Biya to respond to all Anglophone grievances stated in the Buea Declaration of 1993, or face the wrath of the people of Southern Cameroons.³¹ Other political parties in Bamenda include the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (MRC), the National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP), and the Cameroon Liberation Council (CPC). The CPDM, led by President Paul Biya, has traditionally been the dominant party in the region, but there has been growing opposition from other parties in recent years.³²

1.4.1. Traditional socio-political organization of the Bamenda Municipality

The Bamenda municipality is organized in *fondoms* of different sizes. The main fondoms are the fondoms of Nkwen, Bamendankwe and Mankon. *Chieftomship* is hereditary and the *fon* is a sacred figure. The distribution of power between *fons*, regulatory societies, lineage and heads vary from chieftom to chieftom as well as the degree of concentration of power. The political structure of most, if not all fondoms in Bamenda are basically similar. The *fon* has very great executive authority next to the village regulatory society known as *Nkwifon*. Chiefs, notables and quarter heads also form part of the political structure. Most of the fondoms are Patrilineal (apart from the Kom and Aghem societies which are matrilineal) and highly ranked societies. The political system is based on hereditary traditional authority and access to power is highly

³⁰ Political parties are Organizations that coordinates candidates to compete in elections to acquire and exercise political powers in a country. In Cameroon this was made possible after the reinstitution of Multi-party politics in 1990 which till now has seen the birth of 318 political parties in the country.

³¹ The Buea declaration was established from 2-3 of April 1993 following the All Anglophone Conference of 1991. It was a historic document that carried and still carries the frustration of English-speaking Cameroonians.

³² International Crisis Group (ICG), "Report International Crisis Group", Africa report no. 250, 2017, p. 7.

determined by direct descent. On the political state of these chiefdoms therefore, the *Nkwifon* comes first followed by the *Fon*, notables and quarter heads.³³

The traditional political systems of the Bamenda municipality have established mechanisms for resolving conflicts and disputes peacefully, through mediation, arbitration or negotiation. They often place high value on consensus building and inclusive decision making processes.³⁴ The traditional government includes the village government, the administration of justice and the respect of traditional values in the kingdoms.³⁵ By involving all stakeholders in decision making, they help prevent conflicts and promote peace by fostering a sense of ownership and accountability among the affected parties. The *Becheh* or king makers are actually very important nobles in the Bamenda municipality chiefdoms. These are old princes who are member of the *Nkwifon* in the royal palaces. It is important to note that when a *fon* is crowned, princes in his generation cannot be members of the *Nkwifon* else all of them will be equal to the *fon*. This therefore means that *Becheh* are princes three to four generations to that of the *fon*. They can become members of the *Nkwifon* because of their seniority in the palace.³⁶ Being components of the ruling class, they help administer the affairs of the chiefdom, advising the *fon* on very important issues and also taking part in the crowning of a new *fon*. Administratively, the *fon* appoints and dismisses quarter heads as well as install nobles and has the right to choose and send his representatives to other lands.³⁷

³³ E.M., Chilver and, P.M Kabery., "Chronology of the Bamenda Grassfields", *Journal of African History*, Vol.11, no.2, 1970, p. 255.

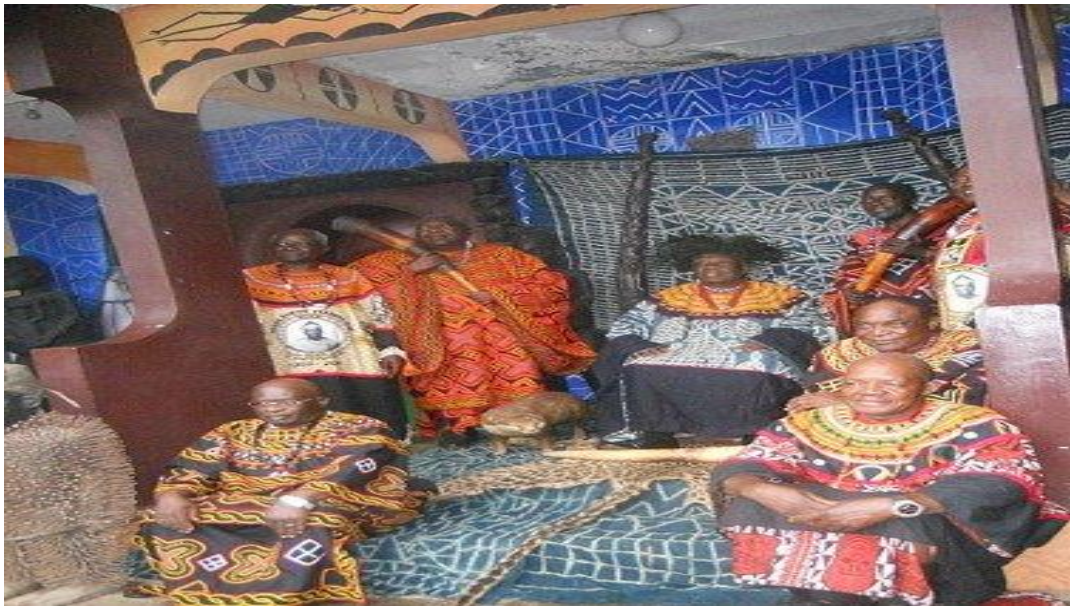
³⁴ *Fon Forchesiri III*, 34, traditional ruler, Bamendankwe Palace, 13 December 2023.

³⁵ P. N. Nkwi., *Traditional Government and Social Change: A Study of the Traditional Institutions of Kom of the Cameroon Grassfields*, Fribourg University Press, 1976, p. 36.

³⁶ E. T. Moffor., "Traditional Arts and Socio-Cultural Changes: The Case of Bags in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon", *IJIRMP*, Vol. 8 (6), 2020, p. 64

³⁷ Fru Thaddeus, 78, Elder, Mankon Palace, 02 November 2023.

Plate 1: *Fon Agwafo III of Mankon with members of the Nkwifon*



Source: www.mankonkingdom.org, accessed 20 March 2024, at 11:15pm.

In time of conflict, these leaders have the authority to mediate conflicts and promote reconciliation, they have the power to convene community meetings, mediate disputes, encourage dialogue between conflicting parties, also mobilize resources and support for peace building initiatives such as organizing peace marches, educational campaigns, and cultural events that promote unity and reconciliation. They can also work with local authorities, religious leaders and other stakeholders to develop and implement strategies for conflict resolution and peace building

1.5. Historical setting of the Bamenda municipality

1.5.1. Migration and settlement in the Bamenda Municipality

According to the 1987 national population census, the North West Region has the highest number of ethnic groups in Cameroon estimated at 51. The main ethnic groups are the Tikar or Tikari, the Widikum, the Chamba, the Aghem and other small or non-indigeneous groups such as the Hausa, the Fulani/Mbororo, Ibo, Kassimbela, Yukum and Furu-Awa among others.³⁸ The origins of the city are related to the settlement of the Tikar people who culturally forged and maintained relations with the kingdom of Bamum in the 1700s. Bamenda, the capital city of the Northwest Region in Cameroon, has a rich and diverse history that dates back centuries.

³⁸ P. N., Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy: A Study of Inter-Chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfields, North West Province of Cameroon*, Department of Sociology, University of Yaoundé, 1987, pp. 15-23

The origin of Bamenda can be traced back to the Tikar people, who are believed to have settled in the region around the seventeenth century.³⁹ The Tikar people were skilled farmers and traders who established Bamenda as a center of commerce and culture in the region.

Table 1: **Main Ethnic Composition of the Bamenda Municipality**

Major ethnic group	Peoples
Tikar	Kom, Nso, Oku, Mbiame, Wiya, Tang, War, Bum, Bafut, Mbaw, Fungom, Mmen, Bamunka, Bamungo, Bamessi, Bamessing, Bambalang, Bamali, Bafanji, Baba, (Papiakum), Bangola, Big Babanki, Babanki, Tungo, Bambili, Bamukumbit, Mbesa, and Yamba.
Widikum	Essimbi (Age), Beba-Befang, Ngemba, Ngie, Ngwo, Mogamo, Meta.
Chamba	Bali-Nyonga, Bali-Kumbat, Bali-Gangsin, Bali-Gashu, Bali-Gham.
Tiv	Aghem Federation.
Mambila	Mbembe, Misaje, Mfunte.
Other small groups	Hausa, Faru-Awa, Yukums, Kassimbela, Fulani or Mbororo (Aku), Ibo.

Source: P.N., Nkwi, 1987, *Traditional Diplomacy: A study of Inter-chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfields, North West Province of Cameroon*, Publication of the Department of Sociology, University of Yaounde, p.15.

Note: Most villages in the Bamenda municipality belong to the Tikar ethnic group as its population is spread across different divisions of the region.

Kaberry explains that the various groups of the Tikar that settled in Bamenda came originally from Tibati, Banyo, Kimi, and Ndobbo, all in the present Adamawa and Lake Chad regions. Their migration intensified in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from the pressure of invasion by Fulani raiders.⁴⁰ Alongside the Tikar in terms of population are the Widikum. Oral sources reveal that these people claim to have migrated from an old market site at Ntarenkom, in Widikum, where their ancestors are said to have emerged from the earth.⁴¹

³⁹ Bamenda chiefdom is believed to have been founded by Fon Dinka who was a migrant from the Tikar ethnic group, settled in the Bamenda area and established the Bamenda chiefdom.

⁴⁰ E.M., Chilver., and Kaberry, P.M., *Traditional Bamenda: The Pre-Colonial History and Ethnography of the Bamenda Grassfields*, Buea, Cameroon Government printer, 1968, p. 18.

⁴¹ P. N., Nkwi, and J. P., Warnier, *Element for a History of the Western Grassfield*, Yaounde: SOPECAM, 1982, pp. 12-13.

Another group present in the area is the Chamba. They claim to have migrated into the region from Northern Nigeria in quest for safety from Fulani raids. They arrived the region in seven fractions, three which settled in Bali-Kumbat sub-division (Ngokentunja division) and the rest in Mezam division, mostly in Nkwen sub division.⁴² Inclusively, we have the presence of other smaller groups like the Fulani or Mbororo, Ibo among others who are scattered throughout the municipality.⁴³ All of this indicates that the history of the inhabitants of the Bamenda Municipality is characterized by shifts in population and transformations in cultural practices.

Bamenda is one of the towns in Cameroon that witnessed early colonial influence under the German and later British rule. These influences meant that it stood as one of the main towns in the former West Cameroon. In July 1884, Cameroon became a German colony. Germany surrendered the territory after the First World War according to the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. The territory was later partitioned between Britain and France under the mandate of the League of Nations which became the United Nations Trust territories after the Second World War in 1945. Under the mandate of the United Nations nationalistic feelings began to develop which saw a violent struggle between the nationalist party and the colonial government. Following this, in 1960 French Cameroon gained her independence and in 1961 British Cameroon gained hers by joining French Cameroon to become the Federal Republic of Cameroon.⁴⁴

In the years following Cameroon's independence in 1961, Bamenda continued to grow and prosper economically, becoming a major urban centre in the country. Bamenda today has a reputation in the North West Region of Cameroon for being a hub of education and innovation, with several universities and research institutions located within its borders and its role as the regional headquarters of the North West Region and the divisional headquarters of Mezam Division. The city of Bamenda is also known for its vibrant arts and culture, with numerous festivals and events celebrating the city's diverse heritage.⁴⁵

Overall, this historical and contextual background serves as a valuable resource as it provides valuable insights into the root causes of conflicts and helps in understanding the

⁴² North-West Regional Master Plan for Sustainable Development: Report 1, 2001, p.20.

⁴³ Some of the notable mini-states in Bamenda include: the Fandom of Bamum, the Fandom of Nso', the Fandom of Kom, and the Fandom of Mbiame. These mini-states are autonomous entities with their own traditional rulers, customs, and traditions, and they are recognized by the Cameroonian government.

⁴⁴ M. D., DeLancey, R. N., Mbuh and M. W., DeLancey, *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cameroon* (4th edition), Historical Dictionaries of Africa, n° 113, Scarecrow Press, 2010, p. 7.

⁴⁵ E.Y., Vubo and G.A., Ngwa, "Changing intercommunity relations and the politics of identity in the Northern Mezam area, Cameroon", *Cahiers D'Études Africaines*, 161, 2001, pp. 163-170.

grievances and perspectives of the belligerent groups. Equally, by learning from the successes and failures of previous peace processes, we can better adopt effective strategies in our efforts to resolve conflicts and build lasting peace. Hence the need for this historical narrative.

2. CULTURAL PRESENTATION OF THE BAMENDA MUNICIPALITY

Each society possesses a distinct identity that embodies its cultural essence. The Bamenda municipality is no exception, showcasing a vibrant culture characterized by art, elaborate costumes, and lively festivals among others. The Bamenda culture encompasses various components that collectively shape its identity. These components include the values and beliefs held by the society, the norms that govern behavior, such as mores, laws, and folkways, as well as the symbolic representations and language used within the culture. In the following discussion, we will explore these elements that contribute to the rich tapestry of the Bamenda culture while acknowledging the inherent weaknesses that exist within its cultural framework.

2.1. Elements and symbols of culture in the Bamenda Municipality

2.1.1. Social organization

This refers to the network of relationships in a group and how they interconnect. This network of relationships help members of a group stay connected to one another in order to maintain a sense of community within a group. And this organization is highly influenced by culture among other factors. The social organization of the Bamenda municipality is and is being influenced by culture in a variety of ways. These organizations include family units, religious groups, schools and education, government bodies, recreation or work groups and ethnic groups. Putting its members into small units facilitate them to meet their basic needs, as each of these groups relies on communication to build and reinforce cultural norms.

➤ Family

In the culture of Bamenda, as is the case with all cultures, the family is the most important unit of social organization. The father is the head of the family and responsible for supplying all needs, the mother is the caretaker of the family and in most cases both are responsible for the indoctrination and institution of cultural and moral values in the child. While the children learn how to behave and what to believe. The family serves as the primary social unit in the society

and plays a significant role in shaping the values, beliefs and behaviours of individuals.⁴⁶ By promoting open communication, empathy and respect for others, they instill in their members the skills and mindset required to live in peaceful coexistence. Families function as crucial sources of comfort, support, and stability during and after conflicts, positioning them as potential agents for peace building.

Nonetheless, wrong teachings and guidance can result to the presence of individuals who tend to inflict pain and trigger conflicts in the community. In many cases, family-related issues such as marriage, inheritance, and property disputes are major causes of conflict between family members. Additionally, the patriarchal nature of many families in the region can lead to conflicts over issues such as domestic violence, polygamy, and child marriage, further exacerbating tensions within families and communities. In a society where land is highly valued and seen as a symbol of wealth and status, disputes over land boundaries and ownership can quickly escalate into violent confrontations.⁴⁷ These family-related conflicts often spread to the broader community, perpetuating cycles of violence and instability in the Bamenda municipality. Addressing these underlying issues is crucial for promoting peace and stability in the Bamenda municipality.

➤ **Social Class**

This ranks people in an order, depending on what is important to the culture, that is, work groups by people who share the same profession, caste determined by a person's social and economic status, clans relating to groups of related families with a common ancestor, tribes consisting of numerous families, clans or other groups under a recognized chief, common culture and ancestry, religious congregations by their sense of spiritual belonging. The elite class, which typically includes traditional leaders, business owners and other influential individuals have a powerful voice and can use their resources and connections to influence decision making. The middle class which includes educators, professionals and individuals with stable incomes contribute their skills to community development projects, promoting education and awareness. Lastly, the lower class includes less privileged individuals who may be vulnerable or marginalized.⁴⁸ Their efforts are seen through their participation in grassroots movements, advocating for their rights and highlighting the challenges faced by marginalized

⁴⁶ T., Mbuy, *Fons of Traditional Bamenda and Partisan politics in Contemporary Cameroon: Reconstructing Identity and Cultural Meaning*, Spears Media Press, 2023, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Fuambu Georgez, 56, Divisional delegate (MINPROFF), Old Town-Bamenda, 22 November 2023.

⁴⁸ Kum Francis, 45, Teacher (GHS Mankon), Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

communities. They also play a major role in community outreach programs, helping to address root causes of conflicts and building trusts among different social groups.⁴⁹ In all, the involvement of all classes is crucial for building sustainable peace.

Nonetheless, the difference in interests, priorities and access to resources can result to tensions and conflicts. The wealthy elites often have access to better education, healthcare, and infrastructure, (as is in every society) while the lower class struggles to meet its needs. Equally, the competition and exploitation of the lower classes by the upper classes can result in economic tensions, social unrest and conflicts. Most often the voices of the lower classes are hardly heard and given a chance in decision making as compared to the upper classes.⁵⁰ This tends to lead to protest and conflicts over governance and representation. Addressing these social class divides and promoting equity and social justice can help in establishing peace and reducing tensions.

➤ **Leadership Patterns**

Leadership patterns are a very important part of social organization. In every ethnic or cultural group, there are different individuals who are regarded as leaders of the group. Every leader has a place and role in his or her community. Leaders can be categorized by type, we have political, religious, economic, health, academic, or social leaders. In the Bamenda society, the leader is typically a spiritual leader who provides guidance and responds to the needs of the people and who is the representative of the Supreme Being.⁵¹ One important aspect of leadership is the ability to promote dialogue and reconciliation among different groups and people within the municipality. They equally play a key role in promoting inclusivity and diversity in the municipality⁵²

Nonetheless, when leaders display authoritarian or autocratic behavior, it creates a sense of division and mistrust among the community members. When people feel disrespected, feel that their concerns are not being addresses and feel ignored, it often leads to frustration and resentment which tends to results in tension within the society. Thus, it is essential for leaders to be mindful of their behavior if they aim at ensuring a community void of conflicts.⁵³

⁴⁹ Nde Godwill, 68, Traditional Councilor, Bamendankwe palace, 11 December 2023.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ T., Mbuy, *Fons of Traditional Bamenda and Partisan politics in Contemporary Cameroon: Reconstructing Identity and Cultural Meaning*, Spears Media Press, 2023, p.6.

⁵² Ibid, p.7.

⁵³ Nde Godwill, 68, Traditional Councilor, Bamendankwe palace, 11 December 2023.

2.1.2. Customs and Traditions

Customs and traditions are two terms often discussed when referring to culture. Customs represent accepted practices specific to a society that evolve over time, while traditions encompass beliefs and ideals transmitted through generations. In the Bamenda society, these terms are represented in various forms

➤ Cultural values and norms

Cultural values are closely associated with both beliefs and norms of a community. The values can be defined as the standards that represent the ideals of the group. They point to what the group regards as right, good, beautiful, desirable, and this goes hand in hand with beliefs. These values encourage group members to behave in ways that the group considers appropriate, proper, honorable and praise worthy, while norms represent the established expectations or guidelines governing appropriate behavior within specific social contexts.⁵⁴ For example, how people greet one another, what they eat and how they prepare it, how they handle conflicts, respect for elders, collective responsibility, hospitality, respect for nature, dressing mode, punctuality and social hierarchy. All these are standards of moral conduct and ethical behaviors that people in a cultural community expect from one another.⁵⁵

One of the key ways in which cultural values and norms contribute to peace building is through promoting respect for diversity and inter-cultural dialogue. In diverse communities like Bamenda where different languages and ethnic groups coexist, cultural values that emphasize tolerance, understanding and unity can help foster harmony and prevent tensions from escalating into violence. Equally, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, such as mediation by respected elders or community leaders, family meetings, rituals or ceremonies are based on cultural values of fairness, reconciliation and restoration of togetherness.⁵⁶

➤ Rituals

These are a sequence of actions involving gesture, objects, and sometimes the utterance of words performed in prescribed ways and carried out at a specific time and place.

To begin with, we have rites of passage. This is a ceremony that calls attention to major events in the social life of an individual, such as birth, the transition from childhood to

⁵⁴ G., Rangel, "Characteristics of Culture, Customs and Traditions", *Journal of Anthropology report*, 2022, p.1.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ A.E., Taki, "Peace-Building Mechanism Among the Widikum of the Bamenda Grasslands, Cameroon, 1870-2014", *International Journal of African Society, Cultures and Traditions*, Vol.11, no.2, 2003, pp. 16-25.

adulthood, marriage and death. It could also mark initiation into religious communities for example baptism in Christian communities. Clubs and secret societies often put new initiates through ritual ordeals before accepting them into the new community. For example, burial rites and death celebrations were intended to appease the dead and to ensure that their journey to the land of the ancestors was peaceful. The dead were given decent burials and proper mourning backed by the belief that a proper burial ensures a cordial relationship with that deceased now an ancestor. If the deceased person was an adult, with grown up children, they will each plant a branch of dracaena on the parent's grave. This cultural symbol is a physical sign of spiritual bond between the dead and the living.⁵⁷

Secondly, we have calendrical rites. This may fall into two sub categories. Seasonal celebrations; which are associated with cycles of planting and harvesting among agriculturalist and with grazing moving the herd among the pastoralists. In many societies sowing seeds is accompanied by offerings to ancestors or deities and harvesting often involves giving the first seeds back to these deities or ancestors. This is the case with the annual rituals performed by the *Voma* sacred cult, who came out to do cleansing before farming to appease the gods and ancestors. During such cleansing, the spiritual leader (*fon* or village priest) uses branches of dracaena to carry a liquid herbal concoction from a bowl to sprinkle on his followers to bless them.⁵⁸

Thirdly, we have political rites which are ceremonial practices that display and promote the power of the traditional institutions. The ascension of the *fon* to power is one of them. For example, the people of Bamendankwe, of the Bamenda III municipality showcase their rich cultural and traditional heritage in a rare event known locally as *Neukwe*. This event represents the official mourning of a *fon* who has “travelled” to the land of his ancestors and the commemoration of the coming age of a reigning *fon*. And it is held once during the reign of each *fon*.⁵⁹ These rituals provide a platform for communication and reconciliation, allowing parties to express their grievances and feelings in a controlled and respected manner. Additionally, through these shared rituals and traditions, community members are able to connect to their cultural heritage and develop a sense of identity and belonging. This fosters mutual respect and understanding among the members.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ M., Jindra, “The Proliferation of Ancestors”, 1997, pp. 29-31.

⁵⁸ C.N., Deyeb, “Signification of Plants in Traditional Peace Building”, 2023, p. 1409.

⁵⁹ M., Jindra, “The Proliferation of Ancestors”, 1997, pp. 74-77.

⁶⁰ *Fon* Forchesiri III, 34, traditional ruler, Bamendankwe Palace, 13 December 2023.

On the contrary, these customs and traditions sometimes lead to conflicts. One way in which this occurs is through inter-ethnic tensions. Considering the presence of different ethnic groups in the municipality, differences in customs and traditions can lead to misunderstandings and disputes, for example the Nkwen and Bamendankwe conflict over the land of *Achichem* is rooted in historical and cultural differences.⁶¹ Sometimes, during these practices certain groups may feel marginalized and discriminated upon. Traditional leaders may also make use of their powers to justify their authority and suppress dissent leading to conflicts between those in power and those seeking to challenge the status quo.⁶² It is therefore important for all these to be addressed in order for peace to reign.

2.1.3. Arts and literature

Art and literature are fundamental to human experience. They allow people to express themselves and to connect with one another. Art has been and, is still a wonderful way of preserving or strengthening a strong community's sense of place, forging a personal identity and showing creativity. It boost multiple opportunities for learning, entertainment, leisure, personal growth and improving communication in the Bamenda municipality.⁶³ It encompasses a wide range of forms, including painting, sculptures, music, theatre, dance, among others. An example of this is the *Ngwerong* dance. It is typically performed during significant celebrations and events within the community. The dance is characterized by vibrant music and energetic movements that symbolize unity, strength and togetherness among participants and equally serve as a way to preserve and showcase the rich cultural heritage of the Bamenda people.⁶⁴ Artist preserve life as we know it even better than historical fact-based records. Arts expresses how it felt to exist in a particular time. Art also help various cultures to understand and communicate with each other through songs, pictures and stories.⁶⁵ Also provides platforms for self-expression, dialogue and understanding among different communities.

Passing on the culture through literature has also been a tool for preserving culture. Art, folktales, music, dance and legends passed down through generations, have kept traditions alive, fostered a sense of community and provided moral guidance. They've connected people

⁶¹ S. B., Tanwie, "Promoting a Culture of Peace between Nkwen and Bamendankwe Communities in Cameroon through Video for Development: Artistic Community Participation towards Peaceful Coexistence", 2021, <https://www.kubi-online.de>, accessed 23 February 2024, at 3:45 pm, pp. 3-4.

⁶² T. E., Ngengong, *From Friends to Enemeies: Inter-Ethinc conflict among the Tikars of the Bamenda Grassfields (North West Province of Cameroon) C 1950-1998*, University of Tromso, Norway, 2007, p.33.

⁶³ N., Premaratna and R., Bleiker, *Arts and Theatre for Peace Building*, in the Palgrave Handbook of Disciplinary and Regional Approaches to Peace, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, pp. 83-84.

⁶⁴ Ngah Ben, 43, managing director, Commercial Avenue – Bamenda, 20 September 2023.

⁶⁵ R., Bleiker, *Arts and Theatre for Peace Building*, 2016, p. 84.

to their roots and to each other, creating a shared sense of identity. For example, the festival of Heritage Arts and Culture in Bamenda is one of the mediums by which cultural values are promoted and presented as a unifying factor in the area⁶⁶. By harnessing this power, communities can bridge divides, promote dialogue and create a shared sense of cultural identity that can contribute to lasting peace and harmony.

But all the same, care needs to be taken because in advents where expressions perpetuate divisive narratives, tensions will amplify and further foster conflicts. The way stories are told and portrayed can influence how individuals perceive and react to certain situations. Story tellers need to strive for a balance and inclusive approach to prevent the escalation of conflicts in the municipality and region. More to this, artists may use their work to highlight social or political issues that convey contentious ideas or challenge existing political power structures, which may in return lead to disagreement and tensions in the community. Equally when used as a tool for expressing grievances or promoting a particular ideology could also exacerbate existing conflicts.⁶⁷

2.1.4. Religion

Religion is a part of culture and acts as one among many forms of overtly expressing and experiencing spirituality that is inward, personal, subjective, transcendental and unsystematic. The religion in the Bamenda municipality is one which seeks to answer basic questions about the meaning of life, influencing cultural practices, providing moral guidance and contribute to the organization of the communities. It could be in the form of monotheism: worship of one God. Polytheism: worship more than one God. Here the people belief that divine beings and/or forces hold relevance to the meaning and practice of politics today and throughout history. They could be mythical, knowable or symbolic figures from the past, for instance *Nyikob fa fumfa Ndzui* meaning that; (God, should give us wealth, give us the consumers of the wealth).⁶⁸ African societies are built and sustained by beliefs and the intervention of ancestors. As such, rituals were performed to appease the gods of the ancestors a native belief referred to be primitive⁶⁹. ‘To the African society, everything is religious. There is no boundary between sacred and secular or between the material and spiritual. Cultural manifestations are geared

⁶⁶ Lum Emelda, 27, Teacher, Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

⁶⁷ R., Bleiker, *Arts and Theatre for Peace Building*, 2016, p. 85.

⁶⁸ Babila, *Brief notes on spirits, divinity and occult powers*, 1960, p.29.

⁶⁹ P. N., Nkwi, *Traditional Government and Social Change: A study of political institutions among the Kom of the Cameroon Grassfields*, Fribourg: University Press, 1976, p. 36.

towards fulfilling this golden desire that is, satisfying the ancestors to ensure harmony of existence in the two realms.

Secondly, we have the representation of sacred symbols. This element involves rituals that re-order the world according to religious principles. The people believe that their senses are portal to the spirit and that there is need to touch, see, and smell the sacred. Therefore, rituals function as tangible symbols of the intangible realm. For example stones and megaliths are symbolic representations of power and authority⁷⁰. Another element are the sacred stories connecting the past, present and future. These stories often involve *fon*, sacred forests and community gatherings like “Contri Sundays” where ancestral spirits are honored and community matters are addressed.⁷¹ These possibilities of reading the past, interpreting it and projecting the future are believed to be necessary for the development of political ideologies (tradition). Therefore, sometimes religious and political groups can appeal to the same stories or ideas even though the interpretation or intent may differ significantly.

Despite these beliefs and practices, the population in the Bamenda municipality is predominantly Christian, with the majority belonging to either the Roman Catholic Church or various Protestant denominations. There is also a significant Muslim population in the municipality. The presence of various religious groups in the municipality contributes to promoting inter-faith dialogue and understanding. These religious leaders often serve as mediators and peacemakers, intervening in conflict and promoting dialogue among conflicting parties. Their moral authority and influence permits them to interfere in conflict situations and propose prospective solutions to effect peace. Equally, their engagement in social and development activities promote peace and reconciliation such as providing support to vulnerable groups, promoting education and literacy and advocating for human rights and social justice.⁷²

Given the diverse religious groups in the area, differing beliefs and practices may incite tensions or conflicts when one group perceives its beliefs are being threatened or undermined by another. Also when political leaders exploit religion for their own agendas, it often results in misunderstandings, mistrust, and a decline in faith, complicating the resolution of disputes

⁷⁰ T., Moffor, “The Symbolism of Stones and Megaliths in the Bamenda–Tikar Fondoms of Cameroon”, *International Journal of Education and Social Science Research*, 2020, p. 57.

⁷¹ Sacred forests like the Mankon sacred forest are considered homes to the gods and royal ancestors, and they serve as places for religious and cultural practices. During *Contri* Sundays, farming activities are restricted to honor previous *fons* and the queen mother. Pa Louise, 66, quarter head, Abangoh-Bamenda, 13 October 2023.

⁷² A. A., Said and N. C., Funk, “The Role of Faith in Cross-Cultural Conflict Resolution”, *Peace and Conflict Studies*, Vol. 9, no. 1, 2002, p. 39.

at the religious level.⁷³ It is thus necessary for religious leaders to maintain their identity, their goals and beliefs in order to ensure the promotion of peace.

2.1.5. Education

Culture is the blood vein of the society, and needs to be conserved. It is an important function of education to help in the preservation of culture and social heritage. This system tries to inculcate the traditions, customs, values, arts, morals into the minds of people. In addition to preserving culture, it is a task of education to maintain the continuity of culture by handing down the existing cultural experiences values, traditions and customs from one generation to another through its various programs and practices. Without this transmission the society is believed to reel in total chaos and confusion.⁷⁴ But still, these traditional beliefs and practices can sometimes clash with modern or external influences which may result to conflicts. Education of the Bamenda people seeks to promote intercultural understanding, dialogue, social cohesion and empowerment among its residents. It encourages a sense of pride and self-esteem which can contribute to building greater resilience and cohesion within the community.

The roles of educational institutions, educators and educational materials in a cultural formation and transformation are for the overall growth of a human being. We learn about the social and cultural values through education. This education could be gotten from home, traditional societies, clubs, organizations or the school milieu. The teaching help students to deal with cultural ethics and norms because each person of the society has his or her own preference and mentality to perceive the world around. Thus education changes the perception of the individual towards different forms of community. In the municipality it is a belief that educating children about the culture is important as it teaches them the values, beliefs and traditions, influence their social interaction with parents, siblings, peers and society and equally influences their language and communication.⁷⁵

Nevertheless, education can reinforce ethnic and cultural divisions in the community. The curriculum and teaching methods in schools may favor one ethnic group over others, leading to feelings of marginalization and discrimination among minority groups. In the context of peace building, inadequate educational and critical thinking and peace resolution skills can

⁷³ Paul Tabufor, 51, Pastor, Down Town Bamenda, 25 November 2023.

⁷⁴ J.A., Banks, *Cultural Diversity and Education: Foundations, Curriculum, and Teaching*, 4th ed, Allyn and Bacon. 2006, p. 71.

⁷⁵ Fuambu Georgez, 56, Divisional delegate (MINPROFF), Old Town Bamenda, 22 November 2023.

contribute to the escalation of conflicts. Thus addressing these issues and promoting education that fosters inclusivity, critical thinking is essential in building peace.

2.1.6. Language

Language is one of the most important part of any culture. It is the way by which people communicate with one another, build relationships and create a sense of community. Effective communication is a fundamental element in every society, and language plays a significant role in this context. It is believed that knowing a language automatically enables someone to identify with others who speak the same language.⁷⁶ This connection is such an important part of cultural exchange. Language is also used to transmit values, laws and cultural norms, and this influences the personal identity of those living within the culture and creates boundaries of behavior. It is through the use of language that we can define ourselves and our surroundings and express how we feel about those things that are important to us.⁷⁷

All communities in the municipality have a spoken language even if there are no developed forms of writing and people who speak the same language often share the same culture. Each language can have several different dialects but a particular language usually points out to a specific group of people.⁷⁸ Interacting with another language means we are also interacting with the culture that speaks the language. You cannot understand one's culture without accessing its language directly. Example the language spoken in villages in Bamenda is known as the *Ngemba*. However there are differences in dialect.⁷⁹ Speaking the language promotes a sense of pride and belonging among the communities, helps bridge the gap between different ethnic groups, facilitate peaceful communication and negotiation between conflicting parties, and promotes community cohesion. All these cultivates a sense of unity, empathy and harmony among the diverse populations thereby promoting peace.

2.1.7. Palace Relics and Sculptures of the Bamenda Municipality

In the Bamenda municipality, traditional art, and especially palace artistic representation embody profound values and beliefs that translate the perceptron and practices of the people. The dynamics of the Bamenda culture with its perceptive systems and practices are represented

⁷⁶ Banks, *Cultural Diversity and Education*, 2006, p. 285.

⁷⁷ Fru Thaddeus, 78, Elder, Mankon Palace, 02 November 2023.

⁷⁸ M., Michael, and L., Melinda, "Rapid Appraisal Sociologicistic Survey among the Ngemba Cluster of Languages: Mankon, Bambili, Nkwen, Pinyin, and Awing, Bamenda, Santa and Tubah Subdivisions, Mezam Division, North West Province", *SIL International*, 2002, p.10.

⁷⁹ The *Ngemba* language, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ngemba_language, accessed 12 February 2024, at 8:30pm.

by both material and non-material forms. The nonmaterial components include myths, folktales and proverbial expressions commonly used principally by the elders. It has been argued that a selection of young people who consistently interact with the elders, end up benefiting from the wisdom of ages and turn to also use proverbs and traditional slangs that carry deep meanings.⁸⁰ Additional forms of immaterial cultural matter include play songs and dances that capture history and collective memory. The material representation of the culture and belief systems is evident through carved objects like masks, thrones, stools, beats, bracelets and related royal accoutrements like royal bags, calabashes, vessels, and other accessories used by notables, princes and princesses. The carved objects, be they utensils or prestige items, are often adorned with symbolic motifs that are not fortuitous. The motifs and representative symbols captured on any object is often laden with deep belief and are meant to tell a story that touches either the social status of the person or item concerned.⁸¹

Plate 2: Sculpture of the throne in Bamenda III



Source: Bamenda III Council museum, 22 November 2023, at 2:55pm.

The entrance to most palaces in the municipality are garlanded with fastidious objects that demand more than average attention beyond their face value. Also, the entrances into secrete community cults, grooves and even some public spots are “decorated” with objects that harbor facts and belief systems about which visitors or onlookers ought to pay greater attention. For example the entrance to the Mankon palace showcases the totemic symbols linked to the

⁸⁰ M., Rowlands, “Notes on the Material Symbolism of Grassfield Palaces”, *Paideuma*, 1985, p. 207.

⁸¹ D. T., Tangem, “Arts, Visual History and the Mores. Typifying Palace Relics and Sculptures of the Grassfield Region of Cameroon, *International Journal of Art and Social Sciences*, Vol 1(2), 2018, p. 54.

fon of these communities. A combination of both the lion and the elephant at the entrance to the palace is quite symbolic of the crushing strength of the *fon*.⁸²

Plate 3: Entrance of the Mankon Palace



Source: www.mankonkingdom.org, accessed 20 March 2024, at 11:20 pm.

Apart from the use of human motif to represent royalty, symbols of giant wild life like the elephant, lion, tiger, leopard and buffalo are associated with majesty and authority. In the Grassfields, these animals are considered to have various qualities such that valiant and charismatic leaders are often metaphorically referred to either as lion, tiger, elephant or related animal whose extraordinary qualities are well known to the community. This means the *fon* is both human and non-human, as per the non-natural, human factors he has. This double posture is what makes the *fon* in the imagination of the Bamenda culture to be extraordinary. This is same reason the *fons* opt for certain totemic symbols. No doubt effigies of animals, birds and reptiles are seen as mythic recapitulation of their hidden qualities.⁸³

These relics and symbols serve as reminders of the rich cultural history and traditions of the area, emphasizing the importance of unity and harmony among different communities. They act as symbols of pride and identity for the people which can contribute to a sense of

⁸² Tangem, "Arts, Visual History", p. 59.

⁸³ Ibid.

shared heritage and common values thus promoting understanding and tolerance among residents.

As regards secret groups and sacred societies, the grandeur, prowess or registered exploits of the different structures are often preserved and promoted as resources that aid in the showcasing of tradition and culture. For example, the history and exploits of the *Nfuh* is often marked by the human head motif projected on the door and window frames.⁸⁴ Furthermore, through the rituals and gatherings, these groups create opportunities for individuals to build relationships and trust with each other, laying the foundation for peace building. Most of these groups have well established mechanisms for resolving dispute within the community.⁸⁵ By providing a forum for dialogue and mediation, conflict could be prevented from escalating. An example is the *Ngwerong* society.⁸⁶

It is all these elements that account for the spirit of togetherness and brotherhood in the Bamenda municipality. The customs, values and traditions combined with these physical representation of the culture promotes and encourages unity within every society. The feeling of belonging permits one to adapt to his or her community and serve as a member of that community. It can be said that the values upheld in this society are of great importance for the promotion of peace yet “man will always be man, always looking for reasons to fight.”⁸⁷ Thus the advent of conflicts in this region.

2.2. Limitations of the Bamenda Municipality culture

Despite the rich nature of this culture, and its ability to source peace in the region, one cannot ignore the fact there are always “two sides to a coin”. Though culture is a great tool for peace it can equally pose as a threat to peace by capitalizing on the cultural differences and traditions of people. Just as it can bring peace, it encourages conflicts. Cultural diversity can make communication difficult and create misunderstandings. Some of these limitations could be identified as follows.

⁸⁴ Tangem, “Arts, Visual History”, p. 67.

⁸⁵ Fru Thaddeus, 78, traditional elder, Mankon Palace, 02 November 2023.

⁸⁶ The *Ngwerong* society is made up of elders and respected community members who are responsible for upholding the customs and traditions of the community. They meet in secret to discuss important issues and make decisions that affect the community as a whole. Membership is passed down from one generation to another and initiation is done through a series of rituals that involve connecting with the ancestors and spirits of the land. P. M., Kabery “Retainers and Royal Households in the Cameroon Grassfields”, *Cahiers D’etude Africaine*, 1962, pp. 282-298.

⁸⁷ Fru Thaddeus, 78, traditional elder, Mankon Palace, 02 November 2023.

2.2.1. Language differences

Differences in language can cause a myriad of misunderstandings and is considered the most crucial barrier in cross cultural communication. The ineffective communication of key objectives results in confusion. Communication is the foundation of meaningful interactions and relationships. Different languages can hinder effective communication and limit opportunities for social integration. Language barriers can also impact access to education, healthcare and employment opportunities, creating disparities among different cultural groups. Language can also be politicized and used as a tool to further divide communities. Politicians may exploit linguistic differences to gain power and manipulate public opinion, leading to political conflicts within the municipality.⁸⁸

Language plays a pivotal role in shaping culture and individual identities within a community. It serves as a key element that binds individuals together, fostering a sense of belonging and shared heritage. In the municipality characterized by diverse linguistic groups, people often develop strong emotional connections to their native language, viewing it as a fundamental aspect of their personal and communal identity. Consequently, individuals who do not speak the dominant language may experience feelings of alienation or marginalization, as they are unable to fully participate in or access various social, economic, and cultural opportunities within the community.⁸⁹ This linguistic divide can further exacerbate existing social disparities and hierarchies, perpetuating a cycle of inequality and discrimination among community members. The unequal distribution of linguistic resources and power dynamics can reinforce perceptions of superiority or inferiority based on language proficiency, creating barriers to social cohesion and collaborative engagement within the municipality.⁹⁰

2.2.2. Stereotypes and prejudices

Stereotypes, predominantly negative images or preconceived notions about a specific community, group, or culture, pervade societies and are particularly pronounced in the context of gender and religion. These stereotypes sow the seeds of prejudice among individuals, fostering judgmental attitudes towards one another. The effects of these deeply rooted biases extend well beyond the individual. They not only alienate people but can also hold entire communities back. This can make it much harder for them to feel like they truly belong in society, limiting their access to vital resources and opportunities they deserve. For instance,

⁸⁸ Tegum Daniel, 75, retired teacher, Old Town Bamenda, 12 November 2023.

⁸⁹ Idem.

⁹⁰ Kum Francis, 45, Teacher (GHS Mankon), Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

within the Bamenda community, harmful stereotypes persist, labeling some as lazy and lacking ambition, women as promiscuous and untrustworthy, and men as inherently aggressive and violent. The presence of inaccurate and damaging beliefs within a community often serves as a catalyst for misunderstandings and a prevailing sense of detachment among its members.⁹¹

These misguided beliefs create a breeding ground for heightened tensions and discord that permeate the very essence of the community, eroding trust and cohesion. When left unaddressed, these negative perceptions can lead to fractured relationships, hindering collaboration and unity within the community. Consequently, fostering a culture of open communication, empathy, and education becomes imperative in dispelling such destructive beliefs and nurturing a harmonious environment where understanding and solidarity flourish.⁹²

2.2.3. Cultural clashes

One of the challenges of this culture is that it is in multi-cultural form and this is a potential for cultural clashes. Different cultural groups may have different customs and traditions regarding land ownership, resource management, and access to services. When these individuals from different backgrounds come together, conflicts may arise due to these differences in values, norms and practices. These clashes can lead to misunderstandings, tensions and even hostility. Disagreements arising from differences in religious practices, gender roles, or social customs can pose substantial obstacles to the attainment of social harmony. At times, these conflicts are deeply entrenched in power dynamics between various cultural groups vying for control over leadership, authority, and political representation both within and outside the community.⁹³ Effectively navigating these cultural clashes is paramount for communities in order to preserve cohesion and foster mutual understanding. By addressing and resolving these disputes in a constructive and inclusive manner, communities can pave the way for sustainable harmony and peaceful coexistence among their members.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Lum Emelda, 27, Teacher, Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

⁹² Idem

⁹³ Pa Louise, 66, quarter head Abangoh, Bamenda, 13 October 2023.

⁹⁴ These limitations plague not only the region and its municipalities but is equally a characteristic of every region in the country because of her multi ethnic diversity and equally most African countries. The amalgamation of these ethnic groups of different and distinct cultures is reason enough to fuel a conflict as there's always going to be a strife for "power and authority" within such societies. But regardless of this, the similarities that exist within these tribes and ethnicities and the power point of every culture which is unity is what binds and keeps the people together thus reinforcing the notion of peace and peace building in the society.

2.2.4. Identity conflicts

Living in a multicultural society can identify conflicts for individuals, particularly among younger generations. The influence of different cultural values and norms can lead to a sense of ambiguity and confusion about one's own cultural identity. This can lead to loss of unique cultural identities and traditions. Values are regarded as to what people view as being significant to their day-to-day lives. Conflicts then arise when people have objectives that are different because of the fact that each individual has values that they uphold highly that may not be in line with others. Most people have values that are grounded within them which is often difficult to change. And since this differs from one person or community to another, conflicts are likely to erupt.⁹⁵

When individuals perceive a threat to their identity or a sense of marginalization, they may resort to violent actions in order to safeguard or assert their sense of self. This phenomenon has the potential to spiral into widespread conflict, as these individuals seek to defend and validate their identity in response to perceived challenges or attacks. When the people feel that their core identity is being undermined or devalued, their instinct to react aggressively can be triggered, leading to a cycle of violence that can have far-reaching implications. In such scenarios, conflicts may escalate rapidly, drawing in multiple parties and causing significant social discord and upheaval as different groups seek to protect their identities and interests through various means, including violence.⁹⁶ The dynamic interplay between identity, perceived threats, and violent responses underscores the complexity of human behavior in conflict situations and highlights the critical importance of addressing underlying issues of identity and marginalization to prevent the escalation of violence and foster sustainable peace.⁹⁷

Conclusion

In today's world, conflicts have taken a different form. Instead of being fought between nations, they now occur within the borders of nation states. Unfortunately, these civil wars have resulted in innocent civilians, including children, becoming the primary targets of violent attacks. However, amidst this chaos, the significance of culture in times of emergencies has gained considerable attention. Culture has been identified as a potential catalyst for achieving peaceful co-existence. The presentation of ethnographical and cultural dynamics within the Bamenda

⁹⁵ Ngengong, "From Friends to Enemies", 2007, p. 32.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 36.

⁹⁷ Kum Francis, 45, Teacher (GHS Mankon), Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

Municipality of the North West Region of Cameroon portrays a rich tapestry of traditions, values, and social interactions that reflect both local identity and the wider national experience. The chapter started by looking at the diverse composition of the community, showcasing a mix of customs, arts, ethnic groups, languages, and religion that create a rich setting for daily life. And concluded by pointing out the limitations of the culture in the municipality. Nevertheless, it is important to note that a well-developed cultural system alone does not guarantee peace. In the context of the municipality, assessing culture as a tool for peace building highlights the diverse cultural practices, values, and traditions that can serve as common ground and potential for fostering peace. By embracing and harnessing the power of their culture, the Bamenda people can pave the way towards a peaceful and harmonious society.

CHAPTER TWO: ANALYSIS OF CONFLICTS IN THE BAMENDA MUNICIPALITY IN THE NORTH WEST REGION

Introduction

Building upon the ethnographical and cultural foundation laid in Chapter One, this chapter undertakes a detailed analysis of conflict within the Bamenda Municipality. The chapter identifies and examines two major categories of conflict that significantly impact the municipality: land and boundary disputes, and the ongoing Anglophone Crisis. The chapter will begin by exploring the historical and contemporary dimensions of land and boundary disputes and the Anglophone crisis, tracing its origins and evolution in the Bamenda Municipality. It will then analyze the political, social, and economic factors that account for the persistence and escalation of conflicts in Bamenda. Finally, the chapter will assess the consequences of conflict on the municipality. By providing a comprehensive analysis of the types, causes, and consequences of conflict in Bamenda, this chapter will pave the way for a deeper exploration of the role of culture in peace building

1. PRESENTATION OF CONFLICTS IN THE BAMENDA MUNICIPALITY FROM 1990-2019

Within the broader ethnographic study of the region, the period between 1990 and 2019 stands as an important era of socio-political transformation and heightened tensions. This section demonstrates the landscape of unrest, moving from localized disputes over resources, particularly land to the overarching political grievances that redefined the municipality's relationship with the state. By examining these tensions, we uncover the deep-seated triggers that have historically tested the resilience of Bamenda's cultural and administrative fabric.

1.1. Land/boundary disputes

The 1990s ushered in an unprecedented wave of violent land/boundary disputes between village-groups Bamenda, North-West region of Cameroon. Upon close examination, it is clear that land/boundary disputes in the region had their roots from European colonialism, and

derived largely from administrative policies that were disruptive on inter-village boundaries.¹ Despite the endeavors made by British colonial authorities to mitigate disputes during the colonial period, as well as the subsequent efforts by post-colonial administrations in Cameroon, these attempts have not effectively resolved the conflicts. Consequently, several of these disputes continue to persist in the municipality to this day.² To understand why, one needs to trace the origin of the problem and of the consistent reoccurrence of such conflicts, which in Cameroon and in Africa such conflicts are said to be as a result of colonization.

When Germany annexed Cameroon in 1884 it proceeded to administer Bamenda with the assistance of a few favored groups. This political dispensation which aimed at facilitating German colonial rule had devastating effects on village groups which resulted into a series of conflicts.³ After the defeat of Germany, Southern Cameroon was then administered by Britain as a League of Nations mandate, and as a United Nation Trust Territory after World War Two.⁴ The British in exercising their mandate were confounded with numerous land/boundary related disturbances between the village groups. The two types of land conflicts experienced were those of land ownership and boundary disputes. Land ownership cases arose from strifes between farmers and graziers while boundary disputes were usually over specific land claims. These are expatiated below.⁵

1.1.1. Land boundary disputes

During colonization, Cameroon was divided between Britain and France as part of the League of Nations mandates. The new colonial boundary demarcations, established in the 1930s, introduced new dimensions to land use and land was commodified. More importantly, land became the subject of ownership. According to Nkwi, the Europeans' arbitrary lumping of people and the complete ignorance of ethnic composition caused differences in boundary understanding in most of the African States.⁶ During the British colonial period, there were several cases of farmland and boundary disputes. An example was the Bafut-Nkwen farmland and boundary dispute. The prevalence of conflict was due to the fact that most of the

¹ Land conflict is defined as a social fact in which at least two parties are involved, the roots of which are different interests over the property rights to land. E. Y., Sobseh and W., Dze-Ngwa, "Land Tenure Insecurity and Land Conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon: Puzzling Evidence From Bali Nyonga/Bawock Land Conflict", *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 2021, p. 868.

² Sobseh and, Dze-Ngwa, "Land Tenure Insecurity", p.868.

³ Village groups are social and cultural units that typically consists of small cluster of villages or hamlets that are geographically close to each other and share common ties, traditions and cultural practices.

⁴ V. J., Ngoh, *Political Evolution of Cameroon, 1884-1961*, Portland State University, 1996, pp. 10-28.

⁵ Monteh, "*Land Grabbing and Conflict*", 2024, p. 3.

⁶ Nkwi, "*The Sons and Daughters of the Soil*", 2011, p. 2.

settlements provided by the British colonial administrators to the numerous land and boundary disputes were not satisfactory to either one or both parties concerned. This was partly because most chiefdoms did not fully accept the divisions and demarcations of their ancestral lands. Even though some of the conflicts were resolved by the British under the various Articles of the Native Land and the Inter-tribal boundary settlement ordinances, conflicts continued to persist in the area.⁷

Another peculiar and up-to-date example is the case of the land issue between Nkwen and Bamendankwe over the land of Sisia. Bamendankwe is located east of Bamenda town while Nkwen is located north and east of the Bamenda town. They share a common boundary to the east that covers the areas called Sisia III and IV/ *Nyi-Ntenefor* I and II and *Achichem*. *Achichem* is a common shrine used by both communities, which marks the conflict area.⁸ In 1939, an administrative decision based on the findings of an intertribal boundary settlement ordinance of 1939 maintained relative calm between the two communities until 1988 when both started laying claims on the said land and their common shrine. In 2008, the Bamenda central division was divided into Bamenda I, II and III sub-divisions following the 2007 presidential decree no. 2007/115 of the 13/04/2007.⁹ This division placed Bamendankwe under Bamenda I sub division and Nkwen as Bamenda III sub division. This also brought disgruntlement between these communities who engaged in several confrontations. In 2014, the government of Cameroon intervened by placing an administrative injuncture prohibiting both communities from all forms of investment and trespasses on the land until the conflict is settled with the boundaries identified. But both communities have not respected this order as both continue with building properties and land sales.¹⁰

1.1.2. Farmer/Grazier disputes

The historical conflicts related to land within the municipality have been entrenched since pre-colonial times, with the advent of colonization, reunification, and the creation of boundaries serving as major triggers for land disputes in the area. With the advent of colonization, reunification, and the creation of boundaries serving as major triggers for land disputes in the

⁷ The Inter-Tribal Boundary Settlement Ordinance was established by the British colonial government in 1933 as a more practical and comprehensive mechanism or approach of peace building in Southern Cameroons. Taki A.E., "Peace-Building Mechanism Among the Widikum of the Bamenda Grasslands, Cameroon, 1870-2014", *International Journal of African Society, Cultures and Traditions*, Vol.11, no.2, 2003, p. 28.

⁸ S. B., Tanwie, "Promoting a Culture of Peace between Nkwen and Bamendankwe Communities in Cameroon through Video for Development: Artistic Community Participation towards Peaceful Coexistence", 2021, <https://www.kubi-online.de>, accessed 23 February 2024, at 4:15 pm, pp. 3-4.

⁹ Decree No. 2007/115 of April 2007, the creation of new administrative units within existing departments.

¹⁰ S. B., Tanwie, "Promoting a Culture of Peace between Nkwen and Bamendankwe", 2021, p. 5.

area. The ongoing struggle between farmers and herders for land control has led to persistent conflict in the municipality.¹¹ When Fulani cattle rearing was introduced in the North West region in 1919, the local chiefs immediately welcomed the Fulani nomadic graziers.¹² The first group of Fulani to enter the North West Region were the *Jafun* who reared large dark brown cattle and came to the region after World War 1 and established the first settlement which was later named Sabga after the first leader of the Mbororo in the area.¹³ And later the *Aku* who rear small white black-nosed cattle entered in the region. They British and Native Authorities saw them as useful clients and as those who were very willing to pay taxes in cows and cash, which was beneficial to the local economy. However, some studies indicted that those who paid the toll of cattle grazing were the food crop cultivators who were largely subsistence farmers.¹⁴ The farmers then had to compete with graziers for the same fertile lands that had abundant pastures for the feeding of cattle. This situation placed the farmers in a difficult situation because as they were tilling the soil and planting crops for family sustenance, the cattle were pasturing and feeding on their crops without compensation.

Additionally, the cattle tax or *jangali* provided a welcome addition to native authority revenues, increased tax commissions of chiefs and allowed stipends to be paid to more Native Authority employees. By the early 1950s, the *Aku* with their disease-resistant-and-faster-breeding cattle entered the region from the Joss plateau. Chilver asserts that over 14000 *Aku* herds of cattle arrived in the region between 1956 and 1958.¹⁵ It was very certain from this that the relationship between graziers and farmers would hardly be cordial.

After independence this problem still persisted as most of the Mbororo or Fulani began claiming rights to land in the area and recognition as members belonging to the community. The major farmer/grazier dispute faced in the Bamenda municipality and the region as a whole can be termed as the Mbororo-farmer dispute. Notwithstanding, the Mbororo and Bamenda people have lived in coexistence learning each other's trade (the Mbororos engaging in agriculture and farmers engaging in cattle rearing) and both contributing to the economy and well-being of their environment. But then considering that both contribute to the society and feed from each other, why still the prevalence of conflict? The main reason for this among

¹¹Nchang Clement, 55, Farmer, Abango Bamenda, 25 October 2023.

¹² M. Z., Njeuma and N. F. Awasom, "The Fulani and the Political Economy of the Bamenda Grasslands: Opportunity and Conflict, 1940–1960", *Paideuma* 36, 1996, p. 217.

¹³ W., Dze-Ngwa, "Boundary Dynamics and the search for Geo-Political Space", 2011. p. 9.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 9.

¹⁵ M. Z., Njeuma, and N. F., Awasom, "The Fulani and the Political Economy of the Bamenda Grasslands, 1940–1960", 1990, p. 219.

others is that these conflicts were tackled such that did not suit nor adapt to the culture and values of the people. Hence its recurrence.

The privatization of land in the 90s by the government intensified farmer/grazier disputes, and others which had boiled down before, and these resurfaced due to the inefficiency in their resolutions. As stated above this was because the colonial powers and later the government in the search for peace enforced it through police and military coercion, which was a system that was entirely alien to African people. In short, the village or groups who were disfavored by the colonial administration in case of land ownership began striking their claims over pieces of land that they claim were theirs. And others who claimed affinities with neighboring villages equally wanted to reunite their lands so as to share a common identity and culture.¹⁶ In the case of the farmer/grazier disputes in the municipality, the political liberation that was felt in the area following the reintroduction of party politics ignited the people (Mbororo) to demand their claims as *membres par entier* of the Bamenda municipality, and the localities in which they were born in the region.¹⁷ This situation brought about disgruntlement among the local and first inhabitants of the Bamenda municipality who were not in agreement with the way the nomads pastured their cattle and the threat the later posed to their source of livelihood.

1.2. Anglophone Crisis in the Bamenda Municipality

The Anglophone crisis also known as the Ambazonia War or the Cameroon Civil War is an ongoing armed conflict between Cameroon armed forces and Ambazonia Separatists rebel groups in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon. The crisis which started in Bamenda with well-founded socio-professional grievances by the Lawyers and the Teachers trade unions took a new turn when political interest groups later took interest in the social unrest.¹⁸ While many interest groups such as the United Nations, the African Union, and the civil society tried mounting high level pressure on government to yield to certain political demands, such pressure have yielded little fruits as the government has remained resolute in its stand.¹⁹

¹⁶ M. O., Arrah, "A Gift of Nature and the Source of Violent Conflict: Land and Boundary Disputes in the North West Region of Cameroon, the case of BaliKumbat and Bafanji", Doctoral dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, 2015, pp. 20-23.

¹⁷ Dze-Ngwa, "Boundary Dynamics and the Search for Geo-Political Space", 2011, p. 11.

¹⁸ B., Agwada, and U. Y., Asal, "The Anglophone problem in Cameroon-The change from crisis to conflict, and a possible way forward to resolution", *African journal on Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 21, no.1, 2021, pp. 23-24.

¹⁹ International Crisis Group (ICG), Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis: How to Get to Talks?, 2019, p. 20.

1.2.1. History of the Crisis

The history of the conflict currently rocking the two English speaking regions of Cameroon which has moved from repeated ghost towns calls to armed confrontation can be traced as far back as the early 1960s when the two territories decided to come together for a stronger state on equal terms in 1961.²⁰ From 1 October 1961, English-speaking Cameroon and French-speaking Cameroon came together to form a unified nation. However, each part of the country kept its inherited colonial system. The country made use of two official languages English and French, two judicial systems and two educational subsystems. The union between the two Cameroons was cemented at the Foumban conference in July 1961.²¹ The foundation of the new nation was built under the understanding of a federal system with two states and two separate administrations. This federal system ran until 1972 when a unitary system of government was instituted. In 1984 the constitution was modified and the name of the country was changed from the United Republic of Cameroon into the Republic of Cameroon. This decision fostered a sense of political, economic and socio-cultural subordination amongst the Anglophones, who have since called for a return to the federal constitution.²²

According to Nyamjoh, the lack of political will by the ruling elites to preserve the two cultural/colonial legacies led to the feeling of marginalization by the minority Anglophones who started agitating for a return to a federal system of government in the 1990s.²³ The complete refusal of the regime to discuss the subject led to growing separatist popularity in the municipality.²⁴ While cultural disparity in itself is not a problem, there are reasons to believe that the mismanagement of cultural diversity is the true cause of the present Anglophone

²⁰ On 1 October 1961, Cameroon became a federal republic. In 1966, the Cameroon National Union (CNU) was formed and the other parties were dissolved. Once the single party was formed, Ahidjo intensified centralization, going so far as to suppress federalism on 20 May 1972, then Cameroon became the United Republic of Cameroon. When Paul Biya succeeded Ahidjo in November 1982, he further centralized power. On 22 August 1983, he divided the Anglophone region into two provinces: Northwest and Southwest. In 1984, he changed the country's official name to the Republic of Cameroon (the name of the former Francophone territory) and removed the second star from the flag, which represented the Anglophone part of the country. To this, the Anglophones organized the All Anglophone Conference (AAC) in 1993 and called for a return to federalism. And on 8 and 21 November 2016, the lawyers and teachers mobilized hundreds of people for a march in Bamenda and reiterated their demand for the full restoration of the Common Law system as it was at the time of the federal system.

²¹ The Foumban constitutional conference was held to create a constitution for the new Federal state of British Southern Cameroon and La Republique du Cameroun.

²² P., Konings, and F., Nyamjoh, "The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 35(2), 1997, 207-229. Chronology of events of the Anglophone crisis.

²³ Ibid, p. 208

²⁴ The ICG listed even major armed militias with an estimated membership of 2,000 to 4000 combattants, and noted another 20 smaller groups with localized purviews. International Crisis Group (ICG), Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis: How to Get to Talks?, 2019, pp. 32-33.

crisis.²⁵ The crisis can therefore be considered an extension of the historical injustices and the resistance to the alleged assimilation of the indigenous speaking population.²⁶

2. FACTORS ACCOUNTING FOR CONFLICT IN THE BAMENDA MUNICIPALITY

Understanding the reason behind the tensions in Bamenda means looking past the headlines and into the everyday lives of its people. It is not just about one single event, it is about a collection of grievances that have been building up for decades. This section explores how deep-seated feelings of identity, the struggle for fair opportunities, and even the way the city itself has grown have all played a part in these conflicts, and equally what happens when historical grievances meet the modern-day frustrations of a community trying to protect its way of life.

2.1. Factors accounting for land and boundary disputes

During the democratization process in the 1990s, various types of conflicts in the municipality became more pronounced and complex. The transition to democracy brought about changes in power dynamics, social structures, and cultural norms, leading to increased tensions and disagreements among different groups.²⁷ In order to comprehend the causes of the conflict, it is essential to first outline its classification. Understanding the classification of conflicts enables us to grasp the underlying reasons behind them.

Conflicts can be broadly categorized as social, inter-personal, intra-personal, intra-societal, or inter-societal/international. As the country underwent democratization in the 1990s, the scope of these conflicts expanded and assumed larger proportions.²⁸ By understanding the classification of conflicts and their underlying causes, policymakers, researchers, and community leaders can work towards resolving these conflicts and promoting peace and

²⁵ E., Anchimbe, “The Roots of the Anglophone Problem”, *Current History* (1941), 2018, p. 170.

²⁶ M., Pelican, “The Anglophone problem in Cameroon-Historical and political background”, *Working paper*, n. 20, 2022, p. 11

²⁷ Arrah, “A Gift of Nature”, 2015, p. 54.

²⁸ Social conflicts refer to disputes between different groups within a society, such as ethnic or religious groups, social classes, or political factions. Inter-personal conflicts occur between individuals, often due to personal differences or misunderstandings. Intra-personal conflicts are internal struggles within an individual, such as conflicting values or desires. Intra-societal conflicts involve tensions within a society as a whole, such as political unrest or economic inequality. Inter-societal or international conflicts occur between different societies or nations, often over issues such as territory, resources, or ideology.

stability in society. It is crucial to address the root causes of conflicts in order to prevent further escalation and promote reconciliation and understanding among all parties involved.

Table 2: **Classification of land conflicts**

Level	Dimension	Types of land conflicts
Inter-personal	Micro-social	• Boundary conflicts between neighbors • Conflict inheritance • Occasional multiple sales of private property by individuals without administrative assistance and without harming third parties • Individual occupation of private land • Building extensions on the private land of another • Illegal lease/sales of somebody else's private land
Intra-societal	Meso-social	• Boundary conflicts between tribes or villages • Illegal sale/lease of communal land/tribal land • Group invasion of private land • Simultaneous use of land between farmer and pastoralists • Occasional building extension on state land • Occasional illegal use of state land • Illegal use of one's own land • Violent attacks on property
	Macro-social	• Ownership conflicts due to legal pluralism • Land grabbing • Illegal sale/lease of state land by individuals • Improper land privatization • Land use conflicts between private and public utilization due to a general disregard of land use regulations by a majority of people • Expropriation without compensation • Illegal acquisition and sale of somebody's else private property by individuals, supported by corrupt public agencies or courts • Multiple allocation of particular plots by officers working at the land registry

Source: GTZ, 2008, *Land Conflicts: A practical guide to dealing with land disputes*, Video/DVD, Eschborn, p.30.

2.1.1. Political causes of land/boundary disputes

Land and boundary disputes was less recurrent before the advent of colonization. In this area as in elsewhere in Africa, it was believed that land was the home of the ancestral spirits to which no one could claim ownership of. Boundaries were not marked by individuals but by natural features like rivers, hills, streams, lakes and most often considered as points of convergence and not points of separation.²⁹ However the hostility of some ethnic groups resulted to conflicts in the area. In case of conflict, both parties assembled their nobles to discuss for the resolution of the conflict. Other than dialogue, rituals were also performed on the disputed area as a means of consulting and listening from the ancestors on the solution to the problem. Rituals like libation, burial of animals to burial of humans and ritual pacts remained the surest proof among the people in respecting the state boundaries.³⁰

In the municipality, Nkwen is known to have concluded ritual pacts with her neighbors by burying two dogs and planting two fig trees on their graves, despite the trenches it had dug around its settlements and the non-ritual alliances it had secured from other states in the sub-region. In doing this, she secured lasting peace and agreement with Mankon “*to mutually defend and protect each other’s trade and traders*”.³¹ And this system of ritual alliances led to relative peace and stability among these communities. The hostilities began appearing as a result of the new clan boundaries imposed by the colonial masters in an effort to reduce administrative cost. And the colonial masters traded the traditional system of conflict resolution for theirs. This system didn’t settle well with the people as they were alien to it. Other groups or villages saw this as a means to claim more lands by becoming friendly with the colonial masters so as to gain in authority.³² This continued to fuel conflicts and accounted still for the reoccurrence of these conflicts in the 1990s.

Additionally, other land/boundary related disputes arose when the British decided to demarcate boundaries to resolve the confusion created by the Germans. The demarcation of inter-chiefdom boundaries fueled conflicts between communities sharing a common boundary and this separation did not take into account the common cultural similarities or differences of the neighboring people. Fanso highlights this problem as such:

²⁹ V. G. Fanso, “Traditional and Colonial African Boundaries: concept and Functions in Inter-Groups’ Relations”, *Presence Africaine*, Vol. 39, no. 3, 1986, p. 71.

³⁰ E. S. D., Fomin, and V. S., Ngitir, *Ritual in Traditional Boundary settlement in the Cameroon Grassfields, Bamenda*, Maryland printers, 2011, p. 49.

³¹ Ibid, p. 48.

³² Mbah, “Disruptive Colonial Boundaries”, 2010, p. 13.

In traditional Africa, the concept of political or ethnic boundary was expressed in terms of neighbors with whom the particular or polity shared the boundary. A people shared a boundary with another people and such a boundary was conceived of in terms of a region or narrow zone fronting the two neighbors sharing it were both were united or joined together. The African spoke of where his people 'meet' with neighboring people on the land where they 'share' the earth not where they separate.³³

The term or appellation 'boundary' just surfaced after the entry of the colonial powers and the new demarcations they set in place. During the colonial period cases of farmland disputes resurfaced and in the post-colonial period some cases still prevailed in the form of land boundary disputes or farmer/grazier disputes. Examples include, the Nkwen and Bamendankwe dispute, and Nkwen and Bafut dispute respectively. The demarcations of boundaries between Mankon and Nsongwa is an example worth examining. The conflict between Mankon and Nsongwa was a case of disruptive colonial boundary which began in 1927 when British authorities demarcated a boundary between them to resolve another dispute that was created by the Germans.³⁴

Furthermore, the contemporary land tenure systems in Cameroon, founded on customary systems of regulation (in law or administration) and statutory formal systems, are embedded in the above unequal and discriminatory power structures and procedures³⁵. These land tenure systems tend to allocate land unequally on the basis of class, gender and other forms of social hierarchy.³⁶ This often accounted for land conflicts, struggles and killings experienced in the region. For instance, the *fons* or chiefs traditionally are known to control land in the community on behalf of the indigenes, but often they tend to misuse the land laws by monopolizing the communal lands and selling them for personal gains without the consent of the community members. This misappropriation of communal land was overtly evident in Big Babanki, a neighboring village to the municipality where the *fon*, *Fon* Vugah of Big Babanki was killed in 2005 by the indigenes who were deprived of their land.³⁷ This just tends to demonstrate the level to which land is considered a prestigious asset among the indigenes of the region.³⁸

³³ V.G., Fanso, "Traditional and Colonial African boundaries: Concept and Functions in Inter-Group' Relations", *Presence Africaine*, Vol. 39, no. 3, 1986, p. 71.

³⁴ V. K., Ngwuh, "The Dynamics of Farmer-Herder Conflicts across the Bamenda Grassfields, 1947-2006," Ph.D Thesis, University of Buea, 2014, pp. 211-216.

³⁵ Cameroon Constitution, law no. 2008/001 of 14 April 2008, to amend and supplement provisions of law no. 96/6 of 18 January 1996; Ordinance N° 74-1 of 6 July 1974 on Land Tenure, Article 1.

³⁶ M. S., Tumde, The participation of women in Politics and Democratization process in Cameroon, *Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, I (I), 1998, pp. 43-58.

³⁷ Big Babanki is found in the Ngoketunja Division of the North West Region.

³⁸ P. M., Sone, "Conflict over Land Ownership: The case of Farmers and Cattle Graziers in the Northwest region of Cameroon", *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 2012, p. 89.

Another peculiar case was that of 6 April 2014 where over 300 Mbororo (Fulani) were evicted from the land they had been occupying since 1920 in Banjah by state authorities, and about 46 hectares of their land seized and handed over to the catholic university of Bamenda on grounds that the said area is situated within the Bamenda city and so not suitable for cattle grazing.³⁹ All these factors played a major role in the state of land ownership and disputes in the area today.

2.1.2. Economic causes of land/boundary disputes

Demographic growth is largely responsible for land conflicts in the municipality as population increase leads to expansion, which means an increase in land need for habitation and agriculture for livelihood. Soil fertility and the search for agricultural and pasturable lands, has led to reviling economic crisis that have contributed a great deal in land disputes in the municipality. Demographic changes in the area also played a preponderant role in provoking competition. The steady increase in human population since the 1960s was another factor in the antagonism between stakeholders. According to computations from Assessment and Intelligent reports, the number of people in the Bamenda municipality in 1948 was estimated at 301 000.⁴⁰ Some fifteen years later, it rose to 536 375. The 1976 and 1987 population censuses had 914 912 and 1 237 348 inhabitants respectively. The 2005 General Population Census revealed that the region had 1 816 500 inhabitants.⁴¹ The animal population during the same period also evolved both in numbers and variety. This heightened tensions between farmers and the graziers over land resources.

Furthermore, competition over natural resources like access to and control over land, seasonal water resources and dry season grazing arose because the livelihoods of both groups depended on these resources that were unfortunately in short supply. The major cause of competition was the continuous shrinking resource base provoked by climate change, population increase and poor production systems. Farming methods were backward, strenuous and unproductive because the soil was burnt and ridges were made along the slopes contrary to the teachings and advice of the agricultural department.⁴² Such bad farming practices resulted in quick soil exhaustion and eventually poor yields. The traditional method of farming

³⁹ “Eviction of the Fulani from their ancestral land at Banja”, <https://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47545&Cr=cameroon&Cr#.U1fDsCjtA5g>, accessed 15 February 2024, at 3:45 pm.

⁴⁰ Chilver, and Kaberry, “*Traditional Bamenda*”, 1967, p.23.

⁴¹ Ngwoh, “The Dynamics of Farmer-Herder Conflicts across the Bamenda”, 2014, p. 147.

⁴² Ibid, p.75.

prescribed that after four years of cultivation, the farm should be allowed to lie fallow, while a new area was designated for cultivation. For one reason or the other, it usually happened that the place designated was in close vicinity to grazing land.⁴³

While the farmers remained glued to their old and uneconomic methods of operating, herders in their turn carefully avoided the use of modern and improved methods of livestock breeding. They avoided the use of salt ponds, crutches, paddocks and the cultivation of improved pasture like kikuyu and bracharia.⁴⁴ Instead, they depended on natural pasture whose seasonal availability left them with only one option: moving to farmlands because overgrazing and erosion had resulted in lack of pasture.⁴⁵ Large-scale cattle rearing was generally non-existent in the Bamenda municipality before colonialism. In 1924, the cattle population in the area stood at 10,000, in 1934 at 91 000, in 1944 at 91 000 and in 1996, it was 714 023.⁴⁶ From this analysis, it is clear that both the human and cattle populations increased about ten times within a period of eighty years. This was exceedingly dangerous because of the pressure they exerted on land. This reduced the amount of available arable land over which farmers and cattle scrambled for survival, and thus resulted to conflicts.

The changing interests of farmers and herders equally led to competition not only over land ownership, but also over the distinctive activity into which it should be put. Traditionally, the Mbororo man and his wife had very few possessions and maintained a small family. They had no interest in agricultural activities, preferring to buy their needs from the local people. Their children remained in the bushes to look after the cattle instead of going to school.⁴⁷ But things changed considerably because by the 1980s and 1990s, the Mbororo, who were prone to the nomadic way of life, saw the rationale for permanent settlement. A good number of them owned real estates in the form of personal large expanses of pastoral lands and this seemed to have been a major cause of trouble. In the past, the indigenous inhabitants occupied themselves with farming and the migrant Mbororo with herding.⁴⁸ But this situation changed with the emergence of indigenes becoming herders, and with the Mbororo equally undertaking diverse

⁴³ Ngwoh, "The Dynamics of Farmer", p.156.

⁴⁴ Kikuyu (*Pennisetum clandestinum*) is a popular tropical grass species that is well-suited for smallholder farming systems in Africa, as it is drought-tolerant and can be grown on poor soil. Brachiaria (*Brachiaria*) is another important pasture grass species that is widely used in tropical and subtropical regions, offering high yields, resistance to pests and diseases, and improved nutritional value. By cultivating these improved pasture grasses, farmers can increase the carrying capacity of their pastures, reduce the need for expensive external inputs, and promote sustainable agriculture practices.

⁴⁵ Ngwoh, *The Dynamics of Farmer-Herder Conflicts*, p.34.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 148.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Dze-Ngwa, "Boundary Dynamics and the search", p. 18.

farming activities in the municipality. This change in interests gave birth to economic rivalry and heightened discord between the two communities in the municipality.

While very few indigenous persons grazed cattle, almost every herder carried out one form or the other farming activities, though within the confines of their immediate premises. This seemed to be a new source of worry, particularly as everywhere in the area some members of the local population were overtly and jealously surprised to see the Mbororo selling maize in the market. Yet, and embarrassingly too, the few indigenous herders were objects of perpetual ridicule and disdain by their own folk.⁴⁹ This then increased the competition between farmers and graziers over available and accessible resources, hence conflict.

2.1.3. Socio-cultural causes of land/boundary disputes

Socially, the proximity factor may account for conflicts in the municipality. The importance attached to land cannot be separated from the constant disputes recorded in the municipality. With the coming of the Europeans, relationships between people and land were seen from a different angle.

In the Bamenda municipality, the Mbororo's constitute an ethnic and religious minority accounting for 5 to 10 per cent of the total population. From a total of about 10 000 in 1955, the number rose to 85 280 in 2005.⁵⁰ This could be from the fact that the area is a pasture-rich and tsetse fly-free zone that attracted thousands of cattle because its climate makes trypanosomiasis infection practically non-existent or easy to eliminate. Also, it sustains pasture on the highlands for eight months of the year.

The majority of the inhabitants who were largely subsistence farmers organized in centralized chiefdoms and confederations belonged to linguistically distinct communities but sharing common features of economic and sociopolitical organization. The Mbororo arrived more than a century later, did not conquer the land and so had no natural rights over it. While the people played the role of landowners, the Mbororo herders contented themselves as landholders, thereby giving rise to patron-client relationships.⁵¹ It was customary for strangers to pay a visit to the traditional authority of their host community to announce their mission and seek permission to sojourn. This was considered *condition sine quo non* for the Mbororo

⁴⁹ Dze-Ngwa, "Boundary Dynamics and the search", p.18.

⁵⁰ MBOSCUA, Results of Census of Mbororo Pupils/Students in Institutions in the North West Province of Cameroon, 2012, <https://mboscuda.com>, accessed 13 January 2024, at 9:45 pm.

⁵¹ Monteh, "Land grabbing and conflict", 2024, p.19.

because they were initially perceived as strangers.⁵² They exchanged some of their animal products with farmers for grain, thereby supplementing their respective diets.

The connections between their economic activities meant that they each had a stake in the well-being of the opposite group. The indigenes who had hegemony over the land maintained host-client relations with the Mbororo who, although recognized by the United Nations in 2004 as “indigenous people” or peoples “*Autochthones*”, were initially locally perceived as “strangers” and “migrants” or *peuples Allogenes*. They were not indigenes or sons and daughters of the soil because concepts about their status which were centered on ideas of priority in time (“first coming”), emphasized spiritual bonds with the land as well as political supremacy and were used by local actors to substantiate claims to land and power.⁵³

Moreover, on the basis of ancestral ties and links with the land’s ritual topography, the Bamenda people entertained strong religious bonds with their settlement area and deemed themselves “sons and daughters of the soil” and “guardians of the land.” They viewed the Mbororo as a prime example of a stranger and migrant population.⁵⁴ In this regard, there were several examples of conflicts over land in which the people and farmers in particular aggressively accused the Mbororo’s of encroaching on “their ancestral land”.

From the above, it is clear that the ills and repercussions of colonialism, and the desire to own land and maintain hegemony were factors that greatly contributed to the rise and manifestation of conflicts in the area. The peculiarity of land conflict resolution in Africa and Cameroon in particular has been the comprehension of both modern governance institutions and traditional approaches. While the former were meant to put an end to land conflicts and serve as a veritable replacement to the latter, its application has rather fueled more land conflicts rather than contain them. This is partly because the government still makes use of the unconventional method of land conflict resolution at the expense of traditional approaches or approaches that are proper to the identity of the people and the respect of their rights.

⁵² Dze-Ngwa, “Boundary Dynamics and the search”, p. 5.

⁵³ M. P., Pelican, *Getting Along in the Grassfield: interethnic relations and identity politics in North West Cameroon*, PhD Thesis, Martin Luther Universitat, Halle-Wittenbourg, 2006, p. 33.

⁵⁴ M. Z., Njeuma, and N. F., Awasom, “The Fulani and the political economy of the Bamenda Grasslands: Opportunity and Conflict, 1940–1960”, *Paideuma* 36, 1996, pp. 217-233.

2.2. Factors accounting for the Anglophone Crisis

2.2.1. Political causes of the Anglophone crisis

➤ Independence and Reunification

Shortly after the Federal Constitution came to power in October 1961, the federation began to move quickly through the unitary system⁵⁵. The following year, the pound sterling was removed from circulation and replaced with the *Communauté Financière Africaine* (CFA) franc across the whole country. After three years, everyone in the trade union in the country came together to form one federation that was connected to a single party. All the political parties in the Republic came together to form the Cameroon National Union (CNU). In the middle of this, there was a political struggle for leadership in West Cameroon which had emerged between Jua and Solomon Tandeng Muna from the time constitutionally, which put Foncha in a situation where he could not be both Prime Minister of West Cameroon and Vice President of the Republic.⁵⁶ The fight became intense. However, it led to the expulsion of Muna and his supporters from the KNDP after Jua's victory.⁵⁷ Muna did not go for good, but he ended up forming a new political party, and his group, the Cameroon United Congress (CUC), pledged to back the Federal Constitution and at the same time champion the creation of a single political party and a unitary system for the entire country. He created a slogan "One country, One government, One flag, One currency."⁵⁸

His popularity was so immense that President Ahidjo discovered the program matched his policy. Then in 1968, he appointed Muna Prime Minister of West Cameroon in place of Jua. A section in the Federal Constitution prohibited the same person from occupying the posts of Prime Minister of West Cameroon and Vice-President of the Republic at the same time, but this was by-passed and Muna was appointed Vice-President of Cameroon on top of his position as Prime Minister of West Cameroon. The position of Vice-President was occupied by Foncha before he was removed from office and Muna appointed. This allowed Muna to create a crystal

⁵⁵ Cameroon adopted its earliest constitution upon independence from France in 1960. In 1961, British Southern Cameroon gained independence and voted to join its French counterpart. Delegates framed a new constitution, which made Cameroon a federation of two states under a single powerful president. In 1972, President Ahmadou Ahidjo pushed through a new document that abolished the federal system, renamed the country the Unitary Republic of Cameroon, and granted the president great powers.

⁵⁶ The Anglophone territory was called West Cameroon and the Francophone territory was called East Cameroon. The federal president appointed the prime ministers of the federated states. However, in the Anglophone part, until 1968, this appointment only validated the prior election of the prime minister by the parliament of West Cameroon.

⁵⁷ B., Chem-Langhë, "The Road to the Unitary State of Cameroon 1959-1972", *Paideuma* 41, 1995, p. 24.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 22.

vision to introduce a unitary system in Cameroon. That was followed by an announcement by President Ahidjo that the National Assembly intended to transform the Federal Republic into a unitary state, provided the electorate supported the idea in a referendum May 20 1972.⁵⁹

➤ The Referendum

Ahidjo wanted the development of the nation. He said that the Republic's weighty and costly federal structures were holding back the nation's developmental efforts.⁶⁰ Bilingualism and multiculturalism were encouraged mostly at the federal-state level, but agricultural production and urban development were being hindered by the inadequately rationalized and harmonized public and town planning policies resulting from the federal structures of the Republic.⁶¹ The President elaborated his plan for the nation, in which he mentioned some important points that would be beneficial for the nation's support and specified the nature of the items. The question of the referendum and the draft constitution for the plan was called to a vote. The plan was then to make a serious and urgent request for voters to cast their votes for the draft constitution that would automatically put in place a Republic, "one and in-divisible," with "one Government and one Assembly."⁶² The question for the referendum was, "Do you approve, with a view to consolidating National Unity and accelerating the economic, social, and cultural development of the Nation, the draft Constitution instituting Republic One, and indivisible, to be styled, under or as, the United Republic of Cameroon?"⁶³

Following this English and French were made the official languages and the draft of the constitution was written in both languages to avoid any conflict of interpretation. The French version of the Constitution would be the original. Also, the draft stated with no procedure to amend the Constitution, if it tended to weaken the republican character, unity, or territorial integrity of the state, or the democratic principle by whom the Republic was governed, changes would be accepted.

The President's appeal was very successful with members from different political leaders' schools, workers, and students. Under President Ahidjo there was no public debate, and the political climate was a dictatorship. It was unsafe to express opinions, especially if it

⁵⁹ Chem-Langhëë, "The Road to the Unitary", p. 23.

⁶⁰ The referendum was held in Cameroon on 20 May 1972. The new constitution will make the country a unitary state with the aim of consolidating national unity and accelerating socio-economic development of the nation

⁶¹ The presence and adoption of the two colonial languages English and French as the national languages is what makes the country characterized as bilingual. And the multi ethnic groups of distinct cultures makes it multicultural nation. Thus the promotion of bilingualism and multiculturalism were a necessity for a unitary state.

⁶² Chem-Langhëë, "The Road to the Unitary State", p. 23.

⁶³ Ibid, pp. 17-25.

was different from those of the government. This may explain why they voted immensely for reunification because the people could not publicly oppose the unitary state. Nobody tried to inspect or contradict the proposition of a unitary state and what it would contribute to the future political integration, unity, and stability of Cameroon.⁶⁴ Bilingualism and multiculturalism were served by it, whether federalism is inconsistent with national integration, and stability. It was not surprising fact that the Cameroonians voted overwhelmingly for the President during the referendum, some people felt like it was a dictatorship.⁶⁵ Not many of the people were going to go against the regime, and this acceptance showed in the vote. After the results were signed, history was made, and the birth of the United Republic of Cameroon was declared. The sacred pact was forever protected, and indicated the deep unity of the nation.⁶⁶

On 6 of May 1972, President Ahidjo declared the federal structures would be abolished in the event of a reunification. This was to assure the Southwest Cameroonians the heritage, which they were contributing to the nation, would not be ignored, “but would be taken into consideration within the framework of a bilingual multicultural state.”⁶⁷ In the end, he succeeded in bringing it to the Unitary States of Cameroon on June 2, 1972. He accomplished the goal he set many years ago, although there was earlier opposition from the Southern Cameroonians and their leaders, and would later come back after being more decisive.

➤ **Reintroduction of Multiparty Politics**

Multipartism existed in both French and British Cameroons before independence and continued after they both gained their independence in 1960 and 1961 respectively. Political parties brought together people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds for the promotion of their interests. The parties therefore pressed for the rights of the people they represented. The equally upheld particular ideas, or a collection of ideas and ideologies to improve on their government’s political system.⁶⁸ A young nation in search of itself had to capture the different tendencies of all Cameroonians who will freely join it. The minority would join the majority to ensure efficient democracy and freedom of thought and speech.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ M., Jeter, “The Civil War Conflict between Anglophones/Francophones in the Northwest and Southwest Regions of Cameroon”, Masters of Arts, Thesis, Old Dominion University, 2023, p. 15

⁶⁵ Chem-Langhëë, “The Road to the Unitary State”, p.24.

⁶⁶ Jeter, “The Civil War Conflict”, 2023, p. 16

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Chem-Langhëë, “The Road to the Unitary State”, p. 22

⁶⁹ A., Linda, “The Changing Character of Democracy in Pre and Post-Colonial Cameroon: An old practice, a new word”, *Journal of Advanced Research in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2017.
<https://jarssh.com/ojs/index.php/jarssh/article/view/140>, accessed 20 January 2024, at 6:15 pm.

Following the law passed by parliament in 1990, multi-party politics was reinstated in Cameroon. Law no. 90/056 of 19 December 1990 authorized the creation of associations and /political parties in Cameroon.⁷⁰ As of today, 282 political parties have been legalized. Out of this number, only about five parties are represented in parliament and participate regularly in both municipal and presidential elections. However this democratization experienced some uprisings, major of which were felt in the Grassfield region. The opposition parties engaged in civil disobedience practices instigating strikes and provoking states of emergency in the main provincial capital cities. The rejection of their demand to get a sovereign National Conference instigated such acts.

➤ **Politics and the Dethronement of Chiefs**

In the Bamenda municipality, traditional rulers were and are still known to occupy a very important position in their respective societies. Also, methods of accessing the position of chiefs were so well-defined and known that any disregard for such procedures was the exception rather than the rule. Individuals who became Chiefs came to power and left through traditionally accepted mechanisms. Violence as a method for dethroning chiefs remained a very distant and hardly used method.⁷¹

Traditional rulers in Bamenda came to power through well-defined and customarily accepted procedures which were handed down for several generations. Although some variations exist, there is general agreement around certain considerations. These include; hereditary succession, the respect of leopard skin principle, and the involvement of kingmakers amongst others. The removal of Chiefs from power through violent means has become increasingly frequent of late. Several examples exist in the Bamenda. These include the cases of Kedjom Keku, Bande, Ashong, Bamali, Balikumbat and Oshie chiefdoms.⁷²

The reintroduction of multi-party politics in Africa as a whole was an inevitable by-product of globalization. In Cameroon and more precisely in the Bamenda Grassfields, the impetus was given with the founding of the Social Democratic Front party on the 26th of May 1990. The “wind of change” which started blowing from the Bamenda Grassfields, began spreading steadily across the rest of the country and on the 19th December 1991, President Paul Biya was obliged to liberalize multi-party politics in Cameroon. This was following law Bo

⁷⁰ Law n° 90/056 of 19 December 1990 on political parties in Cameroon.

⁷¹ T. N. S., Kaze, “Traditional *Coup d’Etats* in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon Chieftaincy Institution: A Historical Exploration”, *Carnelian Journal of Law and Politics*, Vol. 2, 2020, p. 83.

⁷² Ibid, p. 83.

90/056 of 19th December 1990 liberalizing the existence of other political parties in Cameroon.⁷³

However, the reintroduction of the multi-party system sparked a serious debate on the role of traditional rulers in the new political dispensation. The dilemma that confronted traditional rulers in the 1990s was defining a balance between the wishes and aspiration of their subjects and the government. This way, traditional rulers found themselves between the hammer and the anvil. That is between their subjects on the one hand and the state on the other hand. The ruling party saw traditional rulers as vote breakers and sure tickets to rural votes and demanded their allegiance and support. But instead, many subjects supported opposition parties and could not stand to see their Chiefs in the ruling parties. This was a delicate issue, for the relationships between traditional rulers and their subjects were affected by the political choices their chiefs made. This was particularly serious with *fons* of the Bamenda municipality.⁷⁴

Based on the traditionalist views, it can be noted that this system was largely put in place to prevent chiefs from committing crimes that could warrant their dethronement. Traditionalists insisted that it was improper for traditional rulers to compete with their subjects in democratic elections because, if the chief losses, he brings dishonor to his elevated status and in some cases be dethroned by his people.⁷⁵ Traditional rulers participation in party politics was a serious blunder that was sure to under mind the legitimacy and credibility of Chiefs in the eyes of their people.

2.2.3. Economic causes of the Anglophone crisis

➤ Economic Marginalization

There is abundant evidence in history to vindicate the relationship between worsening economic conditions and political and social unrest. The issue of economic marginalization is equally one of the major grievances expressed in the region. There is often a direct correlation between economic and political power and control of economic resources is often subject to competition not only at the individual level, but also between various levels of government. West Cameroon is considered an important national economic base due to its natural resources such as oil and production of crops like bananas, tea, palm oil, cocoa, palms, timber, and rubber.

⁷³ D., Eyoh, "Through the Prism of Local Tragedy: Political Liberalization, Regionalism and Elite struggle for power in Cameroon." *Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 68, no. 3, 1998, pp. 338-359. JSTORE, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1161253>. Accessed 30 December 2023, at 9:15 am.

⁷⁴ Kaze, "Traditional *Coup d'Etats* in the Bamenda Grassfields", 2020, p. 97.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 97.

The recognition of these attributes can be seen in the regional presence of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) – the biggest para-state corporation and the second largest source of employment after government.⁷⁶

Given these important economic attributes, one would perhaps expect that the region is privileged with meaningful development. However, lack of critical infrastructure such as roads, markets, and connectivity to electricity, has impacted productivity and forced the majority of the inhabitants into abject poverty.⁷⁷ But even more significant, is the appropriation of oil revenues by the national government. All of Cameroon's raw oil resources are located in the Anglophone region. But all the critical institutions such as the National Hydrocarbons Corporation (SNH), Cameroon Company of Petroleum Depots (SCDP), Hydrocarbon Analysis Control (HYDRAC), and the national refinery SONARA (Société Nationale de Raffinage) are located in the Francophone regions. For the inhabitants of this region, establishing these corporations outside the region is perceived as a systematic plan by the government to deny the region employment opportunities.⁷⁸

2.2.3. Socio-Cultural causes of the Anglophone crisis

➤ The Name Change/Language Monology

The transition from a federal structure to a centralized state was a process marked by two significant symbolic changes. First, on May 20, 1975, the country's flag originally featuring two stars to represent the union of Northern and Southern Cameroons was modified. The two stars were substituted for a single central yellow star on the green, red, and yellow tricolor, intended as a symbol of national unity.⁷⁹ This political shift was finalized after President Paul Biya took power in 1982. In 1984, he issued a decree changing the country's official name from the United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroon.

These cumulative changes in the flag and name further aggravated disgruntlement within the English-speaking section of the country. Many felt these were deliberate moves to wipe out the minority Anglophones by erasing the symbols of their equal partnership in the original union. This deep-seated resentment fueled a surge of political tension and violence that eventually escalated out of control. In the 1990s, teachers and lawyers took matters into their

⁷⁶ P., Konings., and F., Nyamnjoh, "The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 35(2), 1997, p. 214.

⁷⁷ Tegum Daniel, 75, retired teacher, Old Town Bamenda, 12 November 2023.

⁷⁸ P., Konings., and F., Nyamnjoh, "The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon", p. 214.

⁷⁹ B., Chem-Langhëë, "The Road to the Unitary State", p. 24.

own hands and were at the front of the protest movement. Political representation and constitutional reforms were also a big part of that year with a marginalization claim.

In October 2016, lawyers and teachers' trade unions were upset about the unfair treatment and the forceful use of the French language in schools and law courts. So, the English-speaking regions participated in a peaceful demonstration. The response by the government was the forceful punishment of the protesters and sending them to prison. These federal actions cracked down on protest leaders and also led to the killing of some protesters. Due to the arrest of the movement's core leaders, the movement now fell into the hands of extremists.⁸⁰ This hybrid union was not only clamoring for their rights but also wanted independence within their own country, which worsened the already heated situation. A lot of members of this new movement with modern views were radicalized.

After studying the situation that made the majority of people hostages of separatists, Issa Tchiroma Bakary, the communication minister, said: "a person with his assault weapon can impose his dictation on thousands of people who do not have weapons."⁸¹ These secessionists locally called "Amba Boys" are mostly young, civilian men fighting in the bush, often having hunter rifles and guns. The Anglophones have accused the military of perpetrating human rights violations against civilians since the onset of the violence. They asserted that the military is setting fire to villages and indiscriminately killing innocent individuals. Conversely, the government has accused the separatists of assaulting security forces and mistreating civilians. These are the words of Col. Didier Badjeck Ministry of Defense spokesman: "We cannot fight there if we don't have the population on our side."⁸²

➤ **Traditional Authority**

After the Germans left, the French and British colonialists maintained the same policy⁸³. Once expansive monarchies, the conquered territories were turned into "traditional communities" that fell under the supervision of administrative districts known as divisions and sub-divisions created by the political authorities. Stripped of their aura and sacred status, chiefs became

⁸⁰ E., Anchimbe, "The Roots of the Anglophone Problem", *Current History* (1941), 2018, p. 169.

⁸¹ Jeter, "The Civil War Conflict", 2023, p. 26.

⁸² Ibid, p. 27.

⁸³ In the Bamenda Grassfields, the Germans were the first to set foot in 1889. At their arrival, they discovered the traditional rulers had strong authority over their people, so to have greater hegemony over the *fon*, they resolved to the policy of 'Divide and rule' so as to bring the Chiefs and their people under control. To this, they killed, dethroned or deported Chiefs who rejected their rule. This same policy was adopted by the British and French in order to exercise full control. Nonetheless, the British were less harsh as they granted some traditional authorities powers and extended their jurisdiction.

“auxiliaries” of the administration, were given a distinct legal status and, as such, subject to the “rights and duties” of their office.⁸⁴ After Cameroon gained her independence, these efforts continued under Ahmadou Ahidjo and Paul Biya. To add insult to the injury, the later authorized sub-prefects to establish third class chiefdoms. The ranks of traditional rulers have grown so much that the authority and influence of the most powerful chiefdoms is declining.⁸⁵ It will seem the government’s real aim is to reign in the country’s traditional chiefdoms.

Chiefs faced a challenging decision regarding whether to utilize their political power for personal benefit or to uphold the trust and authority bestowed upon them by their constituents. As many chiefs came under the fold of the state in several of their decisions, they lost traction and moral authority among local villagers.⁸⁶ This further contributed towards transforming existing moral economies of trust in rural areas where older social relations were challenged as individuals entered into new social relations and networks.

Power in the precolonial government was regulated, as the people understood that if given absolute powers, the government would die in chaos. Chiefs consulted their tribes through their representatives before taking important decisions. But after the 90s, chiefs and traditional rulers are found to be more loyal and serviceable to the government than to the people for fear of being disposed of.⁸⁷ This can be explained by the fact that most or some of these rulers are appointed to power by the government and not by the customs and traditions of the people, and when in power, they do not rule as per customs and traditions but per governmental standards. This and many more spark grievances among the people which even saw the forceful disposition of such rulers like chief Vuga Simon, and equally fueled the conflict in the region.⁸⁸

➤ The Colonial Legacy

The underlying tensions triggering conflict in the region can be traced back not only to independence but also to the colonial era. In order to understand the issues facing culture in

⁸⁴ T.N.S., Kaze, and Chantal, Y.K., “Towards Re-Traditionalizing and revalorizing chieftaincy in Cameroon Grassfields: An Expolatory study”, *Beladi*, 2021, p.18.

⁸⁵ Tegum Daniel, 75, retired teacher, Old Town Bamenda, 12 November 2023.

⁸⁶ Idem.

⁸⁷ Fon Forchesiri III, 34, traditional ruler, Bamendankwe palace, 13 December 2023.

⁸⁸ The dethronement and demise of Chief Vuga Simon was as a result of the Kedom Keku – Fulani problem which started in 1991. The people were displeased with him for unilaterally auctioning and selling Kedjom Keku ancestral lands to Fulani cattle merchants. Given that the people were n agricultural population, the selling of this farmlands resulted to starvation among the people who finally decided to revolt against and attack the *fon*. T. N. S., Kaze, “The Dethronement of Traditional Chiefs in the Bamenda Grassfields Historical study of the chieftaincy Crisis in Kedjom Keku 1984-2008”, MA Dissertation in History, University of Yaoundé 1, 2012, p. 89.

peace building in this region, insights into the dynamics during the colonial times and how they changed the country needed to be examined. Considering this, and considering our temporal delimitation of our research, it became clear that recent problems that resulted to conflicts in the municipality have being or resolve around the political factor which is the “question of independence and reunification”. This question prompts one to ask the question of “what had being before independence, before colonialism, and how can it be restored.”⁸⁹

Long before colonization, the municipality had institutional mechanisms, as well as cultural sources to uphold the values of peace, solidarity and unity in the various societies. These structures were responsible for peace making, peace building, conflict management, conflict prevention and conflict resolution. If these mechanisms had been effective in handling and managing conflicts among the people, it was largely because they respected the socio political orientation of the people who lived in a communal way of life binding on the principles of equity and justice.⁹⁰ These systems were inclusive, permitting everyone to participate in the decision-making process. Decisions were taken by “consensus” at village meetings.⁹¹ However, with the advent of slave trade and colonization, these indigenous institutions were largely weakened and in part destroyed in certain societies. The Anglophone problem and a number of other weaknesses in present-day Bamenda has its roots in the colonial period. During the period of the mandate and the trusteeship, each colonial power shaped its territory in its own image. This resulted in major differences in the political culture of the people.⁹² In the municipality, English was designated as the official language, while the educational and customary systems were unfamiliar and foreign to the local population.

3. CONSEQUENCES OF CONFLICTS IN THE BAMENDA MUNICIPALITY

The conflicts in the Bamenda municipality have had significant political, economic, and social consequences. They have strained relationships between political factions and the community, impacting governance and public services. The economic impact has been substantial, disrupting agriculture, trade, and small businesses and leading to job loss. Investment and economic development have been deterred, and infrastructure deterioration has hindered

⁸⁹ Colonialism had only one hand, it was a one-armed bandit which was out to steal from the Africans. That is through its ritual of Christianity and civilization, the Europeans crippled every aspect of African economic, political and socio-cultural lifestyle.

⁹⁰ A.E, Taki., “Peace-Building Mechanism Among the Widikum of the Bamenda Grasslands, Cameroon, 1870-2014”, *International Journal of African Society, Cultures and Traditions*, Vol.11, no.2, 2003, p. 20.

⁹¹ This implies that there was a collective agreement or understanding on certain matters and issues.

⁹² Fon Forchesiri III, 34, traditional ruler, Bamendankwe Palace, 13 December 2023.

growth and access to services. Socially, families and individuals have been displaced, leading to overcrowding and challenges in accessing amenities. The breakdown of social networks has caused insecurity and fear, resulting in psychological trauma and mental health challenges.

3.1. Consequences of land/boundary disputes

3.1.1. Political consequences

The issue of landownership in the Bamenda municipality is a traditionally complex and problematic issue which has in a dynamic and fluctuating manner been influenced by the quest for political power and social status. This quest, often opposing two ethnic groups, villages or communities has often reduced or stood as a hindrance to national integration. In the case between the indigenes and the Mbororo population, the refusal of the latter to accept the former as indigenes of the land on which they both live and work in has in the long run posed as a threat to integration in the community, region and country as a whole.⁹³ Equally the Bamenda municipality has many ethnic groups including the Bamenda, Bamum and Bamunka each with their own cultural and linguistic traditions. The need for one to assert dominance over the other has also obstructed national unity.⁹⁴ The conflicts have equally had a negative impact on national integration in the municipality. The conflicts, primarily between the local population and settlers from other regions, have led to social and economic disparities, language barriers, and cultural differences. This has resulted in mistrust and hostility among community members, making it challenging for the government to implement national integration policies. The conflicts have also hindered economic development, as investors are deterred by the uncertainty and insecurity created by the disputes. Ultimately, the land conflicts in the Bamenda municipality have undermined national unity and cohesion, perpetuating divisions within the country.

Secondly, farmers-herders conflicts led to the proliferation of small arms and other dangerous weapons, shaking the security and stability of communities as people are always in perpetual fear of attacks and reprisal attacks by those armed. The breakdown in law and order has been observed as a result of long-standing land conflicts between local communities and external interests. The conflicts, which have been fueled by corruption, lack of transparency, and inadequate governance, have led to disputes over land ownership and use, resulting in

⁹³ Paul Tabufor, 51, Pastor, Down Town- Bamenda, 25 November 2023.

⁹⁴ Ngengong, "From Friends to Enemies", 2007, P. 25.

violence, property destruction, and displacement of communities.⁹⁵ The situation has been exacerbated by the presence of external factors such as logging companies, plantations, and mining operators who have been accused of grabbing community land without proper compensation or consultation. As a result, tensions have escalated, further resulting to the loss of lives and properties, displacement and migration, economic devastation, social fragmentation, environmental degradation, undermining trust in government and long-term psychological trauma.⁹⁶ Further complicating the resolution of these conflicts.

3.1.2. Economic consequences

Farm produce is often destroyed during the crisis. The activities of the North West Farmers Organization (NOWEFOR), Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER) and a few other agro industrial plantations like Banana Plantations in the municipality, have been halted. Repeated calls for “ghost towns” has compounded efforts to make ends meet.⁹⁷ This has distorted the development of agriculture in the municipality and region. The crisis negatively affects savings, credit repayment ability, as well as food security and economic wellbeing of urban dwellers that depend on these farmers for food supply and this discourages the farmers and rural agricultural development. This agricultural low output may result in malnutrition and diseases. These conflicts have led to the occupation of farmlands by the separatist fighters, resulting in the loss of productive agricultural land. Thereby reducing the availability of land on which farmers should farm, thus leading to a decline in farm output. More to this, the decrease in farming activities as many farmers are reluctant to invest in farming due to the uncertainty and insecurity surrounding the land has also reduced farm produce and output in the area. Additionally these conflicts have led to inadequate markets for the sale of livestock.⁹⁸ In the Bamenda I municipality, herders sell their cattles and produce in what they call “cattle market” as they feel more open and free to sell their produce there. All this reduces the rate of exchange and productivity within the area.

Food security is the availability at all times of adequate food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices. Food security exist when people have physical and economic access to food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. These conflicts have led

⁹⁵ Ashu Etang Wilfred, 32, researcher at Pan African Institute for Development –West Africa, Sonac Street Bamenda, 25 October 2023.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Emile Bemirla, 37, Advisor, Integrated Agricultural Association, Commercial Avenue, 23 November 2023.

⁹⁸ Nchang Clement, 55, Farmer, Abango Bamenda, 25 October 2023.

to financial problems leading to food insecurities in most homes, graziers and farmers alike, led to the displacement of farmers from their lands, losing their source of livelihood, disrupted market access making it difficult for farmers to sell their produce and consumers to access food and led to an increase in food prices making it difficult for some homes to access affordable food.⁹⁹ Incessant attacks by the herders and reprisal attacks on herders by the host communities have led to the loss of lives and the destruction of property. Almost 100 persons have been killed in the past few years with many more injured or displaced. Thousands of homes and buildings have been destroyed or damaged, leaving many families without shelters or livelihoods.¹⁰⁰

Additionally, the longstanding land conflicts, have led to a significant increase in unemployment. The conflicts, often between farmers and herders, have resulted in the destruction of crops, livestock, and infrastructure, leaving many individuals without a source of income. As a result, the local economy has suffered, and many people have been forced to flee their homes in search of alternative means of livelihood. This has led to a rise in unemployment rates, as those displaced are unable to find work in their traditional occupations.¹⁰¹ The situation is further exacerbated by the lack of effective conflict resolution mechanisms and inadequate government support for affected communities, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and vulnerability. Some disputes, often between local communities and external investors or government agencies, have led to the displacement of thousands of people, destroyed infrastructure, and disrupted agricultural activities. As a result, the area has suffered from underdevelopment, with limited access to basic services such as healthcare, education, and clean water. The conflicts have also hindered economic growth, as investments are deterred by the lack of a stable and secure environment.¹⁰²

3.1.3. Socio-cultural consequences

Class discrimination with regard to landownership is identified not only as one of the main factors responsible for land conflict but also as a main constraint resulting from such conflict. Farmers have access only to family land but lack control and ownership of the land in the

⁹⁹ Beckline Mangam, 45, Secretary General (Integrated Agriculture Association), Commercial Avenue, 23 October 2023.

¹⁰⁰ M., Bobbo, T. A., Evaristus, T. L., Nobert, "Land Tenure Conflicts and its influence on Food Security and Rural Livelihoods in the North West region of Cameroon: The Case of Mezam division", *International Journal on Horticulture, Agriculture and Food Science*, Vol. 4, 2020, in <https://www.aipublications.com>, accessed 15 February 2024, at 3:30 pm, p. 222.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 223.

¹⁰² Kum Francis, 45, Teacher (GHS Mankon), Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

community.¹⁰³ Class discrimination has emerged particularly in the context of urbanization and economic development. The scramble for limited arable land has led to competition among different social classes, with wealthy elites and government officials often gaining access to prime land through corrupt means, while marginalized communities, such as small-scale farmers and indigenous peoples, are left with limited or no access to land. This has resulted in social and economic exclusion, with the marginalized groups being pushed to the periphery of the city, exacerbating existing social and economic inequalities.

Also, the absence of ownership rights restricts them from accessing land certificates which by the 1974 Land Ordinance, is the only authentic proof of a private property.¹⁰⁴ This state of affairs undermines farmers and keeps them in poverty, unlike the pastoralists who enjoy greater access to resources and opportunities allowing them to accumulate wealth and influence. This leads to increase social tension, economic inequality and cultural erosion. In the Bamenda municipality, class discrimination has emerged as a consequence of land conflicts, particularly in the context of urbanization and economic development.¹⁰⁵ The scramble for limited arable land has led to competition among different social classes, with wealthy elites and government officials often gaining access to prime land through corrupt means, while marginalized communities, such as small-scale farmers and indigenous peoples, are left with limited or no access to land. This has resulted in social and economic exclusion, with the marginalized groups being pushed to the periphery of the city, exacerbating existing social and economic inequalities.¹⁰⁶

The relationship between herders and farmers used to be cordial and reciprocal but the conflict has created serious levels of mistrust among the group. The conflicts erode trust among residents as they became suspicious of each other's intentions and motives, led to a breakdown in community cohesion as residents became more focused on their individual interests than

¹⁰³ S. P., Munge, "Conflict over landownership: The case of farmers and cattle graziers in the North West Region of Cameroon", *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, in <https://www.accord.org.za/ajcr-issues/conflict-over-landownership/>, 2012, accessed 16 February 2024, at 9:00 pm.

¹⁰⁴ The 1974 Land Ordinance is the main governing law on land which stipulates equal landownership rights in Cameroon. One of the primary aims of the 1974 land reform was to enhance development and self-empowerment by enabling everyone to be able to acquire and exploit tracts in any part of the country free from local customary norms and interpersonal conflicts. This implied that everyone was entitled to the guarantee of ownership of land. But from clear evidence in the region, statistics reveal that less than 10 percent of peasant farmers have access to land ownership (Awosom 1996: 44). This thus challenges the intention of the relevant statutory provisions, including the non-discriminatory laws safeguarding equal ownership of land in the region. Cameroon Constitution, law no. 2008/001 of 14 April 2008, to amend and supplement provisions of law no. 96/6 of 18 January 1996; Ordinance N° 74-1 of 6 July 1974 on Land Tenure, Article 1.

¹⁰⁵ Kum Francis, 45, Teacher (GHS Mankon), Old Town- Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

¹⁰⁶ Emile Bemirla, 37, Advisor (Integrated Agriculture Association), Commercial Avenue, 23 October 2023.

collective well-being. It has also reduced cooperation among residents as they became more reluctant to work with each other or engage in community activities. In some cases, individuals may be forced to leave their homes or communities due to the conflicts, leading to a sense of displacement and isolation.¹⁰⁷ This erosion of social relationships not only harms individuals but also undermines the overall social fabric of the community, making it more challenging to address the root causes of the conflicts and rebuild trust. All this has had an adverse effect on social relations in the area.

Equally, the persistent conflicts between farmers and herdsmen over land use, have led to inadequate cultural exchange between the two groups. The disputes have been exacerbated by the influx of nomadic herdsmen from neighboring regions, who bring with them different cultural practices and livestock that compete with farming activities. As a result, farmers perceive the herdsmen as invaders, while the herdsmen see the farmers as obstacles to their traditional way of life. The lack of understanding and respect for each other's cultures has led to mistrust, violence, and increased tensions between the two groups, making it challenging to foster meaningful cultural exchange and cooperation.¹⁰⁸

3.2. Consequences of the Anglophone crisis on the Bamenda Municipality

3.2.1. Political Consequences

The crisis has revealed the gap between the concerns of the Anglophone populations and the Anglophone elite, which has for a very long time tried to mediate between them and Yaounde, and sometimes even supported a firmer repressive position. In fact, the prime minister and the Anglophone elite, which tried to mediate at the start of the crisis, were mockingly criticized by crowds. The lack of legitimacy of Anglophone leaders is also true, to a lesser degree, of opposition leaders. In November 2016, the president of the Social Democratic Front was booed in Bamenda when he tried to calm an angry crowd. The crisis caused tension in the SDF between a more radical group that, like the deputy Wirba, calls for a two-state federation or for secession, and a more traditional group that wants a four-state federation or, for the most moderates, effective decentralization.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Emile Bemirla, 37, Advisor (Integrated Agriculture Association), Commercial Avenue, 23 October 2023.

¹⁰⁸ Fru Thaddeus, 78, Elder, Mankon Palace, 02 November 2023.

¹⁰⁹ Deputy Wirba has resolutely supported the Anglophone cause and made a speech in parliament, criticizing the government. He then went into exile. "Wirba Joseph, Cameroonian Parliamentarian defies speaker of the house on Anglophone Problem", YouTube, 13 December 2016, <http://bit.ly/2f7lUTi>; "*Crise Anglophone*: Joseph Wirba.

Furthermore, the crisis is a classic case of a dissatisfied minority while at the same time, the result of structural problems. First, it reveals major governance failures, with a lack of decision-making capacity accentuated by the president's prolonged stay in power, a false decentralization, the lack of legitimacy of local elites, tension between political parties, a political system that relies on co-opting traditional Chiefs and local elites, and a policy of regional balance that has been hijacked to their own advantage by families close to the regime.¹¹⁰ Second, the crisis is prolonging restrictions on civil liberties which have become more pronounced since 2013; there has been a ban on demonstrations and the arrest and beating up of political party militants, journalists and researchers. It has even served as a pretext for greater repression, with the use of anti-terrorist legislation for political ends, greater control over social media and threats against journalists. Finally, the regime's refusal to negotiate on fundamental questions and sometimes brutal responses highlights its authoritarian nature.¹¹¹

3.2.2. Economic Consequences

Given the disconnection in the social fabric of the system, businesses have been paralyzed in the two regions. Apart from the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), UNVDA Ndop and a few other agro industrial plantations such as Cameroon Tea Estate, Delmonte Banana Plantation in the Regions, no major manufacturing company exists.¹¹² Repeated call for ghost town has compounded the effort to make ends meet.¹¹³ According to the general manager of CDC over the famous CRTV radio programme - Cameroon Calling on Sunday August 5 2018, out of 11 estates in operation prior to the crisis, none is working normally The report further suggests that all the rubber estates have been shut down, leading to the loss of 7000 direct jobs in rubber, over 5000 job loss in Banana and 4500 lost jobs in the Palm sector.¹¹⁴

The few individuals who attempt to bridge the odds of the ghost town calls are met with the "weapon of fire" that has ravaged hundreds of business units in the two regions¹¹⁵. At least 500 business entities have been damaged in separate locations in connection to the uprising, including but not limited to the burning of markets, shops, individual stores, taxi cars and other

¹¹⁰ International Crisis Group (ICG), "Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis", 2019, p. 13.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Beckline Mangam, 45, Secretary General at Integrated Agriculture Association, Commercial Avenue, 23 November 2023.

¹¹³ The Ghost Town Campaigns involved the voluntary closing of businesses, shops, taxi services and the refusal to pay government taxes.

¹¹⁴ F. H., Ngangnchi, V. A., Wujung and A., Pangmechi, "Analysis of the Socio-Economic Consequences of the Crisis in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon on the Economy of the two Regions", Vol. 7, 2019, at <http://ijecm.co.uk/>, accessed 03 March 2024, at 2:25 pm.

¹¹⁵ The Ghost Towns were coupled with kidnappings, killings and demands for ransom.

transport buses, just to name a few. Over 100 residential houses have also been burnt down in communities across the municipality.¹¹⁶ While the level of illiteracy, teenage pregnancy, household burden, and poverty have risen significantly because of no school, the future consequences on the economy as a whole cannot be underestimated. Armed robbery, stealing, settling of scores have also intensified within this crisis period.¹¹⁷

While the short term infrastructural damage in schools, roads and markets can be evaluated at over trillions of FCFA, the long term effect of such consequences is even far reaching. The persistent call for ghost towns and school boycotts have increased the school dropout rate in the municipality by over 50 percent, increased crime rates by over 45 percent, alcohol consumption and drug abuse by over 15 percent, though with diminishing income and income sources in the municipality. It should be noted that the consequences of school boycott can hardly be evaluated in the short term.¹¹⁸ The long term effect of no school in an economy is much more severe to include but not limited to fall in the supply of labour and consequences on output and economic stability, crime wave, juvenile delinquencies, drug abuse, fall in taxable income, just to mention these few.¹¹⁹

Social services have completely collapsed in certain regions, leaving the population as the primary victims. Water systems have failed, electricity supply in numerous areas is no longer operational, health centers have been reduced to ashes, and those located in remote areas have been deserted due to the fear of being caught in crossfire or kidnapped for ransom.¹²⁰ Many social services in rural areas are managed by institutions in order to meet up with the corporate social responsibility articles of their contracts. It becomes increasingly difficult to settle staff for their upkeeps and proper maintenance.¹²¹ While the communities have sufficiently recovered from the three months internet shut down by the government, its effects on income and general welfare could not be underestimated as many start-ups depends on internet to do business and earn a living.

¹¹⁶ Pa Louise, 66, quarter head Abangoh, Abangoh Bamenda, 13 October 2023.

¹¹⁷ Chiwoo Emeld Ntebe, 48, worker at MINAC, Up Town Bamenda, 16 December 2023.

¹¹⁸ N. S., Leinyuy, *The Effects of the Anglophone Crisis on the Socio-Economic activities of the Population of Cameroon: Case of Bamenda III Sub Division*, Master of Arts dissertation, University of Bamenda, 2024, pp. 37-38.

¹¹⁹ Lum Emelda, 27, Teacher, Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

¹²⁰ Pa Louise, 66, quarter head Abangoh, Abangoh Bamenda, 13 October 2023.

¹²¹ Ngangnchi, et al., "Analysis of the Socio-Economic", 2019, p. 383.

3.2.3. Socio-Cultural Consequences

One of the most significant social repercussions of the political turmoil in the municipality is a near collapse of the social framework that has underpinned the community for more than 50 years. Characterized by daily tension and the fear of the unknown, the Bamenda municipality that once was preferred destinations for many personalities from within and out of the national borders is now almost completely deserted. Higher level radicalism is being observed as the youth and other segments of the population engage in more or less guerrilla warfare as the crisis continues.¹²² No form of economic venture can prosper in the face of such conditions. In particular, the army that used to be a symbol of national pride and highly respected is now being confronted on regular basis. Other security services have to work 24/24 to keep the momentum and gain the necessary authority it once had.

The loss of lives that according to media report were in their thousands since the start of the crisis has had serious social consequences on living in the municipality. The BBC Focus on Africa (2018) reports that over 1200 lives have been lost so far among separatist fighters and the security and defense forces. According to field observations, the more the separatists call for ghost towns, the more potential lives are to be lost because the government is determined to combat them with the full force of the law. Lives lost can never be regained and the warring parties are advised to understand the value of human lives within the context of the bible principle of “thou shall not kill.”¹²³ In this respect, it is only God that has the power to give and therefore to take life.

Education has been the sector most severely impacted by the ongoing conflict, as separatist groups initially utilized educational institutions as a political instrument to exert pressure on the government for reform. Regrettably, as the conflict evolved, the entrenched ideologies became increasingly difficult to eradicate from the consciousness of armed combatants. This resulted in a later phase characterized by acts of kidnapping, targeted assassinations, and demands for ransom, further complicating the landscape of an already volatile situation. On the whole, enrolment in the basic and secondary education sector in the North West region alone dropped by 198.65% between 2016 and 2018. The performance of students at the GCE Examinations also dropped in terms of quality and quantity. Success rates

¹²² Ngangnchi, et al., “Analysis of the Socio-Economic”, p. 380.

¹²³ The Holy Bible, “*Ten Commandments of God, Exodus 20 verse 13: Thou shall not kill*”, king James version, 2001.

at both the ordinary and the advanced level examination dropped by over 27% for the period under review.¹²⁴ This has directly had an impact on education in the municipality.

Table 3: Consequences of crisis in the educational sector in Bamenda

Variable	Year 2016	Year 2018	% change
Number of students in the NW region (secondary education)	213, 277	2,908	-198.65%
Registered students in the University of Bamenda	15,898	14,164	-10.91%
Students registered for GCE examination (O/A level)	138.000	130.000	-5.79%
% of students who passed the GCE examinations (O/A level)	74.84	54.60	-27.04%

Source: F. H., Ngangnchi, et al, “Analysis of the Socio-Economic Consequences of the Crisis in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon on the Economy of the two Regions”, vol. 7, 2019, p. 382.

The effect of the crisis on the culture of the people cannot be left out. In some communities like Belo, for example, women had the responsibility to bury corpses for the first time, which is contrary to cultural and traditional norms of the society. Traditional rulers considered as custodians of the tradition have been publicly attacked, kidnapped and taken ransom from. Some of them have been killed in the crisis, things that should not happen. There are over four hundred thousand internally and externally displaced internally displaced persons as a result of the crisis. Traditional rulers too have abandoned their chiefdoms/palaces for safety in other regions and towns of the country. This crisis has triggered a wave of forceful migration that the UN says is the fastest growing conflict in Africa.¹²⁵

Despite the negative consequences presented above, the Anglophone crisis presents opportunities to other interest groups such as those who deal with arms and ammunitions. While the government has spent billions of FCFA to buy arms, equipments, logistics and to maintain the army and security services on the ground, the separatists have also invested though not to the same extent on war facilities.¹²⁶ Individuals providing support to the government and the separatist movement, including lawyers and others, have directly benefited from the

¹²⁴ Ngangnchi, et al., “Analysis of the Socio-Economic”, p. 382.

¹²⁵ The Holy Bible, “*Ten commandments of God*”, p. 283.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 284.

crisis.¹²⁷ In fact, it created political jobs for others as the crisis saw the creation of the Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism, the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Committee as well as the appointment of two Anglophones for the first time to head the Ministries of Secondary education and Territorial Administration. It also paved the way for the opening of new schools especially of the common law system such as the Common Law Department at ENAM, and other state universities and the creation of the Common Law Bench at the Supreme Court of Cameroon.¹²⁸

Conclusion

The history of conflict in the world is that of social and economic pains, characterized by forceful displacement, loss of lives and property, sexual abuses, economic stagnation, hatred and many more. The dire need for economic growth and development in Cameroon cannot be achieved under such political instability. After many years of fighting, countries like Syria, Yemen, Central African Republic, South Sudan and many war-torn countries are beginning to realize that conflicts cannot always be solved on the battle field. On the basis of the above, there is the need to present other forms through which this conflict can be resolved. Thus the discourse of culture.

¹²⁷ Ninobrown Ateweh, 36, Consultant, Ring way street- Bamenda, 11 October 2023.

¹²⁸ Ngangnchi, et al., "Analysis of the Socio-Economic", 2019, p. 384.

CHAPTER THREE: CULTURE AS A TOOL FOR PEACE BUILDING IN THE BAMENDA MUNICIPALITY

Introduction

Building on the analysis of conflict dynamics in Chapter Two, this chapter assesses the potential of culture as a tool for peace building in the Bamenda Municipality. Recognizing the limitations of purely modern, state-centric approaches, this chapter explores how cultural resources and traditional practices can complement and enhance peace building efforts in the municipality. The chapter begins by outlining the dominant approaches to peace building in the municipality, distinguishing between modern, often externally driven interventions, and indigenous, culturally rooted strategies. It will then delve into the specific value of culture for peace building in the Bamenda context. This includes examining how cultural values can be harnessed to promote dialogue, reconciliation, and social. The chapter will then present a comparative analysis of modern and cultural approaches to peace building, weighing their respective strengths and weaknesses in addressing the root causes of conflict in Bamenda. By providing a comprehensive assessment of culture as a tool for peace building, this chapter contributes to a deeper understanding of how local resources and knowledge can be mobilized to promote lasting peace and social cohesion in the Bamenda Municipality.

1. GOVERNMENTAL AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES TO THE CONFLICT IN THE MUNICIPALITY

The state and the world generally have different layers of interventions in conflict situations. This section explores the formal response of the State, legal decrees and international diplomatic efforts to bring peace to Bamenda. While state interventions are not without value, this analysis is to demonstrate that they rarely measure up to the effectiveness of cultural interventions, which remain the most relevant force in restoring lasting peace.

1.1. Government-led Approaches

The government has implemented various approaches to settle conflicts in the municipality. In the case of land/boundary conflicts, these approaches aimed to address the grievances and disputes arising from land ownership and territorial boundaries, with the goal of promoting

peace, stability, and equitable distribution of resources. Some of the government's approaches included:

1.1.1. Approaches to resolve land conflicts

To begin with, there's the Legal Framework approach. This is established by the government to regulate land ownership and boundary disputes. This involved enacting laws, regulations, and policies that defined land rights, ownership, and boundaries. These legal instruments provided a basis for resolving conflicts through the judicial system. One strategy is the adoption of the 1996 Land Policy and the 2013 Law on Land, which aim to regulate land tenure, promote transparency, and protect property rights.¹ The government established the National Land Coalition (NLC) to oversee land administration and resolve conflicts. This commission, composed of government officials, community leaders, and legal experts, was responsible for adjudicating land disputes, conducting investigations, and making recommendations for resolution. Its main strategies include:

- **Mediation, investigation and arbitration:** The NLC mediates between parties in conflict to reach a mutually acceptable solution, investigates land and boundary disputes to determine the facts of the case and make recommendations and appoints an arbitrator to settle disputes through a binding decision.
- **Public Hearings:** The NLC holds public hearings to gather information and gather feedback from stakeholders on land and boundary disputes.
- **Technical Assistance:** The NLC provides technical assistance to parties in conflict, including surveying, mapping, and demarcation of boundaries.
- **Education and Sensitization:** The NLC educates and sensitizes communities on land laws, regulations, and procedures to prevent disputes conducts public awareness campaigns through radio broadcasts, posters, and social media to educate the public on land laws and regulations. Moreover, the government has established a "Land Conflict Prevention and Resolution Unit" to promote dialogue and mediation between parties involved in land disputes.²

Additionally, the government conducted land surveys and demarcation exercises to establish clear boundaries and prevent disputes. These surveys involved the use of modern

¹ LAW NO. 96/12 OF 05 AUGUST 1996 relating to environmental management and Law N° 2013/004 of 18 April 2013 to lay down private investment incentives in the Republic of Cameroon.

² National Land Coalition, <https://www.landcoalition.org>, accessed 14 December 2023, at 5:00 pm.

mapping technologies and traditional knowledge to accurately determine land boundaries. By demarcating land, the government aimed to reduce ambiguity, prevent encroachment, and ensure equitable distribution of resources. Additionally, the government conducted a comprehensive land survey and mapping exercise to clarify land boundaries and ownership rights within the municipality. This helped to prevent future disputes and ensure that land transactions were conducted in a transparent and legally sound manner. Some of the strategies employed include the use of Geographic Information System (GIS) technology, aerial photography, and field surveys. The National Institute of Cartography (NIC) is responsible for conducting these surveys, which involve measuring and mapping boundaries, identifying and demarcating land ownership, and creating digital maps.³

In conclusion, the establishment of the Land and Boundary Conflict Resolution Committee, the implementation of community-based conflict resolution mechanisms, such as traditional mediation and arbitration, in addressing local-level disputes, the investment in land surveying and mapping initiatives to clarify boundaries and prevent encroachment on protected areas, and the establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms which brings together stakeholders from government, civil society, and local communities to discuss land issues and address conflicts have addressed the causes of disputes, provided clarity and certainty regarding land ownership and promoted peaceful coexistence. As a result, the government has being able to create a more stable and harmonious environment for development and growth.

1.1.2. Approaches to resolve the Anglophone crisis

With the deepening of the crisis, the government also made several peaceful concessions and top-down institutional responses, including the Major National Dialogue from September 30 2019 to October 4 2019⁴. The dialogue was to bring together Cameroonians to reflect on the issues of national interest, including peace, security, national integration, unity and progress. It resulted in a number of proposals that go some way in addressing the Anglophone concerns. This included changing the country's name back to the United Republic of Cameroon, the adoption of special status for the region, restoration of the house of traditional Chiefs and the election of local governors.⁵

³ International Land Coalition, Development and Harmonization of Land Mapping Methodologies, at <https://thetenurefacility.org/projects/cameroon/>, accessed 14 December 2024, at 5:45 pm.

⁴ International Crisis Group (ICG), "Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis", 2019, p. 1.

⁵ Although the dialogue initiative appeared genuinely aimed at resolving the conflict, certain loopholes evolved reason why the conflict still persists till date. The dialogue was not inclusive as the president had claimed it would be. While some separatists leaders based broad were invited to attend, they chose to boycott the talks over security

In the domain of dialogue, the government has engaged in dialogue with leaders of Anglophone separatist groups, such as the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (MRC) and the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), to find a peaceful resolution to the crisis. The government has also engaged in negotiations with civil society organizations, such as the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium, to understand their concerns and find common ground.⁶ The government has equally sought international mediation and support to help resolve the crisis, including consultations with African and international organizations such as the African Union, the European Union, and the United Nations.⁷ These diplomatic efforts aim to address the underlying issues driving the crisis, including perceived marginalization, discrimination, and lack of representation of Anglophones in the government.

Other institutional methods included the setting up of an English division of the Supreme Court and creating a common law section at the National school of Administration and Magistracy. The recruitment of bilingual teachers to teach in secondary schools, the resolution to implement decentralization, setting up a national commission for bilingualism and multiculturalism, putting in place the Disarmament and reintegration (DDR) program for ex-fighters who drop their arms and the presidential plan for the reconstruction of the municipality.⁸

The government has deployed security forces to restore order and maintain control over the municipality, ensuring that law and order are maintained. The Anglophone crisis has been a pressing issue since 2016. In response, the government through the deployment of military forces, creation of mixed forces consisting of Cameroonian Armed Forces (FAC) and gendarmes to patrol the streets, cities, and towns, has increased surveillance. With security personnel patrolling major roads and highways, conducting raids, using intelligence gathering to track down and arrest separatist leaders and fighters and setting up of checkpoints at strategic locations around Bamenda, has prevented the movement of suspected separatist fighters resulting in relative peace.⁹

concerns. This is because several Separatists leaders had been victim of arbitrary arrests and detention in the country.

⁶ In January 2020, the government announced plans to amend Article 47 of the Cameroonian Constitution to allow for greater decentralization and devolution of powers to regional governments, and announced an amnesty for separatist fighters who lay down their arms and renounce violence. This move was intended to encourage rebels to surrender and participate in dialogue.

⁷ Kum Francis, 45, Teacher at GHS Mankon, Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

⁸ The DDR program is a process through which members of armed groups and forces are supported to lay down their weapons and transition to civilian life.

⁹ M., Pelican, "The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon-Historical and Political Background", *Working paper*, n° 20, 2022, pp. 22-23.

1.2. Approaches by the International community

Most other Western countries, particularly Germany, Canada and the UK have condemned separatist and security force violence and called for dialogue. While the executives of these countries criticize both sides, their parliaments have taken a stricter attitude toward Cameroon's government. In Germany, the Bundestag has organized debates on Cameroon and some 50 deputies have called on their governments to suspend economic cooperation with Cameroon in the event of further human rights violations in the Anglophone regions.¹⁰

Switzerland since late 2018, the Center for Humanitarian Dialogue (a Swiss NGO) increased its engagement with Anglophones federalist leaders and some separatist groups, in order to move towards dialogue between them and the Cameroonian government. In March, the president of Switzerland travelled to Cameroon to offer his country's mediation to president Biya.¹¹

At the multilateral level, the UN is at the forefront. The UN Regional Office for Central Africa has issued statements and the Secretary-General has phoned Paul Biya. The UN has asked both sides to guarantee humanitarian access to zones affected by the conflict, end the violence and agree to dialogue. It has offered its good offices for the purposes of mediation. But the Anglophone question has not yet appeared on the Security Council agenda, due to disagreements between permanent members and lobbying by Cameroon's diplomats.¹²

Despite its immense economic role (Cameroon's main trading partner, main contributor of development and humanitarian aid), the EU is unable to intervene decisively on major political issues, such as the Anglophone crisis. Nevertheless, the EU position has recently evolved. In March, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs raised the tone after the arrest and indictment by the Yaoundé military tribunal of the main opposition leader, Maurice Kamto, and 150 members of his party, the Cameroon Renaissance Movement, "engage in dialogue to find peaceful and sustainable solutions to the Anglophone crisis" and "reform the electoral law."¹³

The AU has taken a more discreet position on the Anglophone crisis, although many African and Western diplomats would like to see it playing a greater role. For the moment,

¹⁰ International Crisis Group (ICG), 2019, p. 19.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ In April, the EU parliament voted a resolution on Cameroon, calling on the Cameroonian government to immediately release Maurice Kamto and other political detainees. International Crisis Group (ICG), 2019, p. 20.

only the African Commission of Human and People's Rights has firmly condemned government actions. Former African Heads of State, including Nigeria's Olusegun Obasanjo and Ghana's Jerry Rawlings have emphasized that a solution requires an inclusive dialogue, but the AU does not seem inclined to put any pressure on Yaoundé.¹⁴ The African Union endorsed the execution of community-oriented initiatives designed to enhance reconciliation, social unity, and harmonious coexistence among various ethnic groups within the Bamenda municipality. These initiatives encompassed the creation of community dialogue forums, cultural exchange programs, and collaborative development projects that encouraged mutual understanding and cooperation among opposing parties.¹⁵

Inter-governmental organizations, such as the Commonwealth, have little influence or willingness to take the initiative on the Anglophone question, although the Commonwealth has issued some statements and its secretary general visited Cameroon in December 2017. Others, such as the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (EMCCA) and the International Organization of the Francophonie have condemned violence but tend to back the government strategies for peace building.¹⁶

1.3. Limitations to Government-led interventions in resolving conflicts in the municipality

1.3.1. Governance Issues

The people in Bamenda feel that the unresolved nature of the crisis is as a result of poor governance. The state is using the divide-and-rule tactic, claiming that the protesters want to divide the country.¹⁷ In this way, it is preventing the formation of a broader movement of Cameroonians, regardless of colonial heritage and postcolonial intermediary identities, and rallying against the real problem of the government.¹⁸ On account of the interview, another participant said, "The unresolved land conflicts and the Anglophone crisis in the Bamenda municipality can be attributed to poor governance, which has led to a breakdown in trust between the government and the population."¹⁹ All this account for the lack of representation

¹⁴ International Crisis Group (ICG), 2019, p. 21.

¹⁵ Kum Francis, 45, Teacher (GHS Mankon), Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

¹⁶ International Crisis Group (ICG), 2019, p. 21.

¹⁷ The divide and rule strategy involves exacerbating existing social, ethnic or regional divisions to maintain power and suppress dissent.

¹⁸ Ngah Ben, 43, managing director, Commercial Avenue Bamenda, 20 September 2023.

¹⁹ Tegum Daniel, 75, retired teacher, Old Town – Bamenda, 12 November 2023.

and participation in decision-making processes which have created a sense of exclusion and resentment among the population, leading to widespread discontent and protests. Additionally, “the government's heavy-handed approach to addressing these issues, including the use of force to quell protests, has only exacerbated the situation, further eroding trust and fueling calls for independence or autonomy.”²⁰

1.3.2. Oppression and Exclusion

People from the municipality are feeling oppressed and excluded because of the government's use of force to impose the French system in every aspect of their lives and administration. A participant noted, “The people feel discriminated upon and tribalized.”²¹ The government's failure to recognize and address their rights to land ownership and administration has led to feelings of marginalization and exclusion. Additionally, the imposition of French language and culture by the Francophone-dominated government has created a sense of cultural oppression, fueling resentment among the Anglophones. This has resulted in a deep-seated sense of mistrust and tension between the two linguistic groups, which has contributed to the fueling of the ongoing crisis in the municipality.²²

1.3.3. Cultural and Language Differences

President Biya disclosed that the government's initiative was aimed at establishing parity between English and French languages. However, the Anglophone minority express skepticism regarding the truthfulness of this statement. More to this, in 2005, the census showed that French is the most spoken (57 percent of the population), next to English (25 percent), though both are official languages in the country.²³ Despite being designated as a bilingual nation, a significant portion of Cameroonians lacks proficiency in both official languages, with French predominating as the primary language of communication in public and administrative offices.²⁴ The Bamenda municipality has a significant English-speaking population, which has historically maintained a distinct cultural identity and linguistic heritage. But, the majority of the country's population is French-speaking, and the people feel the government has traditionally promoted the French language in all government and public offices. This has led to tensions between the two groups, with the English-speaking population feeling marginalized

²⁰ Tegum Daniel, 75, retired teacher, Old Town – Bamenda, 12 November 2023.

²¹ Ngum Henrietta, 32, civil servant at MINAC, Up Town Bamenda, 22 October 2023.

²² Tegum Daniel, 75, retired teacher, Old Town – Bamenda, 12 November 2023.

²³ W., Dze-Ngwa, “Official Bilingualism and Clashing Colonial Legacies in Cameroon: A Historical Analysis since Reunification in 1961 to the Present”, NY: *Nova Science Publishers*, 2015.

²⁴ Ilyn Ferla, 31, Civil servant at MINAC, Up Town Bamenda, 13 December 2023.

and ignored by the government.²⁵ This makes it challenging to resolve the long-standing land disputes and addressing the grievances of the masses.

1.3.4. Political domination

Anglophones, including Nyamnjoh, a Francophone, feels the President has turned Cameroon into a country with a chronic lack of vision or commitment to democracy and created a corrupt system with more room for loyal mediocracy than critical excellence.²⁶ The entronement of traditional rulers and other authorities by government administrators, and the Divisional Officers involving in traditional matters is not acceptable by the people and stands as a contributing factor to the conflict.²⁷ The exploitation of their natural resources without providing adequate compensation or benefits to the local communities, has also led to deep-seated resentment and feelings of marginalization among the people thereby contributing to the protracted conflicts.²⁸ This political domination has led to the erosion of trust between the government and the people, making it difficult to find a lasting solution to the land conflicts and the crisis affecting the municipality.

1.3.5. Marginalization

When President Ahidjo came into power and changed the star from two to one star, it was meant to be a symbol of unity but the Anglophones viewed that as marginalization and as the government trying to force them into the Francophone system.²⁹ For them, they had been pushed to the background, a situation which affected the community in every social aspect.³⁰ To this, they decided to protest the more than 56 years of marginalization, oppression, and suppression that they have endured. For decades, the Francophone-dominated government has ignored the cultural, linguistic, and economic needs of the English-speaking population, leading to feelings of exclusion and resentment.³¹ In reference to land conflicts, the municipality, had been plagued by land conflicts between local farmers and foreign investors, with many of the residents feeling that their rights to their ancestral lands are being threatened

²⁵ Ntabeng Joshua, 27, worker at the Community Youth Art Center, Commercial Avenue Bamenda, 20 October 2023.

²⁶ P., Konings., and F., Nyamnjoh, The Anglophone Problem in Cameroon. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 35(2), 1997, p. 207.

²⁷ Pa Louise, 66, quarter head Abangoh, Abangoh Bamenda, 13 October 2023.

²⁸ Emile Bemirla, 37, advisor at Integrated Agriculture Association, 23 November 2023, Commercial Avenue.

²⁹ The national flag was changed on 20 May 1975 with two stars removed and replaced with a large central star as a symbol of unity by Ahmadou Ahidjo.

³⁰ Chiwoo Emeld Ntebe, 48, worker at MINAC, Up Town – Bamenda, 16 December 2023.

³¹ Lum Emelda, 27, Teacher, Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

by the influx of foreigners and government-backed development projects.³² This sense of marginalization has contributed to a deep-seated mistrust of the government thereby limiting her role in resolving the conflicts and restoring peace.

1.3.6. Economic Injustice

The unresolved land conflicts and the Anglophone crisis in the Bamenda municipality can be attributed to a complex web of historical, political, and cultural factors, including economic injustice. The people feel abandoned economically, and that all the good positions have been given to the Francophones in the government, even the big industries are controlled by the Francophones.³³ The region's fertile land has been a subject of contention between indigenous farmers and colonial powers, with the British granting large tracts of land to European companies, leaving local communities with limited access to resources. This historical injustice has led to feelings of marginalization and resentment among the population, who feel that their economic potential is being exploited by the French-dominated government in Yaounde. The resulting tensions have contributed to the current crisis, with many Anglophone leaders accusing the government of perpetuating economic inequality and denying them access to economic opportunities, leading to widespread protests and demands for greater autonomy or independence.³⁴

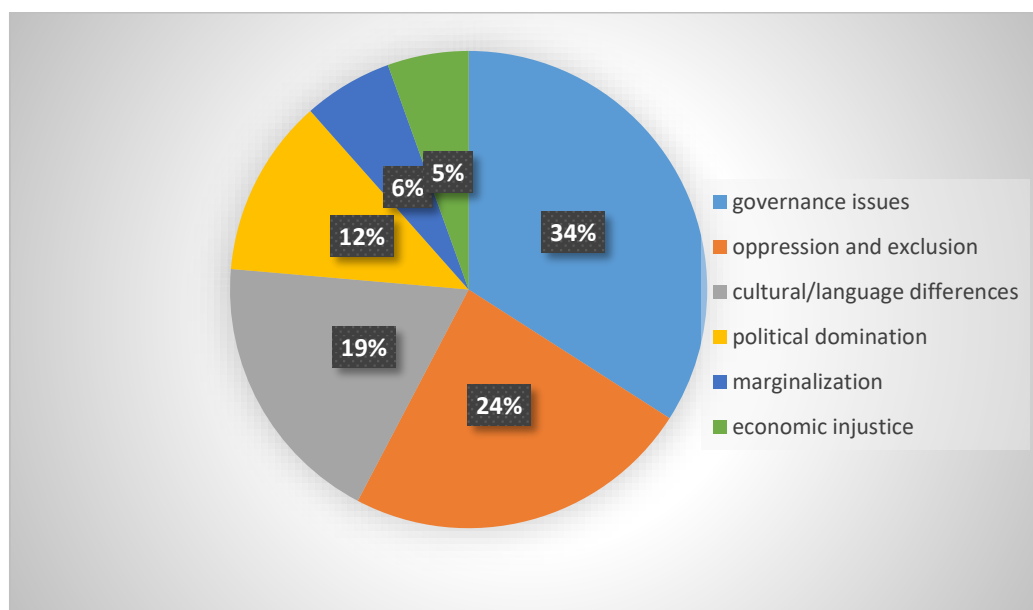
These were key themes that emerged as obstacles to government interventions for peace when conducting the findings. The results reveal the different rates at which government intervention falls short in establishing peace in the area. The main factor being governance issues (34 percent), followed by oppression and exclusion (24 percent), next by culture/language differences (19 percent), trained by political domination (12 percent), marginalization (6 percent) and economic injustice (5 percent).

³² Beckline Mangam, 45, Secretary General (Integrated Agriculture Association), Commercial Avenue Bamenda, 23 October 2023.

³³ Ashu Etang Wilfred, 32, researcher at Pan African Institute for Development –West Africa, Sonac Street Bamenda, 25 October 2023.

³⁴ Idem.

Figure 2: **Conceptual framework showing limitations of government approach to peace building**



Source: Nandji Kwekeu, January 15 2024.

Despite the attempts made to resolve the ongoing conflicts, the violence has not yet been silenced. The fundamental question at this point remains; why are these conflicts so difficult to resolve despite all these resolutions put together. More broadly, the conflicts highlight the shortcomings of Cameroon's centralized governance model and raises a crucial issue that the government must address: the need to improve the way the state handles minority rights, colonial heritages and cultural specificities. Resolving conflicts in Cameroon requires taking into account vital factors that are essential for executing the necessary institutional and governance reforms. The ongoing management of these conflicts demands a multifaceted, long-term strategy that integrates legal and community-based approaches to advance towards more enduring resolutions.

2. CULTURE AS AN APPROACH TO PEACE BUILDING IN THE BAMENDA MUNICIPALITY

This section is at the heart of the research, exploring how the Bamenda people have established and maintained a relative peace that exists outside the formal state system. While government interventions often rely on top-down laws, the cultural approach is built on restorative justice and mending of the social fabric rather than just punishing an offender. By looking at these indigenous tools explored in the municipality, we see a unique roadmap for peace that prioritizes the community and its shared identity.

2.1. Implementation of Culture as a tool for Peace building in the Municipality

There are practically endless possibilities for promoting peace through culture that contribute to personal development and identity achievement. A healthy society demands efforts to promote equal recognition of all identities, and culture thereby providing a uniquely effective space through which peace may be established.

2.1.1. The contribution of arts as a tool for peace building in the Bamenda municipality

Given the hopelessness and trauma that came with the conflict, arts presented a temporary outlet for the actual situation, serving as an avenue for coping and imagining alternate scenarios to the reality of conflict. Arts and culture have much potential to build peace and facilitate processes of reconciliation. Arts have always played a social role within our world. Artists are the voices of some of the most marginalized groups within societies, the mirror the social, cultural and political realities of their time and propose new and alternate imaginings for the future. Arts play a role during all phase of conflict. In the current case, in this period of active violence, art and cultural activities have been used as a tool to “relativize” conflicts.³⁵ This could be seen through.

2.1.1.1. Youth Arts and Cultural Festivals

Youth festivals promote culture and arts. They are important in academic routines from schools and colleges to regions and states. The programs showcase dance, music, paintings, writings, crafts and theatre. This atmosphere, gives an avenue to foster mutual respect, social peace, national unity and compassion, all needed to build peace in a community. Additionally, it fosters the cultural growth of a nation and a sense of fraternity among the people. They are a means of inter-generational communication and cultural education. Equally, they serve a crucial role in safeguarding cultural heritage by transmitting information and experiences to future generations. Throughout history, numerous African societies have gained recognition for their rich artistic heritage, cultural practices, and traditional customs. The primary purpose of youth festivals is to foster artistic and cultural growth. It gives the youth a new sense of energy.³⁶

³⁵ E. N., Silverman, *The Contribution of Art And Culture in Peace and Reconciliation Processes in Asia -A literature review and case studies from Pakistan, Nepal, Myanmar, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh*, Denmark: Centre for Culture and Development, 2015, p. 11.

³⁶ Chinwe Stella, 32, civil servant at Youth Outreach Organization, City Chemist Bamenda, 15 November 2023.

Art is the reflection of the society, which is the representation of people's lives. Thus creativity fundamentally affects the human heart and creates diverse feelings in individuals which can readily influence their perceptions about humanity. In the Bamenda municipality there are a wide range of Youth Art NGOs alongside the ministry of Youth Affaires which organize art and cultural festivals in order to ignite the feelings of brotherhood amidst the citizens and revalorize culture as the most essential aspect of a society.³⁷ These festivals like the Youth FESTAC annual festival that celebrates African culture and talents, and the Bamenda Easter Cultural Festival organized by princess Angwafor for the promotion of creativity and cultural diversity, through a variety of performances, including dance, music, painting, modeling, writing, mimes and theatre.³⁸ Such activities has allowed the people especially the youths to showcase their literacy and artistic abilities and equally encourage the feeling of "togetherness". Only by promoting brotherhood throughout the nation can violence and classism be eradicated, which will in turn promote national unity crucial for the integrity of the country.³⁹

From our research, we discovered that, the youth festivals were organized in the forms of competitions and during these youth festivals, multiple cultures in the region united on the same stage and demonstrated diversity within unity. To this we derive that:

- i. It permitted the youths to participate in a variety of recreational and challenging events. And from the concluding results, majority of the youths were able to reunite with their local culture;
- ii. Equally, it was generally agreed that the events held during the Youths, Art and Cultural festivals created awareness among the youths about the various cultures and arts of the country
- iii. Most youths who partook in the events resolved that more efforts are to be made for the events to be communicated and felt at the national level as this would create more awareness and promote unity at a greater scale;
- iv. Additionally, it was highly agreed that the diverse solidarity created by the festivals plays a crucial role in the formation of youth identity and development of leadership qualities in the youths;

³⁷ Chufor Bryan, 25, director at Youth Outreach Organization, City Chemist Bamenda, 19 November 2023.

³⁸ *Idem*.

³⁹ Fisiy Kinkoh, 26, consultant, City Chemist Bamenda, 19 November 2023.

v. Also most youths considered that using the media to project the festivals at the national and global levels is a great means of sensitization. Nevertheless, the media channels and sources must be trustworthy as their purity impacts the reader, the listener and society as a whole.

This can be seen in the table presented below. From the overall results, it is obvious that the people deem art as a very efficient mechanism and initiative to peace building.

Table 4 : Cross-tabulation between research hypothesis and respondents of research on the role of arts in peace building

Hypothesis of research	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Festivals help the youths to connect with their local culture	3%	5%	12%	35%	45%
Festivals create awareness among the youths about the various cultures and arts of the country	7%	9%	7%	34%	43%
Festivals do not communicate the culture at the national level	20%	22%	17%	19%	22%
Leadership qualities develop in youths during festivals	1%	5%	3%	37%	54%
Medias should not broadcast cultural festivals	40%	35%	5%	12%	8%

Source: Fieldwork data, 2023.

Other artistic methods have been employed by local communities and organizations. Here are some examples:

i. Story-telling and Oral History: Oral traditions have been used to share stories of ancestral lands, migration patterns, and cultural practices. This helps to build empathy and understanding among conflicting parties, promoting reconciliation and a sense of shared history. The Bamenda-based "Community Youth Art Center" has utilized this approach to facilitate community-led peace building initiatives.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Ngah Ben, 43, managing director, Commercial Avenue Bamenda, 20 September 2023.

- ii. Visual Arts: Local artists have employed various forms of visual art, such as murals, paintings, and sculptures, to represent the histories and perspectives of conflicting parties.⁴¹ This creative expression has helped to break down barriers and foster dialogue, as seen in the "Bamenda Walls Project," which brought together artists and community members to create a mural representing the city's history and diversity.⁴²
- iii. Theater for Development: Theater performances have been used to raise awareness about land conflicts, promote empathy, and encourage community engagement in conflict resolution. The "Bamenda Theater for Development" has staged plays that highlight the struggles of local communities affected by land conflicts.⁴³
- iv. Photo voice: Photo voice is a participatory methodology that empowers local communities to take photos that represent their concerns and experiences related to conflicts. This visual representation can help raise awareness about the issues and provide a platform for community voices to be heard. The "Reconciliation and Development association" has used Photo voice in several projects related to conflicts so as to make the voice of the people heard.
- v. Music for Peace: Music has been used as a tool for promoting peace and unity among conflicting parties. The "Bamenda Music Festival" has brought together musicians from different backgrounds to perform songs that promote harmony and understanding.⁴⁴

While these methods are not mutually exclusive, they often work together to create a comprehensive approach to resolving conflicts in the Bamenda Municipality.

2.1.2. Traditional Peace Building Approaches in the Bamenda municipality

Traditional approaches to peace building focus on conflict management and resolution. Conflict management merely works to contain or end violent conflict. Conflict resolution attempts to resolve the issues at hand through negotiated settlements between opposing sides. These approaches to peace building demonstrate a continual focus on reducing or ending physical violence as the means and ends to peace. Traditional approaches to peace seek solutions at an elite and surface level through negotiated settlements that fail to provide for the

⁴¹ S. B., Tanwie, "Promoting a Culture of Peace between Nkwen and Bamendankwe Communities in Cameroon through Video for Development: Artistic Community Participation towards Peaceful Coexistence", 2021, <https://www.kubi-online.de>, Accessed 18 November 2023, at 9:30 pm.

⁴² Fisiy Kinkoh, 26, consultant, City Chemist Bamenda, 19 November 2023.

⁴³ Idem.

⁴⁴ Fon Forchesiri III, 35, traditional ruler, Bamendankwe Palace, 13 December 2023.

in-depth process necessary for the creation of a healthy society and sustainable peace. Still, a consideration of conflict resolution practices highlights current understandings of peace.

2.1.2.1. Traditional approaches: *fons* hosting the festivals of heritage and culture of FEHACU

During the FEHACU festival in the Nkwen's fon palace in 2022, his majesty Fon Azehfor III of Nkwen called on sons and daughters of his fonom to embrace peace and living together as a tool for development. He noted that the festival finds meaning in the culture of the people and brings out a sense of belonging. Peace, his Majesty highlighted is crucial for the socio-economic development of the region and should be preserved jealously at all times. "Peace is the greatest weapon for development that every other person should have. We must be cautious to shun violence and embrace the true values of peace. Shun tribalism, nepotism, corruption, as we open our door to a cosmopolitan society."⁴⁵ He added by telling parents that if the house is in order then society is in order and equally demonstrated on the need for self-growth and togetherness.

Plate 4 : Fon Forchesiri III of Bamendankwe, Fon Angwafo IV of Mankon and Fon Azehfor III of Nkwen marching for peace holding the peace plant, Bamenda 2023



Source: www.observer237.com, accessed 15 January 2024, at 11:15 am.

⁴⁵ Speech made by his Royal Majesty *Fon Azehfor III* of Nkwen during the festival of Heritage and Culture in Nkwen Fon's palace 2022.

In addition, traditional leaders are at the centre of the local governance. They serve as consultants in municipal councils because they help to identify the needs, troubles and worries of the citizens and are in a better position to express their grievances to the government administrators. Their position has made them able to propagate the peace offerings initiated by the government to in the municipality thereby fostering peace within these communities. Equally they have direct access to the separatist fighters through which they try to convince them to leave the bush and come back for reinsertion.⁴⁶ This has brought in relative stability in the municipality thanks to the works of these leaders who are actively participating and engaged in the conflict. Some of the other traditional methods employed to resolve conflicts in the Bamenda municipality include:

2.1.2.2. The use of Customary Laws

The Bamenda people have their own customary law, which is based on their traditional practices and cultural norms. This law is often used to resolve land conflicts, as it is considered more effective and relevant than modern statutory law.⁴⁷ In the Bamenda municipality of Cameroon, some examples of customary laws that still hold significant influence include the use of "*Prestation*" (a traditional system of taxation) where farmers and traders pay a portion of their harvest or goods to the traditional rulers as a sign of loyalty and recognition of their authority. Another example is the *dakwa* tradition, where young men from different clans gather to settle disputes and resolve conflicts through a mix of storytelling, singing, and physical challenges, with the aim of maintaining peace and harmony in the community.⁴⁸ These customary laws are often seen as complementary to national laws and continue to play an important role in shaping social norms and relationships in the region.

2.1.2.3. The use of compromise and conciliation

In Bamenda, compromise and conciliation are important aspects of peace building. The concept of "conciliation" is deeply rooted in the local culture and is often seen as a way to restore harmony and peace to a community.⁴⁹ This approach to peace building is often facilitated by respected community leaders or mediators who are able to bring the parties together and help them find common ground. Parties involved in a land dispute often engage in discussions and negotiations to find a mutually acceptable solution. The culture places a strong emphasis on

⁴⁶ Fon Forchesiri III, 34, traditional ruler, Bamendankwe Palace, 13 December 2023.

⁴⁷ Idem.

⁴⁸ Fru Thaddeus, 78, Elder, Mankon Palace, 02 November 2023.

⁴⁹ Fon Forchesiri III, 34, traditional ruler, Bamendankwe Palace, 13 December 2023.

establishing peace through compromise and conciliation, which is reflected in the way that parties involved in land disputes approach resolution⁵⁰. By engaging in discussions and negotiations, individuals can work towards finding a mutually acceptable solution that takes into account the needs and concerns of all parties involved. For example, in a land dispute, a party may agree to sell a portion of their land to resolve the conflict, while also retaining some control over the remaining land.⁵¹

The use of compromise and conciliation in peace building is also influenced by the cultural values of the people which place a strong emphasis on community and social cohesion. In this context, finding a solution that works for everyone is seen as essential for maintaining social harmony and preventing further conflict. In practice, this may involve parties making concessions or compromises on their original demands, or finding creative solutions that meet the needs of multiple stakeholders. In case of the Anglophone crisis, many leaders and even community members have created environments conducive to engage in dialogue for building trust among community members and educating on the need for peace.

2.1.2.4. Traditional rites and ceremonies and practices

In some cases, traditional rites and ceremonies are used to resolve land conflicts. For example, the *Nsilo* ceremony is performed to mark the end of a conflict and restore peace between parties. This ceremonial practice not only signifies the conclusion of the conflict but also serves as a powerful symbol of reconciliation and peaceful coexistence within the community. Through the adherence to these time-honored rituals, individuals involved in land disputes can find closure, mend strained relationships, and foster a renewed sense of unity and understanding. The solemn observance of traditional ceremonies like the *Nsilo* not only facilitates the resolution of conflicts but also reinforces the cultural heritage and values that guide communal interactions and governance in such contexts.⁵²

Ancestral authorities, such as ancestors' spirits or fetish priests, may be consulted in cases where other methods have failed to resolve a land conflict. These authorities are believed to possess spiritual powers that can bring peace and harmony to the community. In situations where conventional conflict resolution methods have proven ineffective, individuals within a community may turn to ancestral authorities for guidance and intervention.⁵³ These venerable

⁵⁰ Fon Forchesiri III, 34, traditional ruler, Bamendankwe Palace, 13 December 2023.

⁵¹ Idem.

⁵² Fru Thaddeus, 78, Elder, Mankon Palace, 02 November 2023.

⁵³ Pa Louise, quarter head Abangoh, 66, Abangoh – Bamenda, 13 October 2023.

figures, which include the spirits of ancestors and respected fetish priests, are regarded as possessing potent spiritual abilities that are capable of restoring tranquility and unity within the community. By seeking the wisdom and influence of these ancestral authorities, community members put their faith in the belief that through their spiritual powers, resolutions can be achieved, fostering peace and harmony among all individuals involved.

Furthermore, in some cases, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms such as *Nweh* (a traditional dispute resolution mechanism among the Bamenda people) are still practiced and effective in resolving conflicts. Despite modernization and the advent of more formal legal systems, the enduring efficacy of *Nweh* in resolving disputes is a testament to its cultural significance and the deep-rooted trust placed in its outcomes. The practice of *Nweh* involves a series of traditional rituals and gatherings where community elders play a pivotal role in facilitating dialogue, mediating disputes, and guiding the involved parties towards an amicable resolution. Through a combination of storytelling, negotiation, and consensus-building, *Nweh* not only addresses the immediate conflict at hand but also fosters a sense of unity and cohesion within the Bamenda society. By upholding the values of community harmony and mutual respect, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms like *Nweh* continue to offer a valuable and culturally-rich alternative to contemporary dispute resolution methods.⁵⁴

From the table presented below, we observe that the majority of the research participants were in agreement with the use and effectiveness of traditional initiatives for peace building. This proves how much the people consider, respect and applaud their tradition as important and valuable for peaceful co-existence.

⁵⁴ *Nweh* is a traditional dispute resolution mechanism among the Bamenda people, which translates to "mediation" or "conciliation" in the Bamenda language. It is a time-tested process that has been used for centuries to resolve conflicts between individuals, families, communities, and even villages.

Table 5: Cross-tabulation between research hypothesis and respondents of research on the role of tradition in peace building

Hypothesis of research	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Cultural festivals help the people to connect with their local culture	1%	1%	2%	11%	85%
Customary laws are more efficient than statutory laws in resolving conflicts	11%	15%	9%	24%	39%
Compromise and conciliation helps to bridge divides between the people	1%	1%	3%	45%	50%
Traditional rites and ceremonies do not have more capabilities than state centric approach to peace building	40%	25%	2%	21%	12%
Traditional practices takes into consideration the rights of the people when peace talks are made	8%	12%	5%	35%	40%

Source: Fieldwork data, 2023.

The above results show that traditional methods are still employed today in the Bamenda municipality, alongside modern approaches to peace building. While they may not always produce quick or definitive solutions, they are an essential part of the region's cultural heritage and play a vital role in maintaining social cohesion and preserving traditional values. However, it's worth noting that these traditional methods may not always be effective in resolving complex or entrenched land conflicts, particularly those involving multiple parties or conflicting interests. In such cases, there is a mixed approach to peace building involving both traditional and modern approaches, such as mediation or arbitration, which prove more effective in achieving a lasting solution.

2.1.3. Strategies Employed by Women in Peace building

Women play a prominent a role in bringing about peace in post-conflict societies. In order to achieve sustainable peace, women must be involved in all stages of the peacemaking process, including participation in conflict resolution forums and the restoration of justice. As a group disproportionately affected by the conflict, and as victims of widespread sexual violence, it was

critical for women to be empowered and available to other women and children that have experienced trauma.⁵⁵ The resilience, courage, and above all, the compassion that women possess have proven fruitful in the rebuilding of the communities.

Women in the municipality have shown their role and influence as change-makers through the various organizations that continue to advocate for peace in the conflict-ridden areas. They have served as mediators, facilitating the resolution process, and even suggesting resolutions for conflicts. Before the advent of Western occupation, some communities used elderly women who could no longer conceive as peace envoys. Women have traditionally been viewed as sacred and untouchable. As such, they were shielded from war-related violations. In the case of the Anglophone crisis in the Bamenda municipality, CAWOPEM (Cameroon Women's Peace Movement) women who studied the situation, organized peace marches and rallies to promote peace and stability in the region. The extent to which women have developed both formal and informal initiatives to bring about peace shows that women are a formidable force to reckon with in mediation and conflict resolution and must be well integrated with these peace building processes.⁵⁶ Other subsequent roles played by women in peace building practices include;

2.1.3.1. Participation in Land Customary Councils

In the Bamenda municipality, women have taken the initiative to establish Land Customary Councils, venerable traditional bodies dedicated to arbitrating land-related disagreements within the community.⁵⁷ In 2018, the women's association such as the Association of Women Jurists of Cameroon (AFJC) leveraged their wealth of experience and profound knowledge of the cultural landscape alongside the Bamenda III council, to play a pivotal role in mediating land disputes ensuring that these conflicts were resolved in a manner that respected the historical norms and practices of the municipality. Through their dedication to upholding the principles of justice and equity rooted in the community's heritage, this Council serve as bastions of wisdom and guidance in the effective resolution of land-related issues, contributing to the harmonious coexistence and sustainable development of the Bamenda municipality.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ K., Anweting, and T., Ogar, "Traditional Roles of African Women in Peace Making and Peace Building: An Evaluation in NGO", *In Inter Disciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Practice*, Vol.1, 2013, p. 46.

⁵⁶ Fuambu Georgez, 56, Divisional delegate (MINPROFF), Old Town Bamenda, 22 November 2023.

⁵⁷ Mambo Brenda, 32, Worker at MINPROFF, Old Town Bamenda, 22 November 2023.

⁵⁸ Idem.

2.1.3.2. Creation of Women's Organizations

Women's organizations play a crucial role in conflict resolution by offering invaluable support and advocacy to women who are impacted by various disputes. One exemplary organization that exemplifies this is the Mother of Hope Cameroon (MOHCAM). Through their dedicated efforts, they have been able to provide a safe and empowering space for women to seek guidance and assistance during challenging times.⁵⁹ By equipping women with the necessary resources and knowledge, these organizations enable them to navigate through conflicts and advocate for their rights effectively. The impact of such organizations goes beyond individual assistance, as they also contribute to fostering a more inclusive and peaceful society by addressing the root causes of conflicts and promoting gender equality at large.⁶⁰

2.1.3.3. Traditional Arbitration

Women have used traditional arbitration methods, such as the *takembeng* system in Nkwen, where elderly women or respected community women leaders mediate disputes and provide a binding decision. In this system, women have found a platform to voice their concerns and seek justice in matters that directly affect them. The *Takembeng* system not only provides a pathway for conflict resolution but also serves as a forum for women to assert their rights and have their grievances heard by those in positions of authority within the community. Through the utilization of such traditional methods, women have been able to navigate and address issues effectively, contributing to the maintenance of social harmony and cohesion.⁶¹

2.1.3.4. Cultural Events

Women have taken a proactive role in fostering peace and reconciliation through the organization of various cultural events. These events, ranging from traditional dances like the *Mbagalum* dance performed by the people of Nkwen, to elaborate ceremonies like birth, marriage to, serve as powerful expressions of unity and harmony amidst turmoil. By showcasing their rich cultural heritage and traditions in festivals like FEHACU (Festival Heritage of Arts and Culture), these women not only seek to uplift and unite their communities but also to bridge divides and promote understanding among conflicting factions.⁶² Through their collective efforts, these cultural events have become poignant symbols of resilience and

⁵⁹ Menkem Catherine, 35, Mother of Hope Cameroon MOHCAM, Savannah Street Bamenda, 27 October 2023.

⁶⁰ Idem.

⁶¹ H. K., Kam, "Women's Resistance in Cameroon's Western Grassfields: The Power of Symbols, Organization, and Leadership, 1957-1961", *African Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 12, 2011, p. 75.

⁶² Fon Forchesiri III, 34, traditional ruler, Bamendankwe Palace, 13 December 2023.

hope in the quest for peace in Bamenda. Another of such events was the food cultural festival organized by the women of the ministry of arts and culture to present and showcase the binding and reconciliatory power food can have in the society.⁶³

2.1.3.5. Education and Awareness

Through tireless efforts, they have effectively heightened awareness among community members about the importance of upholding each other's rights and the potentially devastating consequences of participating in violent confrontations. Furthermore, women have demonstrated remarkable generosity by offering valuable guidance and sharing resources to inspire and empower young girls and boys to explore artisanal skills as a viable means of livelihood. An example is COMINSUD (Community Initiative for Sustainable Development).⁶⁴

By nurturing these creative talents and providing alternative pathways for personal and economic development, women have successfully diverted the youth from engaging in harmful and violent behaviors, thereby fostering a culture of peace and prosperity within their societies.

Table 6: Cross-tabulation between research hypothesis and respondents of research on the role of women in peace building

Hypothesis of research	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Women are allowed to participate in land customary councils	30%	25%	5%	28%	12%
Women organizations focus mainly on gender issues than general violence in the communities	15%	30%	10%	20%	25%
Women have a say in traditional arbitration	35%	30%	5%	20%	10%
The cultural events encourages togetherness and appreciation of ones' culture	3%	5%	1%	40%	51%
Education and awareness nurtures creativity among the youths and promotes peace building	1%	2%	0%	45%	53%

Source: Fieldwork data, 2023.

⁶³ Ngum Henrietta, 32, civil servant at Ministry of Arts and Culture (MINAC), Up Town Bamenda, 22 October 2023.

⁶⁴ Mambo Brenda, 32, Worker at MINPROFF, Old Town Bamenda, 22 November 2023.

The above presentation reveals how far women's engagement in peace building is recognized. Despite some obstacles, it is still highly applauded as a vital undertaking to peace building. According to the society, women are seen as mothers and architects of ethical standards that are important for imparting young generation with values and respect which encourages peaceful co-existence.⁶⁵ Although traditional societies restrict women from interfering in the affairs of society, this does not hold true for the municipality. Instead, they are encouraged to speak up their minds and make suggestions on how peace can be attained. This has proved useful in several conflict cases.

2.1.4. Religion and civil societies as mechanisms to Peace Building

One such prominent group that played a key role in efforts to resolve the conflicts in the municipality was the church. Church leaders from the Catholic, Presbyterian, and the Baptist churches were involved in peace-building efforts at all levels as they used their influence to stop and prevent violence by communities and armed groups.

The first of such roles was that of church leaders who organized ecumenical prayers, sermons, and joint celebrations of Christian, and Muslim festivals as symbols of imperative peace and peaceful co-existence. Some churches like the Catholic Church have dispatched leaders who have directly mediated in areas affected by the conflicts. Scholars such as Lang Michael a Religion historian argued on the importance of alternative dispute resolution, show the important role played by the Catholic Church in the management of conflicts and peace-building in the North West Region.⁶⁶ The Catholic Church in December 2002 created an institution of peace-building known as the Justice and Peace Commission (JPC) in the Archdioceses of Bamenda. Its main objectives were to protect the rights of the vulnerable groups during conflicts, empower the poor, intervene and mediate in conflicts, organized training and educative programs aimed at monitoring and preventing conflict.⁶⁷

Upon creation in 2002, the JPC investigated into the kind, origin and type of conflicts in the municipality in order to understand how it could intervene in their management. Furthermore, with credible information about the conflicts, the Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Church (JPC) established an alternative Dispute Resolution unit in almost all the headquarters of the seven divisions of the North West Region. The alternative Dispute

⁶⁵ Fuambu Georgez, 56, Divisional delegate (MINPROFF), Old Town Bamenda, 22 November 2023.

⁶⁶ M. K., Lang, "Inter-Ethnic Conflict Management and Prevention in Cameroon's North West: Assessing the Role of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Archdiocese of Bamenda", *Asean Journal of Peacebuilding*, Vol. 7, n° 1, 2019, pp. 125-142.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 127.

Resolution approach permitted the JPC to mediate in conflicts. Quite often, a third party engaged by the commission helped disputants through their negotiations in a non-handing fashion.⁶⁸ In response to the conflict in the Bamenda municipality, the JPC education program have been designed to serve as a curriculum for all catholic primary and secondary schools in the municipality and North West Region in general. The curriculum provides, life skills related to peace education and conflict minimization and prevention to teach youths and the community. The manuals addressed themes like condition for peace, approaches to resolving conflicts, mediation in schools, human rights and responsibilities, peace and violence. Also, teachers for both primary and secondary schools have been trained on the technique of teaching for a culture of peace, communication skills and questioning skills.⁶⁹

Since the 1990s many civil societies have emerged in Cameroon to remedy the socio-economic and political conditions of Cameroonians. Nkwi noted that, civil societies though greatly compromised by the political and social structures still contribute to societal transformation and nation building in Cameroon. It was within this context that, a wide range of civil society, peace initiatives emerged in the North West Region in general to deal with conflicts.⁷⁰ These local civil society groups helped in the creation of local peace committees in raising awareness on the need for peace. These civil society groups have also been involved to mediating directly in the conflict in the municipality.⁷¹ A good example of a civil society that has promoted peace among the communities challenged with the conflict was the Peace House CIG and Peace Advocates Training in Nkwen.

From the illustration below, majority of the people believe religion can be a cultural custom that helps maintain peace, while others see it as obstacles to peaceful coexistence. This can be due to the various religions and practices observed in the communities. While others see it as a saving factor, others consider it a gap factor. Regardless of this, all religious beliefs promote peacefulness thus making them being employed for maintaining peace and harmony in the society. Considering its validity by the majority of participants, it is clear that there has been substantial improvement in many conflict situations leading to its application in restoring peace between warring factions.

⁶⁸ Lang, "Inter-Ethnic Conflict, pp. 127-129.

⁶⁹ Paul Tabufor, 51, Pastor, Down Town Bamenda, 25 November 2023.

⁷⁰ Nkwi. "The Dilemma of Civil Society in Cameroon since 1990". *African Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.9, No.2, 2006, p. 94

⁷¹ Ibid,

Table 7: Cross-tabulation between research hypothesis and respondents of research on the role of religion in peace building

Hypothesis of research	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Religion fosters peace building by promoting dialogue	3%	5%	5%	52%	35%
Religion empowers local communities to take actions into their hands	15%	22%	8%	30%	25%
All religions in the community are actively participating and driven towards a common goal; peace building	22%	18%	10%	40%	10%
Religion must be considered as a mechanism for peace building	20%	26%	4%	30%	20%
Religion is not a hindrance to culture as far as peace building is concerned	30%	25%	5%	28%	12%

Source: Fieldwork data, 2023.

Overall, religious methods have been effective in resolving conflicts in the Bamenda municipality by promoting peaceful coexistence among communities and respecting traditional practices and customs.

2.2. Value of Culture as a Peace Building Mechanism

2.2.1. Freedom of expression

The use of culture as a peace building tool has helped to promote freedom of expression, community building, and storytelling thereby fostering equality, reconciliation, and social capital. Upholding and promoting culture is incredibly urgent in the municipality because of the intricate ties between culture and identity.⁷² The conflict included the repression or destruction of minority cultural identities in order to suppress political dissent. In other words, the culture has been used to address and express issues of power dynamics within society. Not only has this increased the level of trust in the government and demonstrate a genuine interest

⁷² Silverman, *The Contribution of Art and Culture in Peace*, 2015, p. 8.

in fostering a diverse and inclusive society but also it fosters the freedom of expression, nonviolent action, and recognition of minority identities.⁷³

2.2.2. Reconciliation and Social Capital

Cultural spaces have provided an objective space for people to build relationships and networks that help promote a healthy society. In peace building, culture foster diverse relationships through community-based activities, develop participants' peace building skills and resources, and redefine formally contested spaces.⁷⁴ These spaces are also an objective area where dialogue can take place through raising questions, exhibiting diverse opinions on social issues, and transcending differences. The viewers take in multiple perspectives of the conflict, and difficult issues can be discussed more freely.” In other words, culture has the ability to overcome language barriers, engage people of all ages, and develop relationships.⁷⁵ Cultural festivals such as FEHACU not only function as events where various traditions are showcased, but they also highlight the crucial necessity for cultural advancement within communities and the processes of peace building.

2.2.3. Mental Healing

When a military or political conflict is prolonged, we need to consider how culture can help heal psychological wounds. Victims on both sides will remain severely distressed, it is especially traumatic to be separated from fellow members of the same village or group and forced to fight against them. In order to assist individuals in recovering from their psychological trauma, cultural activities provide both parties with a chance to mutually articulate their emotions, which will aid in the redefinition of their identities. In order to assist individuals in recovering from their psychological trauma, cultural activities provide both parties with a chance to mutually articulate their emotions, which will aid in the redefinition of their identities.⁷⁶ A good example is a joint drama workshop held to bridge the gap between people who were on the government and rebel sides by offering an opportunity to converse with each other and to lessen the pain of those who had no choice but to battle against their brothers.⁷⁷

⁷³ Ngah Ben, 43, managing director at Community Youth Art Center, Commercial Avenue Bamenda, 20 September 2023.

⁷⁴ Ntabeng Joshua, 27, worker at the Community Youth Art Center, Commercial Avenue Bamenda, 20 October 2023.

⁷⁵ Idem.

⁷⁶ Fuambu Georgez, 56, Divisional delegate (MINPROFF), Old Town Bamenda, 22 November 2023.

⁷⁷ Tanwie, “Promoting a Culture of Peace between Nkwen and Bamendankwe”, 2021, p. 5.

2.2.4. Passing down the Memory of Conflicts and Anguish

Physical damage is easily discovered and drawn to everybody's attention, but mental anguish does not surface unless those who suffer open up their hearts. In many cases, those suffering from the crisis are reluctant to talk about their agony.⁷⁸ These approaches provided the people with an opportunity to express themselves and keeping a record of their psychological wounds which will in turn ease the process of reconciliation and peace building. For instance, in order to record and pass down from generation to generation the torment of victims of the Anglophone crisis, various opportunities have been created in the forms of literature, dramas, and international symposia by the Youth NGOs like the Youth Outreach Organization and the Community Youth Art Center.⁷⁹

2.2.5. Restoring cultural and ethnic pride

Conflicts often destroy or distort self-identity and demolish cultural traditions in which ethnic identity is expressed.⁸⁰ To this, the culturally-led peace building processes in the municipality have included activities for restoring and reestablishing a symbol of ethnic cultural identity, whether it is tangible (for instance a historical monument) or intangible (for instance performing art.). Inviting a separatist craftsman to restore ceramic art destroyed during the crisis is one example of such endeavors. Another practice is the annual Bamenda Festival, which celebrates the region's unique cultural heritage through traditional music, dance, and art. The festival brings together people from different ethnic groups, fostering a sense of community and unity. Additionally, the municipality's museums and cultural centers showcase the history and traditions of the various ethnic groups, providing a platform for intergenerational knowledge sharing and preservation of cultural practices. These initiatives help to promote a sense of identity and pride among the residents, reinforcing their connection to their cultural roots and promoting a positive self-image.⁸¹

2.3. Limitations to the implementation of culture as a tool for peace building in the Bamenda municipality

Culture can play a significant role in promoting peace, but equally has its weaknesses as a peace building mechanism in the municipality. Some of these are as follows;

⁷⁸ Mambo Brenda, 32, Worker at MINPROFF, Old Town Bamenda, 22 November 2023.

⁷⁹ Chiwoo Emeld Ntebe, 48, worker at MINAC, Up Town Bamenda, 16 December 2023.

⁸⁰ Fon Forchesiri III, 34, traditional ruler, Bamendankwe Palace, 13 December 2023.

⁸¹ Idem.

When conducting cultural activities for peace building, practical problems and difficulties were faced. Such concerns encompassed understanding the needs and intentions of the local population, as well as determining how to prioritize various projects.⁸² In cases where there are many possible options, it is not easy to determine when, what or how to launch and carry out such activities, or to judge priority of possible endeavors. To put it differently, getting the best out of these cultural exchanges means giving careful thought to the methods, approach and degree of involvement.

The second point is risk taking. Cultural activists may run the risk of being involved in conflict. We have to ask ourselves, therefore, who is going to be responsible for reducing such risk? What can be done to avoid risks? One approach is to invite the people from both sides of conflict areas to an outside world and have them take part in cultural workshops. In such a method, however, our support will be indirect. An alternative will be to create protected spaces which enable us to safely conduct cultural activities in conflict zones. Yet, numerous issues beyond our control will arise, including how and by whom such a space should be actually constructed.⁸³ There may, however, be a possibility that areas where cultural activities take place come to be considered and serve as protected spaces, if managed with the full cooperation of the citizens of the area.

Furthermore, there is the need to deal with political risk. Can cultural exchanges remain neutral without being biased towards either side? This is a constant political problem and one must find ways to avoid. Furthermore, organizers of these programs, especially culturally-related organizations, must consider how they should avoid the risk of getting involved inadvertently in conflicts and ensure the safety of activists.⁸⁴ Failing to take appropriate measures will likely set off increase insecurity in the areas of origin of those organizations.

Another weakness is the issue of cultural relativism. While it is essential to respect and acknowledge the diversity of cultural practices and beliefs, it can be challenging to find common ground and shared values that can unite conflicting parties in a peace building process.⁸⁵ Moreover, cultural relativism may be used as a justification for human rights abuses or discriminatory practices, which can further complicate efforts to achieve peace.

⁸² Chiwoo Emedl Ntebe, 48, worker at MINAC, Up Town Bamenda, 16 December 2023.

⁸³ Ngah Ben, 43, managing director at Community Youth Art Center, Commercial Avenue Bamenda, 20 September 2023.

⁸⁴ Ashu Etang Wilfred, 32, researcher at Pan African Institute for Development –West Africa, Sonac Street Bamenda, 25 October 2023.

⁸⁵ Fon Forchesiri III, 34, traditional ruler, Bamendankwe Palace, 13 December 2023.

Another challenge is the presence of historical grievances and traumas that are deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of Bamenda. These unresolved conflicts and grievances can continue to fuel distrust and animosity between different ethnic groups, hindering efforts to build peace and promote reconciliation. Additionally, cultural norms and values related to power dynamics and social hierarchy can perpetuate inequalities and exacerbate existing tensions, making it challenging to create a more inclusive and equitable society.⁸⁶

Furthermore, the influence of external actors and forces on cultural dynamics in Bamenda can also complicate peace building efforts. Globalization, migration and the spread of modern technology have all contributed to the rapid transformation of cultural norms and practices in the city, creating new tensions and challenges for those seeking to promote peace and stability.⁸⁷ Additionally, the legacy of colonialism and the imposition of foreign cultural values have further complicated the cultural landscape in Bamenda, making it difficult to reconcile traditional beliefs with modern ideals.⁸⁸

Another challenge of culture to peace building in the Bamenda municipality is the lack of effective communication and dialogue between different ethnic groups. The language barriers, cultural taboos and historical resentments can all contribute to the breakdown in communication and understanding, making it difficult to build trust and cooperation among the diverse communities in the city.⁸⁹ This also gives room to extremist ideologies and radical groups who often exploit cultural grievances and manipulate ethnic identities to incite violence and discord, further destabilizing the fragile peace in the city.

Additionally, the lack of institutional capacity and resources for cultural preservation and promotion can also hinder peace building efforts. Without adequate support for cultural initiatives and programs, it can be challenging to mobilize communities around shared cultural values and traditions, making it difficult to create a sense of identity and belonging that transcends ethnic divisions.⁹⁰ Moreover, the absence of cultural institutions and platforms for dialogue can limit opportunities for intercultural exchange and learning, further perpetuating misunderstandings and conflict.

⁸⁶ Fon Forchesiri III, 34, traditional ruler, Bamendankwe Palace, 13 December 2023.

⁸⁷ Kum Francis, 45, Teacher (GHS Mankon), Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

⁸⁸ Lum Emelda, 27, Teacher, Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

⁸⁹ Nde Godwill, 68, Traditional Councilor, Bamendankwe palace, 11 December 2023.

⁹⁰ Ntabeng Joshua, 27, worker at the Community Youth Art Center, Commercial Avenue Bamenda, 20 October 2023.

3. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT-LED AND CULTURAL-LED APPROACHES TO PEACE BUILDING

From 1990 to 2019, national authorities implemented a variety of tactics to tackle these enduring territorial conflicts. This comprehensive approach has encompassed extensive negotiations and mediations among affected communities, the delineation and formalization of land ownership rights, the establishment of specialized administrative bodies, and the enforcement of pertinent laws and regulations. Through these collective endeavors, the government has aimed to clarify ownership, alleviate tensions, and establish clearer boundaries between the different stakeholders with competing claims.

The government's approach to peace building in the Bamenda municipality falls short when compared to cultural approaches. There are several shortcomings in the government's approach that hinder effective peace building efforts. One of the main shortcomings is the lack of understanding and appreciation for the cultural dynamics and traditions of the local community. The government often imposes top-down policies and initiatives without considering the unique cultural context of the municipality. This approach disregards the importance of local customs, values, and traditions in fostering peace and harmony.⁹¹ The approach has equally faced significant criticism due to its lack of inclusivity and failure to address the root causes of conflict. Many community leaders and residents argue that the government's efforts have been superficial and ineffective in promoting lasting peace and reconciliation. The security measures and military interventions, have been criticized for exacerbating tensions and further alienating marginalized groups.⁹² Additionally, the government's failure to engage with local stakeholders and incorporate their perspectives and needs into the peace building process has been a major point of contention.⁹³ Critics argue that without genuine dialogue and participation from all relevant parties, the government's strategies are unlikely to achieve sustainable peace in the Bamenda municipality.⁹⁴

Secondly, we have the lack of cultural sensitivity. Government strategies may not always take into account the cultural nuances and traditions of the local population. This can lead to a disconnect between the government's approach and the cultural values and practices of the

⁹¹ J., Öjendal, H., Leonardsson, and M., Lundqvist, "Local Peacebuilding – Challenges and Opportunities", at : <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316544073>, accessed 15 March 2024, at 9:30 pm, p. 11.

⁹² Kum Francis, 45, Teacher (GHS Mankon), Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

⁹³ Idem.

⁹⁴ Bekono Cyrille, professor, Tecasse Yaounde, 08 August 2023.

community, making it difficult to effectively promote peace building.⁹⁵ While well-intentioned, this approach often lacks the depth and cultural sensitivity needed to truly address the root causes of conflict in the municipality. In contrast, traditional approaches to peace building, rooted in the rich cultural heritage of the community, have proven to be more effective in fostering reconciliation and sustainable peace.⁹⁶

Moreover, government strategies often follow a top-down approach, where decisions and policies are made at the higher levels of government and then implemented at the local level which may not adequately involve or empower local communities.⁹⁷ This can result in a lack of ownership and participation from the people directly affected by conflict, limiting the effectiveness of peace building initiatives.⁹⁸ This government's top-down approach to peace building often overlooks the unique cultural dynamics of the Bamenda municipality. Policies and programs imposed from outside the community may not resonate with local residents or address their specific needs and concerns. This can lead to a lack of trust and cooperation, hindering the effectiveness of peace building efforts. On the other hand, Cultural methods often involve the active participation and engagement of the local population. This can help to build a sense of ownership and responsibility within the community, leading to more sustainable and effective peace building initiatives.⁹⁹

Another factor includes limited resources. Government strategies may be constrained by limited resources, both financial and human. This can hinder the implementation of comprehensive and sustainable peace building initiatives, as there may not be enough funding or personnel to address all the complex issues and challenges within the municipality.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, the government's approach often relies heavily on security measures and law enforcement, neglecting the importance of social cohesion and trust-building. Cultural approaches, on the other hand, prioritize dialogue, reconciliation, and the building of relationships between different groups within the municipality. By fostering understanding and empathy, cultural approaches can help bridge divides and promote peaceful coexistence.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ Nde Godwill, 68, Traditional Councilor, Bamendankwe palace, 11 December 2023.

⁹⁶ Idem.

⁹⁷ R. N., Monteh, "The Intersection of Tradition and Modernity in Peacebuilding Mechanisms: A Cameroonian Perspective", *Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, Vol. 7, 2025, p. 110.

⁹⁸ Fuambu Georgez, 56, Divisional delegate (MINPROFF), Old Town Bamenda, 22 November 2023.

⁹⁹ Idem.

¹⁰⁰ Chufor Bryan, 25, Worker (Youth Outreach Organization), City chemist Bamenda, 29 September 2023.

¹⁰¹ Mr. Charles, 43, palace Secretary, Bamendankwe palace, 13 December 2023.

Additionally, Government strategies may be influenced by political considerations. These can sometimes prioritize short-term gains or political stability over long-term peace building efforts. This can undermine the effectiveness of government interventions and hinder the establishment of lasting peace within the community.¹⁰² Another shortcoming is the limited involvement of the local community in decision-making processes. The government tends to overlook the valuable insights and perspectives of the people who are directly affected by conflicts and violence. By excluding the community from the peace building process, the government fails to tap into the wealth of knowledge and experiences that could contribute to sustainable solutions.¹⁰³ In contrast, cultural approaches to peace building recognize the power and agency of local communities in resolving conflicts and promoting peace. These approaches prioritize community engagement, participation, and ownership, allowing for more sustainable and locally-driven solutions.¹⁰⁴

These critics to governmental approaches highlight the need for a more inclusive, holistic, transparent, and grassroots-oriented approach to peace-building. Advocates of cultural methods argue that they are more inclusive and participatory, allowing individuals and communities to take ownership of the peace building process.¹⁰⁵ By recognizing and respecting cultural traditions, these methods can help restore trust, heal wounds, and build sustainable peace from within. However, critics of cultural methods caution that they may not always be effective in addressing complex conflicts that require broader systemic changes. They argue that cultural practices can sometimes perpetuate inequalities, discrimination, or exclusion, and that government intervention is necessary to address these underlying issues. By addressing these concerns, the government can enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of its initiatives and work towards sustainable peace in the region.¹⁰⁶

Secondly, cultural approaches can sometimes perpetuate existing power dynamics or reinforce traditional norms that may not be conducive to long-term peace. Challenges may arise in adapting to changing societal dynamics and addressing complex issues that require broader systemic changes, and the cultural methods may also lack the resources and institutional support needed to address larger systemic issues. Without the backing of government institutions and funding, these approaches may struggle to have a lasting impact on peace-

¹⁰² Monteh, "The Intersection of Tradition and Modernity", 2025, p. 110.

¹⁰³ Fru Thaddeus, 78, Elder, Mankon Palace, 02 November 2023.

¹⁰⁴ Idem.

¹⁰⁵ Bekono Cyrille, professor, Tecasse Yaounde, 08 August 2023.

¹⁰⁶ K., Avruch, "Cross-Cultural Conflict", 2002, at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242598393>, accessed 15 March 2024, at 9:45 pm, pp. 4-5.

building efforts. Therefore, a combination of both government strategies and cultural methods may be necessary to address the complex and multifaceted nature of conflict within the Bamenda municipality.¹⁰⁷

More to this, despite cultural methods being inclusive and participatory, allowing individuals and communities to take ownership of the peace building process, critics of cultural methods caution that they may not always be effective in addressing complex conflicts that require broader systemic changes. They argue that cultural practices can sometimes perpetuate inequalities, discrimination, or exclusion, and that government intervention is necessary to address these underlying issues.¹⁰⁸

From the above analysis, it shows that government's approach to peace building in the Bamenda municipality falls short when compared to cultural approaches. By addressing the shortcomings of the government's approach, such as a lack of cultural sensitivity, limited community involvement, a focus on short-term solutions, neglect of socio-economic factors, and over-reliance on security measures, the government can work towards more effective and inclusive peace building initiatives that promote lasting peace and harmony in the municipality. Additionally, the government's approach often neglects the importance of grassroots initiatives and community-led efforts. Cultural approaches to peace building recognize the power and agency of local communities in resolving conflicts and promoting peace. These approaches prioritize community engagement, participation, and ownership, allowing for more sustainable and locally-driven solutions.¹⁰⁹

To find a way forward, it is crucial to recognize the strengths and limitations of both approaches. A comprehensive approach that combines government strategies with cultural methods may be the most effective way to promote peace within the Bamenda municipality. This could involve collaboration between government agencies, community leaders, civil society organizations, and international partners to develop and implement holistic peace-building initiatives. By leveraging the strengths of both approaches, it is possible to create a sustainable and inclusive peace process that addresses the unique challenges faced by the Bamenda municipality.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Bekono Cyrille, professor, Tecasse Yaounde, 08 August 2023.

¹⁰⁸ Kum Francis, 45, Teacher (GHS Mankon), Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

¹⁰⁹ Bekono Cyrille, professor, Tecasse Yaounde, 08 August 2023.

¹¹⁰ Idem.

Conclusion

In summary, violent conflicts are difficult to address because during these periods, society, communities and individuals are broken. Loss, hopelessness, betrayal, anger and pain are among the various emotions that individuals experience. Violent conflict is a no-win situation for ordinary people, everybody is a victim. Cultural activities provide space to creatively address the trauma that comes with active conflict as well as make accessible the tools such as dialogue, education and awareness to address violence. They are a life-force that allows individuals from opposing sides to come together, to laugh and cry together. Most of all, they enable ordinary men, women and children to imagine a different future, devoid from all types of violence and in which conflict can be resolved in a more peaceful way. When used together with State-based peace building techniques, culturally led initiatives become a medium through which peace may be realized.

CHAPTER FOUR: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES OF CULTURE IN PEACE BUILDING

Introduction

Having established the potential of culture as a peace building tool in Chapter Three, this chapter critically examines the challenges and perspectives surrounding its application within the Bamenda municipality and Cameroon as a whole. While cultural resources offer promising avenues for fostering peace and social cohesion, their utilization is not without obstacles. This chapter will begin by identifying the key challenges that hinder the effective use of culture for peace building in the Bamenda municipality. Despite these challenges, the chapter will also highlight the positive perspectives and opportunities for leveraging culture in peace building. This includes exploring how cultural heritage can be used to promote reconciliation and healing, adapted to address contemporary disputes, foster dialogue and understanding during crisis and in promoting a shared sense of identity within the municipality and country. By providing a balanced assessment of the challenges and perspectives of culture in peace building, this chapter aims to inform the development of more effective and culturally sensitive peace building strategies for the Bamenda Municipality.

1. CHALLENGES TO PEACE BUILDING STRATEGIES IN THE BAMENDA MUNICIPALITY

The persistence of conflicts within the Bamenda Municipality is not the result of a single isolated event, but is rooted in a complex interplay of historical, socio-political, and economic drivers. In this section, we identified the underlying structural factors that have transformed the municipality into a primary site of contention. Here the research moves beyond just stopping the violence to addressing the continuous triggers that challenge both state and cultural initiatives for peace building.

1.1. Language differentiation

“If you communicate with a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his native language, that goes to his heart.”¹

¹ Fon Forchesiri III, 34, Fon, Bamendankwe palace, 13 December 2023.

Challenges to peace building in Cameroon arise mainly from language and in-fighting within border tribes irrespective of the language. The government has seemingly overlooked English, one of its two official languages, in favor of promoting French. All administrative decisions are read or published in French. The issue of language pose as a barrier to national unity in the municipality, both official languages are spoken throughout the country but one feels marginalized.² It should be noted that French Cameroon accounts for 80 percent of the territory while English Cameroon 20 percent of the country. If this division is recognized, it is clear that on a natural note the French language should surpass the English language as it is spoken in 8 regions of the country compared to just 2 English speaking regions.³ More to this, the people seem to have forgotten that the French and English languages are just foreign languages adopted from the colonial masters. Thus the issue of language should not have to cause conflicts within the country.

During the Paris Peace Summit, President Paul Biya declared that they were key differences between the French and English speaking Cameroonians because of their different experiences under colonial rule.⁴ The result has been a juxtaposition of culture and civilization that makes things quite difficult.” This goes to say that one of the major source of division in the country amidst multiculturalism is the issue of language.⁵ Until this issue is addressed, certain conflict situations in the country may remain unresolved.

The limitations of a shared language not only hinders effective communication and understanding among the people in the municipality, but also creates barriers to social cohesion and collaboration. Without a common language to bridge the gap between communities, it becomes challenging to build relationships, foster empathy, and promote unity.⁶ This linguistic divide can lead to feelings of isolation, exclusion, and marginalization, further exacerbating existing tensions and conflicts within the region.⁷ Additionally, this lack poses significant challenges for governance and decision-making processes. Without a common medium of communication, it becomes difficult for diverse groups to participate in democratic processes, engage in dialogue, and work towards common goals. This lack of linguistic unity can hinder the development of inclusive policies, equitable resource allocation, and effective conflict

² W. Dze-Ngwa, “National Unity and National Integration in Cameroon”, 2006, p. 166.

³ Bekono Cyrille, professor, Tecasse Yaounde, 08 August 2023.

⁴ The Paris Peace Submit was held in France from the 11th to 13th of November 2019.

⁵ M., Jeter, “The Civil War Conflict between Anglophone/Francophones”, 2023, p. 52.

⁶ Mr. Charles, 43, palace Secretary, Bamendankwe palace, 13 December 2023.

⁷ Kum Francis, 45, Teacher (GHS Mankon), Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

resolution mechanisms, ultimately undermining efforts to promote peace and stability in the municipality and country as a whole.⁸

In Cameroon, there is no government position on language policy and planning apart from the statement that French and English shall be the official languages of the Republic. Fonlon, analyzing from a perspective of nationalist purposes, identifies that the purpose of bilingualism in Cameroon should determine its definition, description as well as its implementation. Since the policy symbolizes the promotion of national unity and integration, according to him, “The objective which we should envisage should instead be individual bilingualism whereby every child who follows the cycle of our educational system will be able to speak English and French.” Famous for his argument for, and position on early bilingualism, Fonlon has established the type of bilingualism to be pursued in schools.⁹ The absence of embracing bilingualism in this context causes language to act as an obstacle to peace building in the municipality and country as a whole.

1.2. Ethnic diversity

Ethnic diversity has been, and still continues to be a major barrier to peace building in the country. One characteristics of these conflicts is that the state is originally heterogeneous created by communal contenders, and this genuine circumstance led to the fact that different groups fighting to seek power and control over the other. These groups have hatred for one another as they have different identities in terms of religion, tradition, politics and conviction.¹⁰ This suggests that ethnic diversity resulting from artificial separation has diminished emotional connections within the municipality, thereby reinforcing the notion that conflicts are inherently a product of colonization.¹¹ The municipality is home to a population that includes more than 7 distinct ethnic groups, each with its own unique cultural traditions and territorial claims. This diversity often leads to competition for authority, resources, and political representation, which frequently results in clashes between the groups.¹²

The legacy of French and British colonial rule in the country has further exacerbated these issues by giving rise to pronounced socio-economic inequalities and a pervasive

⁸ Bekono Cyrille, professor, Tecasse Yaounde, 08 August 2023.

⁹ B., Fonlon, “The Language Problem in Cameroon: An Historical Perspective”, *ABBIA*, Vol. 5, 1969, p. 20.

¹⁰ M. A., Adig, “Belonging and Becoming: Boundary and Identity Issues in the North West Region of Cameroon”, *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, 2022, p. 56.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Fru Thaddeus, 78, Elder, Mankon Palace, 02 November 2023.

sentiment of marginalization among specific ethnic communities.¹³ This prevailing sense of injustice has fostered deep-seated resentment and mutual distrust between various ethnic factions, thereby perpetuating a cycle of violence and discord. Notably, the protracted Anglophone crisis that erupted in 2016 stands as a poignant testament to the enduring consequences of these historical and contemporary tensions, showcasing the profound challenges faced by the Cameroonian government in its endeavors to institute sustainable peace-building strategies and foster cohesive national solidarity amidst regional upheavals.¹⁴ Thus the issue of ethnic and cultural diversity has been considered a major challenge to peace building globally.

1.3. Lack of shared vision

Although a unified vision for peace building is deemed significant and a crucial result of the political process, in many cases, such a vision either does not exist or is not collectively embraced within the nation or the region. The lack of a shared vision for peace and development between national and international partners is a key challenge to peace building operations in the municipality. This could be expressed in the following

- the lack of a shared understanding of the context of conflict
- the absence of an agreed theory of change over the long term
- the difficulty of integrating different realities into one vision
- The tendency to focus on immediate priorities and interventions unsuited to address the multiple dimensions of the peace building challenge¹⁵.

In the municipality as well as in Cameroon, the absence of a unified vision among key players obstructs endeavors to build peace by fostering disarray, suspicion, and disunity. This lack of a clear and comprehensive understanding of the nation's prospects hinders progress towards peace, as various factions and individuals prioritize their own interests over the collective good. This leads to frequent clashes and power struggles, as different groups vie for control and access to resources. Without a shared vision, the underlying causes of conflict, such as marginalization and inequality, remain unaddressed.¹⁶ The absence of a common

¹³ E. Y. Sobseh, "The Demise of Colonialism and the Emergence of Boundary Conflicts in the Bamenda Grassfields of Cameroon", In *Boundary and History in Africa in Honor of Fanso Verkijika G.*, Yaounde, University of Yaounde, 2011, p. 87.

¹⁴ E. Achimbe, *The Roots of the Anglophone Problem*, 2018, pp. 170-172.

¹⁵ Challenges of Peace building, at <https://egyankosh.ac.in>, accessed 11 May 2023, at 7:45 pm.

¹⁶ Bekono Cyrille, professor, Tecasse Yaounde, 08 August 2023.

understanding of the nation's future, prevents effective strategies from being implemented to tackle these root issues. As a result, efforts to promote peace encounters significant challenges and struggle to make meaningful progress. The absence of a unified vision equally, allows for the perpetuation of conflicts, as different groups continue to pursue their own agendas without considering the broader consequences. This lack of cohesion and shared purpose undermines the stability of the country and perpetuates a cycle of violence and unrest.¹⁷

1.4. Citizen participation

Improving citizen engagement and guaranteeing their involvement in the development and execution of government policies are regarded as crucial elements of a revitalized governance framework and the social contract that supports it.¹⁸ However, effective involvements of civil society in key decision-making and planning context are rare in the municipality¹⁹. Civil societies, community-based organizations and ordinary citizens are not fully involved in peace building programs. Ensuring citizens' participation at all stages of the design and implementation of interventions in support for peace building objectives are seen as challenging yet key are for long term stability.²⁰ There is need for civil society participation, to enable the government to understand and respond to people's expectations and consequently to rebuild the trust between the states and citizens. However, state-centric and capital-centric approaches to peace building promoted by national and international partners do not help create space for civil society actors.

State-centric and capital-centric approaches to peace building, often espoused by national and international partners, tend to overshadow the crucial role of civil society actors in the process. By prioritizing the interests of governments and financial institutions, these approaches inadvertently sideline the voices and contributions of grassroots organizations, community leaders, and other civil society stakeholders.²¹ This lack of inclusion not only diminishes the diversity of perspectives necessary for comprehensive peace building but also hinders the development of sustainable solutions that truly resonate with the needs and aspirations of local populations. Consequently, a more balanced and inclusive approach that

¹⁷ Bekono Cyrille, professor, Tecasse Yaounde, 08 August 2023.

¹⁸ "Challenges of Peace building", at <https://egyankosh.ac.in>, accessed 11 May 2023, at 8:00 pm.

¹⁹ Ilyn Ferla, 31, Civil servant at MINAC, Up Town Bamenda, 13 November 2023.

²⁰ Idem.

²¹ Nkwi., "The Dilemma of Civil", 2023, p. 99.

recognizes and empowers civil society actors is essential to fostering genuine and enduring peace in conflict-affected regions.

1.5. Poor strategic communication

The lack of communication is identified as a real challenge to the advancement of peace building agenda. Unsurprisingly, strategic communication in fragile and conflict affected areas in the municipality seldom a priority, despite being a critical element for change and for efforts to increase the legitimacy and accountability of the state. Communicating government decisions in regards to critical peace building goals and interventions contributes to aligning interest and getting support for difficult reforms.²² The lack of strategic communication room, the main use of the French language, associated with the weakness of the leaders is a major factor affecting the consolidation and advancement of peace building processes in the municipality. Poor communication can cause anger, hurt feelings frustration, and sometimes damages the relationships and become non-reparable.²³

This limitation in effective communication not only hinders the ability of leaders to effectively convey their vision and goals to their team, but it also creates a barrier to collaboration and cooperation among different stakeholders involved in the peace building process. When information is only disseminated in French, it excludes non-French speakers from fully participating and understanding the discussions and decisions being made, leading to feelings of exclusion and marginalization.²⁴ Furthermore, weak leadership resulting from poor communication can lead to a lack of trust and confidence in the leadership, which can further hinder progress in peace building efforts. Without clear and transparent communication, misunderstandings and misinterpretations can arise, leading to conflicts and setbacks in the peace building process.²⁵

By addressing the issue of poor communication and strengthening leadership through effective communication strategies, peace building efforts can be more successful in achieving their goals and creating lasting peace and stability in conflict-affected regions.

²² De Soto, Alvaro and G. del Castillo. "Obstacles to Peace Building." *Foreign policy*, n°94, 1994, pp. 69-83.

²³ Beckline Mangam, 45, Secretary General (Integrated Agriculture Association), Commercial Avenue Bamenda, 23 October 2023.

²⁴ Fisiy Kinkoh, 26, consultant, City Chemist Bamenda, 19 November 2023.

²⁵ Chiwoo Emeld Ntebe, 48, worker at MINAC, Up Town Bamenda, 16 December 2023.

1.6. Attitude and Behavioral Problems

Peace building process is not only to resolve violent conflict but to deal with people of conflict mentality and their issues related to attitudes and behaviors, and social structures that mostly generate people's grievances. In this context, it was found in this study that peace related activities are affected because of the attitudes and behavioral problems which people have and often become reasons of personal and community conflicts. These problems exist among individuals, families and larger society in which people do not cooperate with one another at time of tension and misunderstanding and make these happenings an issue of ego to show attitude or behave violently.²⁶ In response of a question asked from participants that 'how attitudes and behavioral problems affect peace building efforts, many of them presented their views differently. One of the participants – a college teacher commented that: "We often face problems because of our attitude and behavior. We hardly accept one another's point of view and show attitude even to our family members on petty mistakes they commit."²⁷ This type of familial environment makes our youngsters emotional and intolerant within the family and outside. They mostly become the source of small-scale disputes that occur among family members or relatives that lead them to enmity or violent conflict at community level and create hurdles to peace efforts at local level."²⁸

Attitude and behavioral problems can significantly hinder peace building efforts in the municipality, in Cameroon and other countries experiencing conflict. Here are some ways in which they can do so:

- Polarization and division: Intolerant attitudes, along with hatred and mistrust, can foster divisions within communities, reinforcing existing social and ethnic cleavages. This can make it challenging to build bridges and foster dialogue between conflicting parties.²⁹
- Lack of empathy and understanding: When individuals or groups disregard the viewpoints of others or fail to demonstrate empathy for their challenges, it can foster a feeling of disconnection and mistrust, thereby complicating peace-building initiatives.³⁰
- Intimidation and violence: Acts of intimidation, threats, and violence directed at individuals or groups advocating for peace and reconciliation can suppress their voices and cultivate a climate of fear, thereby hindering the establishment of trust and the promotion of collaboration.³¹

²⁶ Fuambu Georgez, 56, Divisional delegate (MINPROFF), Old Town Bamenda, 22 November 2023.

²⁷ Tegum Daniel, 75, retired teacher, Old Town Bamenda, 12 November 2023.

²⁸ Idem.

²⁹ Nde Godwill, 68, Traditional Councilor, Bamendankwe palace, 11 December 2023.

³⁰ Paul Tabufor, 51, Pastor, Down Town Bamenda, 25 November 2023.

³¹ Mambo Brenda, 32, Worker at MINPROFF, Old Town Bamenda, 22 November 2023.

- Corruption and nepotism: When leaders or those in positions of authority partake in corrupt activities or show favoritism, it can undermine trust in institutions and foster resentment among the populace, thereby obstructing efforts to build peace.³²
- Resistance to change: In circumstances where beliefs are firmly established, individuals or groups might oppose changes that foster peace and reconciliation, apprehensive that such changes could threaten their authority or the existing state of affairs.³³

1.7. Education

Enhancing education of cultural diversity to promote peace, links indigenous knowledge systems through to modern information technology. However, insufficient technological advancements and limited literacy rates in the country present significant challenges to the advancement of educational and informational strategies aimed at fostering peace. By promoting intercultural dialogue, it will increase tolerance and deepen understanding of indigenous people.³⁴ If intercultural understanding and tolerance are practiced through education, the diverse cultures in the municipality can easily be integrated into the formation of cultural identity of the region and nation which is a key dimension to resolving the conflict in the municipality. Ignoring these obstacles hinder the dissemination of knowledge and information, which makes it difficult to promote understanding and tolerance among different cultures and communities.³⁵

The significant challenges presented by insufficient educational infrastructures and substandard levels of literacy across the African continent serve as formidable barriers to the advancement of initiatives aimed at fostering peace. These obstacles hinder the effective dissemination of knowledge and information, further entrenching complexities in promoting mutual understanding and acceptance among the diverse cultures in the community. In areas where educational resources are scarce and literacy rates remain low, the task of nurturing meaningful dialogue and cooperation becomes increasingly arduous.³⁶ In the municipality, Cameroon and Africa as a whole, necessitating comprehensive strategies that address educational disparities and enhance literacy levels will cultivate a more informed and interconnected society.³⁷

³² Beckline Mangam, 45, Secretary General (Integrated Agriculture Association), Commercial Avenue Bamenda, 23 October 2023.

³³ Fon Forchesiri III, 34, traditional ruler, Bamendankwe Palace, 13 December 2023.

³⁴ Kum Francis, 45, Teacher (GHS Mankon), Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

³⁵ S. D., Dughav, "Multiculturalism in Education", *Educational Resource Journal*, Vol. 3, 2021, pp. 47-48.

³⁶ Kum Francis, 45, Teacher (GHS Mankon), Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

³⁷ Idem.

1.8. Gender Issues

Women and girls have major contribution in all stages of conflict resolution and peace building processes. This contribution cannot be minimized or ignored and without women and men's full and equal participation durable peace cannot be achieved.³⁸ It means, in peace building efforts men and women contribute equally and because of their equal contribution the resultant peace remains durable as well as there is stability and smooth functioning in the municipality. In contrast, when women are not given their rights of freedom, participation and decision making cannot avoid violence and achieve the goals of peace development.³⁹ Due to weak and restricted socio-economic status of women in the municipality, they are more vulnerable and exposed to violence. They are easily targeted by men and mostly become the reason of both familial and communal conflicts. For example, a female participant pointed "first we - the women become source of conflict, then affected more severely by conflict as compared to men and at the end of conflict we are not given the opportunity equal to men to participate in post conflict peace building activities."⁴⁰ Similar views were also given by majority of this research participants. Besides, the importance of women and gender in mainstream activities of public interest are not only confined to cultures and different contexts, but they act as crucial factors for understanding the dynamics of peace and peace building.

2. PERSPECTIVES FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE BUILDING IN THE BAMENDA MUNICIPALITY

In the pre-colonial era, highly centralized politico-administrative and judicial systems were developed. This form of centralized political organization was embedded in the secular regulatory societies that were employed to administer justice, maintain peace and order, and promote social wellbeing, which was the primary objective of the African community life.⁴¹ The people's ethical values were determined by their ethos (customs and tradition) and this was reflected in their artistic display in form of songs and carved objects that represented great figures, events and their entire civilization. Peace building is different from conflict resolution in that it focuses on systematic change that transforms social, political, and economic systems

³⁸ Fuambu Georgez, 56, Divisional delegate (MINPROFF), Old Town Bamenda, 22 November 2023.

³⁹ Idem.

⁴⁰ Lum Emelda, 27, Teacher, Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

⁴¹ A. K., Eyong, A. C., Ngwa, R.T., Talla, "Traditional Land Conflict Resolution Strategies in the Banyang Country, Cameroon from Pre-Colonial Times to Present", *Indiana Journal of Humanities and Science*, Vol. 1, 2020, p. 42.

to be more inclusive and nondiscriminatory. The peace building process works to reweave the fabric of a society as it emerges from a destructive international conflict or civil war fostering justice, equity, and cooperation (that is positive peace).⁴² This can be achieved through:

2.1. Implementation of cross cultural structural adjustment programs for Peace Building

The democratic system needs to be strengthened and made more participatory for all groups and culture by levelling the playing field.

2.1.1. Women Participation

In Cameroon society, we cannot talk about culture and not talk about women, not only in Cameroon but Africa in general. Though in the culture women play a big role, the impression is that when it comes to big decisions women are left out.⁴³ In the municipality, when men are not around, women step up and do what is necessary as seen with CAWOPEM (Cameroon Women Peace Movement) in their struggle to mediate conflicts and restore peace. Women belong in all places where decisions are being made. It shouldn't be that women are the exception. Behind the scenes, the women impact political decisions, but because of their limited leadership in the legislature, their voices are not heard, and they are not put in male-dominated positions.⁴⁴ Despite established percentages, the representation of women in leadership positions on the council remains minimal. As women excel in sports, education, business, and social media, their roles have begun to change from behind the scenes to leadership positions.

Even though a lot of progress has been made in trying to include women in politics, we still see distinctions when it comes to women having a place in the wide national dialogue. Cameroon's National Action Plan (NAP) states that the government of Cameroon recognizes that women are above all promoters and agents of consolidation of peace. This move is aimed first, to build peace and social cohesion, and second, as written in its NAP, the government should better integrate the gender dimension into its conflict resolution and humanitarian and initiatives aid.⁴⁵ This will create an opportunity to redress and address the experiences and

⁴² J. Galtung. *Three approaches to peace*, 1997, p. 290.

⁴³ Mambo Brenda, 32, Worker at MINPROFF, Old Town Bamenda, 22 November 2023.

⁴⁴ Ngum Henrietta, 32, civil servant at MINAC, Up Town Bamenda, 22 October 2023.

⁴⁵ Cameroon National Action Plan (NAP) 2018-2020.

representation of women in the crisis situations in the municipality. Even though there has been a lot of progress, there is still a lot of work to be done.

Women's opinions should not be limited to defining the stories of pain they have endured. Women in Bamenda have demonstrated their influence as change-makers regarding different conversations that still champion peace in the conflict-affected areas in the municipality.⁴⁶ Their participation should not combine with the patriarchal view that women are naturally peace-loving, but should be viewed as an exhibit of women as change makers who belong to the national dialogue.

2.1.2. Youths Participation in Peace Building

The youths are the epitome of hope and future of a nation and deserve to be encouraged and streamlined towards galvanizing their role in nation building and sustainable development through an integrated approach. Youths would play a very important role in the advancement of their societies if they are given the least opportunity to do so, and could ruin a society if they are alienated.⁴⁷ The lives and experiences of young people are more intricate than generally exposed and youths can play many roles within fragile and conflict settings, including perpetrators, victims and peacemakers. Empowering youth is essential for conflict prevention, resolution and in peace building efforts in the municipality.⁴⁸ The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 2250 recognizes the roles of youth in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and urges to increase representation of youth in the decision-making processes at all levels.⁴⁹ A variety of factors have prompted policy-makers to examine the connection between youth and violence, as is particularly evident in Bamenda. They include: unemployment, youth growing population, youth alienation, intergenerational inequalities and the exclusion of youth in economic and political life.

The slogan that politicians and policy-makers in Cameroon have had is that, “youth are leaders of tomorrow” yet, they have always side-lined the youth in major political sphere - the slogan has always been an illusion with a tomorrow that is never insight.⁵⁰ From this viewpoint,

⁴⁶ Ilyn Ferla, 31, Civil servant at MINAC, Up Town Bamenda, 13 November 2023.

⁴⁷ Chufor Bryan, 25, Worker (Youth Outreach Organization), City chemist Bamenda, 29 September 2023.

⁴⁸ Idem.

⁴⁹ The resolution was unanimously adopted on 9 December 2015, dealing with the topic of youths from an international peace and security perspective. Furthermore, the UN/World Bank study: Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches in Preventing Violent Conflict also recognizes the importance of youth in the prevention of violent conflict.

⁵⁰ Ngah Ben, 43, managing director at Community Youth Art Center, Commercial Avenue Bamenda, 20 September 2023.

harnessing the abundant energy seeking a constructive outlet by the Cameroonian government could significantly enhance economic growth and promote sustainable development. This economic advancement and development may mitigate civil unrest, and increase social cohesion and personal levels of happiness and life satisfaction in Bamenda.⁵¹ In order for the government of Cameroon as well as other governments of conflict affected countries to galvanize the youth into mitigating conflicts and building peace in their respective societies, the following recommendations need to be taken to consideration:

- There is the need for the government of Cameroon to guarantee formal and informal education for young people, channeling their power and energy into learning and sustainable development.⁵²
- Acknowledge and include young people as stakeholders in the process of peace and security building, bearing in mind that they have been both affected by conflict and they are the key to progress of the nation.⁵³

2.2. Community empowerment and social reconstruction for Peace Building

There is need for the provision of opportunities for vulnerable and marginalized groups such as victims of human rights violations women, children and youth to engage in social and political issues that affect them. The creation of these safe spaces for the exchange of ideas and opinions around social issues could facilitate processes of reconciliation and understanding the social, cultural, material and psychological dimensions of trauma and facilitating processes that could address these issues in the municipality.

The need for stronger community involvement in the Bamenda municipality should be emphasized in creating peaceful co-existence. For culture to conceptualize peace building, the society needs to develop comprehensive programs like arts and cultural festivals. These programs must aim to share ideas central to community-based human practices and their relation to peace⁵⁴. The objectives of these programs, are to cultivate the understanding, attitudes and skills that are necessary to create and maintain peace. The emphasis here is about bringing different cultures together to develop in the minds of citizens an outlook of tolerance that would contribute to peaceful behavior, promote social progress, ensure peace building, and

⁵¹ Ngah Ben, 43, managing director at Community Youth Art Center, Commercial Avenue Bamenda, 20 September 2023.

⁵² Kum Francis, 45, Teacher (GHS Mankon), Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

⁵³ Paul Tabufor, 51, Pastor, Down Town Bamenda, 25 November 2023.

⁵⁴ Fon Forchesiri III, 34, traditional ruler, Bamendankwe Palace, 13 December 2023.

groom values of compassion, justice, equity, gender-fairness and hope in the community and country.⁵⁵

This method of peace building incorporates both immediate and extended peace building processes. The peace building efforts were particularly successful during the pre-colonial era when individual ownership of resources, including land, was not a component of the socio-economic standards. In such a case, land as a resource was owned by the whole community under the guardianship of the *fon* or chief. Every individual or family was given land for agriculture. There was nothing like “my land” rather was “our land”. What existed was inter-village or inter-tribal land boundary problems caused by wars of expansion.⁵⁶ The peaceful coexistence experienced during the precolonial times changed with the advent of colonialization.

Before planning any project in the Bamenda municipality, the area, people living there, their culture, their traditions and power structures should also be carefully examined. At the implementation stage, each project should consider the fragility of post-conflict areas and pay careful attention to small changes or divisions within the municipality. For instance, in the situation of land disputes between Nkwen and Bamendankwe, given that this conflict arises from historical and cultural contexts, the government ought to empower local peace-building mechanisms such as traditional councils, secret societies, and *fons* in the affected areas to make and implement decisions that could lead to immediate peace. Regarding the Anglophone crisis, the government should collaborate closely with community organizations, including youth and women NGOs, civil societies, and traditional authorities, to foster peace-building efforts within the municipality.⁵⁷ This may help reduce the psychological gap between the war affected zones and the central government.

Culture seeks unity and harmony within a community. Therefore, each community itself has potentials to promote peace and reconciliation. Nonetheless, the need of establishing identity as a nation among the people, and the current sense of small identity based on ethnicity could deepen the division among the people and prevent further reconciliation.⁵⁸ It might be difficult for each project to address this issue of identity within the municipality. However, each project should take a role of bridging the communities and people through various

⁵⁵ Pa Louise, quarter head Abangoh, 66, Abangoh Bamenda, 13 October 2023.

⁵⁶ A. E. Taki., “Peace-Building Mechanism Among the Widikum of the Bamenda Grasslands, Cameroon, 1870-2014”, *International Journal of African Society, Cultures and Traditions*, Vol.11, N°2, 2023, p. 16.

⁵⁷ Lum Emelda, 27, Teacher, Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

⁵⁸ M. A., Adig, “Belonging and Becoming”, 2022, P. 56.

activities, and endeavors like cultural festivals, community reunions, peace marches and artistic exposure to establish a wider sense of identity, which could unite beyond ethnic ties.⁵⁹ Community initiatives such as the Justice and Peace Commission, UNIMAC's Peace Workshop, and cultural and development organizations like MBOSCUDA should be encouraged and valued during peace negotiations.

2.3. Peace education as a strategic tool for peace building

"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."⁶⁰ This quote can be actualize through peace education. As peace education is a broad field, its definition can be a little tenuous. Very simply, peace education aims to provide learners with knowledge, not only of facts, but of values, skills, and attitudes necessary to end violence and injustice and promote a culture of peace and bring about behavior changes that will enable children, youths and adults to prevent conflict and violence, resolve conflicts peacefully and to create the conditions conducive to peace.⁶¹

Mahatma Ghandi also stressed the importance of educating youths about peace at an early age: "if we are to teach real peace in this world, and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children."⁶² This to an extend relates to the present situation in the Bamenda municipality as children are seen to be the main targets amidst the violence, either as a tool to ignite war or to resolve the crisis.⁶³

One of the major roles of the formal educational system is to transform the national culture, thereby preparing the young generation to contribute to society in its current and anticipated form. An important component of the culture to be transmitted is the consensually held correctively narrative. These narratives serve as guiding principles, influencing social behavior and promoting collective understanding within a community. By adopting these narratives, individuals can effectively navigate societal norms and contribute to cultural unity. As generations progress, the narratives evolve, incorporating new ideas while preserving essential values.⁶⁴ This scores the need for creating a peace culture based on quality justice,

⁵⁹ Ninobrown Ateweh, 36, Consultant, Ring way street Bamenda, 11 October 2023.

⁶⁰ Preamble to the constitution of UNESCO, London, 16th November 1945.

⁶¹ C. M., Howard, "Education and the Culture of Peace: The Case of Cameroon", PhD thesis in Law, Université Catholique d'Afrique Centrale, 2024, p. 15.

⁶² "Mahatma Ghandi's Message on Peace, Nonviolence, Inclusion of Minorities is Pertinent." *The independent news*, 27 October 2019, <https://theindependent.sg/mhatmaghandis-message-on-peace-nonvoilence-inclusion-of-miorities-is-pertinent/>, accessed 15 May 2024, at 11:30 am.

⁶³ The case when children are used to portray the ills of conflict.

⁶⁴ Bekono Cyrille, professor, Tecasse Yaounde, 08 August 2023.

democracy, human rights, tolerance, and solidarity in a society. Schools are definitely the starting point for social change, schools and teachers can help make this change through education.⁶⁵

From a historical perspective, the field of peace education has being known as education for cultural understanding, conflict analysis, resolution and prevention critical pedagogy including media pedagogy, social justice education, life skills education, environmental education, education for empowerment and liberation, development and disarmament education, education for social and human rights, and education for international understanding.⁶⁶

It is important that education should facilitate people's understanding about war and other forms of physical, political and economic violence that are not on the same scale as natural disasters. While the latter ones are things to be prepared for, the former are consequences of human will and intent.⁶⁷ Learners must be guided towards a clear comprehension of the major obstacles to a culture of war. Together, these problems comprise the problematic of creating a culture of peace. These suggestions should be introduced into school curricula from primary to tertiary institutions.⁶⁸

Dze-Ngwa advocated for the necessity of introducing peace education in Cameroon's schools. His research has shown that a covert conflict already existed in the implementation of the dual educational system and the diverse ethnic and religious groups. Dze-Ngwa's conclusion highlights the necessity for peace building in Cameroon's schools. Moreover, a harmonized citizenship education program can also lead to a unique and authentic Cameroonian educational system that does not mimic English or French colonial heritage but builds on the local culture and local people's needs. This appropriation of local needs implies that educators recognize how inherited colonial educational systems (British and French) continue to divide Cameroonians 60 years after independence.⁶⁹ Consequently, teachers should

⁶⁵ Bekono Cyrille, professor, Tecasse Yaounde, 08 August 2023.

⁶⁶ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2017. Preventing violent extremism through education: A Guide for Policy-Makers. Paris, UNESCO.

⁶⁷ Kum Francis, 45, Teacher (GHS Mankon), Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

⁶⁸ M. G., Ngwane, "Peace Education in Cameroon Schools: Beyond an Event", accessed at <https://www.gngwane.com/2010/09/peace-education-in-cameroon-school-beyond-an-event.html>, accessed 15 May 2024, at 12:30 pm.

⁶⁹ W., Dze-Ngwa, "Introducing Peace Education in Cameroon Schools: A Blueprint for Sustainable Development", *International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social science*, 2(3), 2014, pp. 27-40.

enrich their pedagogy by exploring local identities and cultures in developing community relations and equipping students with a national identity.

In a guise to fully implement peace to the younger generation in the Bamenda municipality, it is adamant that the children and youths be thought of their origin and way of life, that is get rooted in their culture.⁷⁰ It is strange that in a country rich in more than 250 languages, not one of these languages are thought as a major language in schools, rather the imported languages from the West is used as language of instruction and even other foreign languages are prioritized at all levels of education in the country.⁷¹ Though it is important to adapt to change considering we living in an ever evolving world and learning from other is necessary for growth, one shouldn't forget or ignore its origin which gives identity to every individual particularly in an African society.⁷²

This assumes that education is the key to peace, and it is this understanding of others and shared values that will overcome hostilities that lead to conflicts. Education can address inequalities in the Bamenda society by alleviating economic disparities and addressing discrimination within the official system.⁷³ Whether in peace building or humanitarian development, education is internationally recognized as a key solution to poverty because it provides students of all ages with the skills necessary to participate in the economic sector⁷⁴. Education is the most powerful tool to develop the economic and social skills necessary to generate sustainable livelihoods for successive generations.

2.4. Building peace by promoting dialogue across ethnic divides in the Bamenda municipality

Inter-ethnic community cohesion and dialogue are central for peace building as they work to promote multi-cultural civil identity, establish systems to link local and national mechanisms dealing with inter-ethnic relations and building conflict resolution expertise.⁷⁵ The dialogue should be void of bias, trust worthy and respect of personalities from different religious, political, economic and social backgrounds.⁷⁶ There is no practical human conflict that cannot be resolved peacefully through dialogue. For living together to thrive in the municipality, there

⁷⁰ Fuambu Georgez, 56, Divisional delegate (MINPROFF), Old Town Bamenda, 22 November 2023.

⁷¹ Bekono Cyrille, professor, Tecasse Yaounde, 08 August 2023.

⁷² Idem.

⁷³ Ashu Etang Wilfred, 32, researcher at Pan African Institute for Development –West Africa, Sonac Street Bamenda, 25 October 2023.

⁷⁴ Tegum Daniel, 75, retired teacher, Old Town Bamenda, 12 November 2023.

⁷⁵ Idem.

⁷⁶ Nde Godwill, 68, Traditional Councilor, Bamendankwe palace, 11 December 2023.

is the need for the people to understand the values and cultures of those they live alongside with. The Bamenda municipality comprises diverse cultures due to the presence of different ethnic groups, thus, for its people to live in harmony, there must be certain societal ethics like the respect for customs, traditions and norms that people should adhere to in order to ensure respect for one another's culture and values. Until when individuals understand the values and cultures of others and the manner in which they uphold theirs is taken seriously, living together will remain futile.⁷⁷

2.5. Traditional Approaches

It's hard to talk about the intricate nature of culture without acknowledging how much tradition shapes it. Tradition is like the bedrock that influences everything else, helping to guide cultural practices and expressions. These practices play a crucial role in promoting peace and harmony within communities. However, we also need to look closely at why traditional values are gradually diminishing or fading away in many African societies. The traditional ways of resolving conflicts often reflect a strong dedication to minimizing or entirely stopping physical violence. This reduction isn't just a strategy; it's seen as essential for achieving lasting peace and stability in these communities. By drawing on established customs and practices, these initiatives are better able to resonate with local populations, ensuring that they are embraced by the communities they aim to serve. This alignment with traditional values can lead to increased trust among stakeholders, facilitate dialogue between conflicting parties, and ultimately contribute to more sustainable and effective peace-building efforts.

2.5.1. Setting up of Traditional Councils in the Bamenda Municipality

The setting up of traditional councils is a mechanism to maintain peace. These councils can either be village councils or clan councils.⁷⁸ In the municipality, the elders form a dominant component of the customary mechanisms of conflict resolution and peace-building and they have three sources of authority that make them effective in maintaining peaceful relationships and community ways of life. They have access to networks that go beyond the clan boundaries, ethnic identity and generations, and possess super natural powers reinforced by superstition

⁷⁷ Fru Thaddeus, 78, Elder, Mankon Palace, 02 November 2023.

⁷⁸ These village councils are councils of Elders or community leadership councils made up of both men and women.

and witchcraft. Among the elders are found the diviners, oath swearers, heads of families and villages.⁷⁹

The village council operates as a court endowed with extensive and adaptable authority to interpret evidence, enforce judgments, and oversee the reconciliation process. Within the council, mediators facilitate the discussion regarding the issue at hand. The conflicting parties do not communicate directly with one another, thus preventing any direct confrontation. Interruptions are prohibited while the parties present their arguments. Following the statements, open deliberation ensues, which occasionally includes listening to and cross-examining witnesses, visiting the scene of the dispute, gathering opinions and perspectives from neighbors, reviewing previous cases, and conducting private consultations.⁸⁰ This is to avoid Judgement imposed from top to bottom with the aim of building sustainable peace. Our informant talked about the role of the village council in resolving conflicts and maintaining peace in the following words: “Our parents made us to understand that their methods of resolving conflicts was far more better than what was brought by the Whiteman.”⁸¹ Decisions are based on consensus and rendered on the spot.

These aspects of inclusive dialogue and reconciliation between parties in conflict was exemplified in the leadership structures in the municipality which has built consensus and sustainable peace among the people and between the villages.⁸² All members of the society whether big or small have a say in matters affecting the municipality.⁸³ This thus promotes dialogue and provides effective measures in resolving conflicts and promoting peace within the municipality.

⁷⁹ Taki A.E., “Peace-Building Mechanism Among the Widikum”, 2003, pp. 18-21.

⁸⁰ Nde Godwill, 68, Traditional Councilor, Bamendankwe palace, 11 December 2023.

⁸¹ Fru Thaddeus, 78, Elder, Mankon Palace, 02 November 2023.

⁸² Fon Forchesiri III, 34, traditional ruler, Bamendankwe Palace, 13 December 2023.

⁸³ With the case of the Anglophone crisis, *Fon Forchesiri III* said “for peace to reign the only way out is through dialogue cause this sets grounds for negotiations permitting both parties to make concessions to restore peace. But nonetheless, this dialogue needs to be based and set up on traditional/cultural judicial systems, include more traditional actors than external actors, as the latter is more able to present the grievances and pains of the people and propose prospective solutions which will be more receptive by the people. Equally the dialogue has to be an open dialogue where all resolutions are brought to the table and open for talks unlike the 2019 national dialogue where the government had already drafted its resolutions and didn’t give much grounds for talks and adjustments.” Interview with *Fon Forchesiri III*, 34, traditional ruler, Bamendankwe Palace, 13 December 2023.

2.5.2. The use of a symbolic representation for peace; Peace Plant *Nkun* or *Dracaena*

The symbolism of the peace plant *dracaena/nkun* is significantly reflected in traditional governance, in the execution of justice as well as economic activities.⁸⁴ Political symbolism signifies that much value is attached to these plant in the day to day administration of the communities. This action served as a mark of social responsibility examined in the political usefulness of the plant and their significance in power distinction, boundary demarcation and peace building within the family/communities.

In the Bamenda municipality, planting of the *dracaena* on a piece of land is considered to be symbol of ownership and power over the given area.⁸⁵ And this is practiced not only in the municipality but equally in the neighboring communities who deem this practice as worthy enough for peace. From the time of *fondom* creation or settlement, the identification and planting of these plants became the focal points of socio-cultural practices, ranging from initiation ceremonies to land tenure institutions. When this plant is planted in an area, it often becomes a thick forests later used as shrines in which sacrifices were made to the gods by the traditional leaders who legitimized their authorities by performing rites of initiation there. In all the Bali Chamba villages, abandoned settlements/residences could be identified with the presence of the *dracaena* indicating burial sites/graves, boundaries and shrines.⁸⁶ Using *dracaena* leaves could be a symbolic representation for peace among conflicting parties in the municipality. Though it seems insignificant, its presence and domain of traditional governance, conflict resolution could foster peace building initiatives in the country.⁸⁷

2.5.3. Mediation by Elders

In the Bamenda municipality, elders play a crucial role in resolving conflicts through mediation. They use their wisdom, experience, and knowledge of traditional customs to bring parties together and facilitate dialogue.

These elders, often revered for their wisdom and respected for their age, played a crucial role in maintaining peace and harmony within their communities. When conflicts arise like the land dispute between Nkwen and Bamendankwe over the land at *Sisia*, or whether they were

⁸⁴ These plants having dark green beautifully designed leaves, have cultural, moral, spiritual, economic and political implications. Planted around shrines, graves, boundaries and used in performing rituals, the *Ghim* and *Nkun* are also symbols of traditional authority, source of economic growth, traditional medicine health and peace.

⁸⁵ C. N., Deyeb, "Signification of Plants in Traditional Peace Building", 2023, p. 1406.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 1406.

⁸⁷ Ngah Ben, 43, managing director at Community Youth Art Center, Commercial Avenue Bamenda, 20 September 2023.

between individuals, families, or even entire villages, the elders are called upon to intervene and find a resolution. One of the key reasons why elders are so effective in conflict resolution is their deep understanding of customary practices.⁸⁸ They have spent their entire lives immersed in the traditions and values of the municipality, and as a result, they possess a unique insight into the cultural norms and expectations that govern social interactions “This understanding enables them to tackle conflicts with a sophisticated viewpoint, considering the particular cultural context in which the disagreement has emerged.”⁸⁹

Furthermore, the elders' expertise in conflict resolution is often rooted in their own personal experiences. Having lived through various challenges and adversities themselves, they have acquired a wealth of knowledge on how to navigate difficult situations and find common ground. This experiential wisdom enables them to empathize with the conflicting parties and offer guidance that is both practical and compassionate. In addition to their knowledge and experience, the elders also possess a natural ability to foster communication and understanding.⁹⁰ They are skilled listeners, able to patiently hear out the concerns and grievances of each party involved in the conflict. Through their attentive and non-judgmental approach, they create a safe space for open dialogue, allowing all parties to express their perspectives and emotions.⁹¹

Acting as impartial mediators, the elders adeptly facilitate dialogues, foster an environment of open communication, and foster a spirit of compromise among the conflicting parties. Through their guidance and wisdom, the elders diligently work towards identifying shared interests and values, ultimately steering the parties towards finding common ground. Central to their approach is the unwavering emphasis on the principles of mutual respect and cooperation, which serve as the bedrock for fostering reconciliation and fostering a sense of unity within the municipality.⁹²

Overall, the role of elders in conflict resolution and peace building in traditional Cameroonian communities is invaluable. Their expertise, wisdom, and understanding of customary practices enable them to bridge divides, heal wounds, and restore harmony. Through their mediation efforts, they not only resolve immediate conflicts but also contribute to the long-term stability and cohesion of their communities.

⁸⁸ Pa Louise, quarter head Abangoh, 66, Abangoh Bamenda, 13 October 2023.

⁸⁹ Fon Forchesiri III, 34, traditional ruler, Bamendankwe Palace, 13 December 2023.

⁹⁰ Idem.

⁹¹ Paul Tabufor, 51, Pastor, Down Town Bamenda, 25 November 2023.

⁹² Lum Emelda, 37, Teacher, Old Town Bamenda, 12 October 2023.

2.5.4. The role of traditional healing systems in the Bamenda Municipality

Traditional healing practices can also be used to address the psychological and emotional scars of conflict in Bamenda. Traditional healers use various techniques, such as meditation, herbal remedies, and spiritual rituals, to help individuals recover from trauma.⁹³ These traditional healing practices play an integral role in addressing the deep-seated psychological and emotional wounds that often accompany conflicts. In the realm of traditional healing, skilled healers leverage a diverse array of techniques to aid individuals in their journey towards healing and recovery. Through the practice of meditation, individuals can achieve a state of inner calmness and clarity, enabling them to process and come to terms with the traumas they have endured. Additionally, the use of herbal remedies provides a holistic approach to healing, offering physical and emotional comfort while promoting overall well-being. Herbal remedies, such as teas, tinctures, and poultices, are used to address physical ailments that may be exacerbated by emotional distress.⁹⁴

These remedies are often believed to have healing properties that can restore balance to the body and mind. Spiritual rituals play a crucial role in traditional healing, providing a sacred space for individuals to connect with their inner selves and seek solace and guidance from forces beyond the material realm. Spiritual rituals, such as ceremonies, prayers, and offerings, are also important components of traditional healing. These methods are often deeply rooted in cultural beliefs and practices, passed down through generations within municipality. The rituals are believed to connect individuals to their ancestors, spirits, and higher powers, providing a sense of guidance, protection, and support during times of distress.⁹⁵ By engaging in these rituals, individuals can find a sense of peace, purpose, and connection to something greater than themselves.

In post conflict areas or areas in conflict, the obvious wound is the one created by the absence of someone who used to be in the family or amongst your inner circle. The fact that they won't be seen again is already traumatizing in itself. After the death of the closed one, the survivors have to deal with the thought of losing their loved ones and in cases where the survivors witnessed the death, every moment or remembering the event evokes negative painful

⁹³ These systems encompass herbalism, spiritual healing and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. Examples like the *Ntui* shrine where conflicts are addressed, mediated upon and resolved and the *Ngaafu* who are a group of healers and herbalists in Mankon.

⁹⁴ S. B. Mbi, and C. P. Musah, "Traditional Medecine and Healing in the Bamenda Grasslands of Cameroon. Since Pre-Colonial Times", *IJLTEMAS*, Vol. 12, 2023, pp. 8-9.

⁹⁵ Mr. Charles, 43, palace Secretary, Bamendankwe palace, 13 December 2023.

emotions. In such cases in the municipality, the victims should be brought together in communal gatherings like organized memorials for victims of conflict, exchange of words like *Anjeë fola sebesi* (sorry for the difficult time), or *Alinii nyenyo* (has been taken by God), accompanied by literal shaking of hands signifies joining in grief. Such expressions help to acknowledge the grief of those affected by the conflict, as well as provide reassurance, mental and emotional support.⁹⁶

Furthermore, Cultural festivals and celebrations in Bamenda are deeply rooted in the its diverse ethnic groups and serve as a powerful tool for bringing people together.⁹⁷ These events provide a platform for individuals from different backgrounds to come together, celebrate their shared heritage, and appreciate the unique traditions of each community. By showcasing various forms of artistic expression, such as music, dance, and storytelling, these festivals create a sense of unity and foster social harmony among the participants. One of the key functions of cultural festivals and celebrations in Bamenda is their role in conflict resolution.⁹⁸ In a country with a history of ethnic tensions and occasional conflicts, these events serve as a space for dialogue and understanding. Through the medium of music, dance, and storytelling, individuals within the municipality can come together, share their experiences, and find common grounds for peace. These contribute to the resolution of conflicts and the building of peaceful relationships in the Bamenda municipality.⁹⁹

Storytelling is another essential aspect of the Bamenda culture as it plays a crucial role in promoting peace and reconciliation. Traditional tales like the significance of plants in peace building, the importance of the birth of twins, the legend of the secret forest, the tale of the farmer and the bush and the fowl.¹⁰⁰ These stories are passed down through generations and serve as a means of imparting moral lessons, important values, and cultural knowledge. These stories often revolve around themes of unity, forgiveness, and understanding, providing individuals and communities with guidance on how to resolve conflicts and maintain peaceful relationships.¹⁰¹ By sharing these stories, individuals can find common ground, empathize with one another, and work towards reconciliation.

⁹⁶ Fon Forchesiri III, 34, traditional ruler, Bamendankwe Palace, 13 December 2023.

⁹⁷ Nde Godwill, 68, Traditional Councilor, Bamendankwe palace, 11 December 2023.

⁹⁸ Fru Thaddeus, 78, Elder, Mankon Palace, 02 November 2023.

⁹⁹ Fon Forchesiri III, 34, traditional ruler, Bamendankwe Palace, 13 December 2023.

¹⁰⁰ The story of the farmer and the bush and the fowl is widely known among the people in the municipality particularly among the people of Bamendakwe. In narrative, the farmer helps a bush fowl in distress, and the bird later repays the kindness. This story teaches the value of kindness, generosity and reciprocity. Interview with Fru Thaddeus, 78, Elder, Mankon Palace, 02 November 2023.

¹⁰¹ Idem.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the investigation into the cultural dynamics influencing peace building efforts in Bamenda Municipality uncovers a multifaceted relationship of challenges and opportunities that requires a sophisticated understanding and strategic intervention. The prevailing communal conflicts substantially hinder the pursuit of peace. It is then imperative to address these challenges through a comprehensive approach that incorporates indigenous knowledge, promotes inclusive dialogue, and empowers local communities to assume responsibility for peace initiatives. These initiatives are essential components of the Bamenda culture and play a significant role in fostering social harmony, resolving conflicts, and promoting peace. Furthermore, recognizing culture as a dynamic and evolving entity, rather than a static aspect, is crucial for adapting peace building strategies to the distinct context of Bamenda.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The intricate relationship between culture and peace building has garnered significant attention in the field of conflict resolution and peace studies. This work titled *Culture and Peace Building in Cameroon. Case Study of the Bamenda Municipality, 1990-2019*, has provided a comprehensive exploration of the intricate relationship between cultural dynamics and peace building efforts in a region marked by historical complexities and socio-political challenges. Through a detailed examination of the ethnographical, historical, and cultural landscape of the Bamenda municipality, alongside an analysis of conflicts and their consequences, this study has illuminated the multifaceted nature of peace-building in a culturally rich yet conflict-prone area.

In order to conduct a thorough and comprehensive examination of the identified problem, the following theories were used for data analysis and interpretation; the theory of structural violence (Johan Galtung), stable peace theory (Kenneth Boulding), the theory of Protracted Social Conflict (Edward Azar) and sustainable peace building theory (John Paul Lederach). These theoretical frameworks provided insightful perspectives that aided in understanding the multifaceted nature of the problem. Structural violence theory highlighted underlying systemic issues, while stable peace theory suggested pathways towards lasting solutions. The insights from the theory of Protracted Social Conflict emphasized the need for addressing deep-rooted grievances to achieve sustainable resolution and the theory of sustainable peace suggested building infrastructures of peace from the grassroots level.

Temporary responses were proposed, verified, and substantiated by empirical evidence collected during and after the data gathering process. The main research hypothesis derived from the main research question asserts that culture has indeed influenced peace building and conflict resolution in the municipality. Meanwhile the three specific hypothesis postulated are the following; the first states that culture has often been overlooked and inadequately considered in state-centric peace process initiatives within the municipality and the broader region. Secondly, the region is characterized by a diverse and vibrant cultural heritage that fosters communal living as well as a spirit of peace and harmony among its inhabitants. The third holds that culture has the potential to act both as a catalyst for conflict and a means for peace.

To this, our research included both primary and secondary objectives. Our main objective was to explore culture in Bamenda and how it contributes to peace building. Our specific objectives were; to evaluate conflicts present in the area and examine the social, economic and political factors contributing to these conflicts and their impact on the society, to assess the role and value of culture as a peace building initiative in the study area, to analyze the challenges to peace building and to providing novel perspectives on ways in which cultural factors can be leveraged to enhance the effectiveness of peace building initiatives in Bamenda, Cameroon and throughout Africa.

To conceptualize this, a mixed method approach comprising both qualitative and quantitative research methods was used and a literature review of previously published works on the issues of culture and peace building was done. This enabled us to find out what research had already been done and what is unknown within our topic. The study outline then presented the body of our work made up of four chapters.

Chapter one encompassed on the ethnographical and cultural presentation of the Bamenda municipality. It captured the unique historical context that has shaped the identity of Bamenda, framing the municipality's diverse cultural landscape. The geographical background besides discussing the location, relief, climate, and vegetation, provided a solid background upon which culture and peace building in Bamenda rested upon. The exploration of local customs, traditions and practices reflected the richness of Bamenda's cultural heritage, while also acknowledging its limitations. This holistic portrayal not only highlighted the integral relationship between the environment and culture but also emphasized the significance of preserving the cultural identity of Bamenda amidst evolving societal dynamics. Overall the chapter served as a valuable resource for understanding the complexities and nuances that define the Bamenda municipality.

Chapter two provided a comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted conflicts present in the Bamenda municipality, primarily focusing on land and boundary disputes alongside the Anglophone crisis. It identified key factors contributing to these conflicts, such as socio-economic disparities, political tensions and historical grievances, which have exacerbated the situation in this region. Furthermore, the chapter elucidated the dire consequences of these conflicts, affecting not only the local communities' social cohesion and economic stability but also hindering peace-building efforts. Through this exploration, it became evident that addressing the root causes of conflict is essential for fostering a culture of peace in the Bamenda municipality. The insights gleaned from this analysis serve as a foundation for further

discussions and strategies aimed at conflict resolution and the promotion of sustainable peace within the municipality and region.

Chapter three effectively highlighted the significance of culture as a pivotal tool for peace building in the Bamenda municipality. It began by emphasizing the vital contributions of external actors such as international interventions, governmental policies, and non-governmental organization, who facilitate peace initiatives, setting the stage for a broader understanding of the multifaceted nature of peace building. Subsequently, the chapter delves into the cultural dimensions of peace building, illustrating how arts, traditions, religion and community engagement can foster social cohesion and mitigate conflict. This cultural approach is particularly valuable in Bamenda, where cultural practices resonate deeply with the population, offering unique pathways to reconciliation and healing.

Furthermore, the chapter made a comparative analysis between state-centric peace strategies with culturally-informed approaches, showcasing the limitations of top-down interventions in favor of grassroots solutions that prioritize the local context. By underscoring the interplay between culture and peace building, the chapter advocates for a more inclusive and nuanced framework that integrates cultural heritage into peace initiatives. This analysis illustrated that understanding and leveraging the rich cultural tapestry of Bamenda is essential for sustainable peace, positioning culture not merely as a backdrop but as an active agent in the peace building process.

Chapter four navigated through on the challenges and perspectives of culture in peace building within the Bamenda municipality. It vividly illustrated the multifaceted hurdles faced in fostering peace in this region of Cameroon. It identified significant challenges that undermined communal harmony. However, it concurrently emphasized the potential of cultural resources as a pivotal instrument in peace building, through which the community can inspire dialogue, build trust and facilitate reconciliation among conflicting groups. The points stressed in this chapter showed the importance of integrating cultural dimensions into peace building efforts, not only in Bamenda but also across Africa, underscoring the transformative power of shared cultural heritage in forging unity and stability. Ultimately, the discussion reinforced the necessity of a culturally-informed approach to peace initiatives, paving the way for sustainable peace that respects and celebrates diversity while addressing deep-rooted challenges.

The findings of this dissertation carry significant implications for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars engaged in peace-building initiatives in Cameroon and similar

contexts. Firstly, it is crucial to recognize the centrality of culture in any peace-building strategy. Policymakers should prioritize cultural engagement and community participation, ensuring that local voices are heard and integrated into formal peace processes. This approach not only enhances the legitimacy of peace initiatives but also fosters a sense of belonging and commitment among community members.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of addressing the root causes of conflict through culturally sensitive interventions. Efforts to promote social cohesion must go beyond conflict resolution and aim to foster trust and understanding among diverse cultural groups. This can be accomplished through community dialogues, cultural exchanges, and collaborative projects that highlight the Bamenda municipality's rich cultural heritage. Establishing effective communication channels is crucial in dismantling stereotypes and misperceptions, fostering a climate where mutual respect and appreciation can thrive. Moreover, integrating traditional customs and practices with modern peace-building efforts may also enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives, creating a harmonious blend that resonates well with the local population. Engaging local leaders and stakeholders in these activities ensures that the initiatives are not only accepted but also actively supported, laying the groundwork for sustained peace and unity.

Additionally, the role of external actors in peace-building should be reconsidered. While international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can provide valuable assistance, their interventions must be contextually relevant and culturally sensitive. Engaging local stakeholders in the design and implementation of peace initiatives can improve their efficacy and viability. Building strong partnerships that respect and integrate indigenous practices can help to bridge any cultural gaps that may exist. This careful integration contributes to the development of programs that resonate with local populations, thereby gaining their trust and cooperation.

Along with political and economic frameworks, the study of international relations now encompasses ideas relating to home, mobility, identity, belonging and entitlement. In the context of building peace, certain questions arise which include; how does one rebuild these wounded societies? What are ways to transform the negative cultural and social norms that have contributed to, and developed during the course of the conflict? How do we build trust among neighbors, enable victims to reintegrate into their community and allow perpetrators the opportunity to re-establish their humanity? These are the questions this work sought to elucidate on. During periods of protracted violence, new cultural patterns develop and

perpetuate a culture of violence even after the conflict. Such can be said of the case of the Anglophone crisis, as we see the population or the victims of the crisis fully turning and becoming dependent and giving all their support to the party striving in quelling the conflict and re-establishing peace in both regions.

In this context, an understanding of one's history is crucial for comprehending our identity and appreciating the richness of our cultural heritage. Delving into the annals of our past not only provides us with insight into the events and individuals that have shaped our present circumstances but also allows us to grasp the values and traditions that underpin our society. In Cameroon as well as Africa, there has been a general loss of moral orientation among the younger generations. The reason for this, is that African countries took over western values uncritically. Thus there is the need to imbibe unadulterated African knowledge and values in modern moral or ethical conceptualization and apply them in an African context. More to this, there is need for self-realization and self-consciousness that had been lost during colonization.

In this light pioneers of decolonization in Africa, such as Thomas Sankara, Patrice Lumumba, Nkwame Nkrumah, among others, recognized the necessity of liberating the mind from the entrenched systems and cultures imposed during the colonial era in order to achieve true freedom and independence. They posit that the impact of colonization extended beyond the political and economic spheres to encompass various aspects of society, including education, religion, literature, healthcare, and lifestyle. Consequently, the process of decolonization must begin with a mental shift. However, undoing the deep-rooted effects of colonization on the psyche of individuals is a complex and time-consuming endeavor, as colonization had become deeply ingrained in the collective consciousness. As Nkwame Nkrumah aptly noted, the legacy of colonization was so profound that it seemed to be encoded in the very DNA of the people, and it will take time to break free from its influence, but embracing one's cultural values and belief systems is essential in the journey towards decolonization and the attainment of autonomy and self-realization.

In conclusion, the interplay between culture and peace building in the Bamenda municipality of Cameroon from 1990-2019 illustrates the significant role of culture in fostering social cohesion and mitigating conflict. The municipality has experienced myriad challenges which have often threatened communal harmony. However, local cultural practices, traditions, and even community engagement have proven instrumental in promoting dialogue and understanding among diverse groups. Additionally, grassroots initiatives and cultural events

have facilitated reconciliation processes, reinforcing the importance of incorporating cultural dimensions into peace building strategies. The case of Bamenda highlights that, while external political interventions can play a role, sustainable peace is deeply rooted in the recognition and valorization of local cultures. As Cameroon navigates its complex socio-political landscape, embracing the richness of its cultural heritage will be essential for fostering a peaceful and harmonious society. The journey towards peace is ongoing, and it is through the collective efforts of individuals, communities, and institutions that a brighter future can be forged for the Bamenda municipality, Cameroon and beyond.

➤ **Future research directions**

As a result of the complex relationship between culture, peace, conflict and peace building, there is an urgent need for research to be made in this areas:

- Firstly, the impact of digital technology and social media on cultural expressions and peace-building efforts warrants further investigation. As globalization continues to influence local cultures, understanding how these changes affect community engagement and conflict dynamics will be crucial for developing effective peace-building strategies
- Further studies could explore the intersection of culture, identity, and conflict, examining the ways in which cultural identities are constructed and contested in Cameroon, particularly in the context of conflict. This could involve exploring how cultural identity is linked to political affiliation, economic status, or social class
- Equally, an evaluation on the impact of external influences on Cameroon's cultural heritage is primordial in investigating how external factors (e.g., globalization, urbanization) are affecting Cameroon's cultural heritage and what implications this has for peace building efforts

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2.	Anonymous	F	43	_____.	Up town Bamenda	15/10/2023
3.	Anonymous	F	45	_____.	Up town Bamenda	17/10/2023
4.	Anonymous	F	35	_____.	Sonac street Bamenda	25/10/2023
5.	Awah Joseph	M	56	Teacher	Abangoh Bamenda	18/10/2023
6.	Ashu Etang Wilfred	M	32	Researcher peace and conflict studies (PAID-WA)	Sonac street Bamenda	25/10/2023
7.	Beckline Mangam	F	45	General Secretary (Integrated Agriculture Association)	Commercial Avenue	23/10/2023
8.	Bekono Cyrille	M	Above 45	Associate Professor	TKC Yaoundé	08/08/2023
9.	Chiwoo Emeld Ntebe	F	48	Cadre (MINAC)	Up town Bamenda	16/12/2023
10.	Chufor Bryan	M	25	Worker (Youth Outreach Program)	City chemist Bamenda	29/09/2023

11.	Emile Bemirla	F	37	Advisor (Integrated Agriculture Association)	Commercial Avenue	23/11/2023
12.	Fisiy Kinkoh	F	26	Consultant (Youth Outreach Program NGO)	City chemist Bamenda	19/11/2023
13.	Fon Forchesiri III	M	34	Fon	Bamendankwe palace	13/12/2023
14.	Fru Peter	M	45	Worker in the Mankon museum	Mankon musuem	09/11/2023
15.	Fru Thaddeus	M	78	Elder	Mankon Palace	02/11/2023
16.	Fuambu Georgez	M	56	Divisional delegate (MINPROFF)	Old Town Bamenda	22/11/2023
17.	Ivlyn Ferla	F	31	Civil servant (MINAC)	Up Town Bamenda	13/11/2023
18.	Kum Francis	M	45	Teacher (GHS Mankon)	Old Town Bamenda	12/10/2023
19.	Lum Emelda	F	37	Teacher	Old Town Bamenda	12/10/2023
20.	Mambo Brenda	F	32	Worker MINPROFF	Old Town Bamenda	22/11/2023
21.	Charles	M	45	Secretary Bamendankwe palace	Bamendankwe palace	13/12/2023
22.	Nchang Clement	M	55	Farmer	Abango Bamenda	25/10/2023
23.	Nde Godwill	M	68	Traditional Councilor	Bamendankwe palace	11/12/2023
24.	Ninobrown Ateweh	M	36	Marketing Consultant	Ring way street-Bamenda	11/10/2023
25.	Ngah Ben	M	43	Managing director (Community Youth Art Center)	Commercial Avenue-Bamenda	20/09/2023
26.	Ngum Hendreta	F	32	Civil servant (MINAC)	Up town-Bamenda	22/10/2023
27.	Ntabeng Joshua	M	27	Intern (Community Youth Art Center)	Commercial Avenue-Bamenda	20/10/2023
28.	Louise	M	66	Quarter head	Abangoh-Bamenda	13/10/2023
29.	Paul Tabufor	M	51	Pastor	Down Town-Bamenda	25/11/2023
30.	Tegum Daniel	M	75	Teacher (GHS Mankon)	Old Town-Bamenda	12/11/2023

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRES

NAME:

PROFESSION:

GENDER:

DATE OF INTERVIEW:

RESIDENCE:

SOCIAL STATUS:

AGE: 18-25 ☐ 26-35 ☐ 36-45 ☐ Above 45 ☐

1. In your opinion can culture be implemented as a tool for peace building?

a. if yes, kindly explain

b. if no kindly explain

2. What can you account for as the source/ces of division and conflict in the Bamenda municipality?

3. The reintroduction of multiparty politics in the 90s created a wave of tension throughout the country. To this, what was the common feeling expressed in this region and by its peoples following its re-introduction?

4. What are the historical roots of conflicts in the region, and how have they evolved over time?

5. Do you think/believe culture is peculiar and what are the main cultural elements of peace building in the area?

6. What cultural mechanisms have being put in place to channel culture as an instrument for peace and peace building and how effective has this/these been?

7. In the political context, should culture be considered when making political decisions, not only as a tool for peace, but also when decisions concerning the society, the economy are deliberated upon in the area?

8. Economically, to your opinion, does culture impede development, does it have an adverse effect on the development of the area?

a. If no why

b. If yes how

9. On the social aspect, can culture be used in restructuring and reorganizing the community?
For it to be successful, what should be done?

10. As an individual, civil worker or organization, how can you help promote the culture of nonviolence and peace in the area and what are the specific challenges of working as a peacebuilder in a cultural context

12. What are the benefits and risks for reconciliation process of drawing on a cultural form and how and under what circumstances might this foster reconciliation process?

a. Benefits

b. Risks

13. Culture engulfs aspect of the society directly related to man. It could be in arts, the way of living, tradition and many more. To this,

a. What are the traditional conflict resolution approaches to peace building in this area?

b. Artistic cultural approaches

c. Educational approaches

d. Communal approaches

14. How cooperative and receptive have people being to their culture and the cultural reforms set in place to effect peace building and achieve peace in the area, region and to an extend Cameroon as a whole?

15. In your view, what role does the colonial legacy including language differences play in conflicts in the region? Could these conflicts be termed identity crisis and why?

Thanks for Participating !!!

Appendix 2: QUESTIONNAIRE MODEL

SECTION 1: Analyzing Culture as a peace building initiative in the community

Please indicate whether you agree, strongly agree, disagree with or are not sure about the following statements

N°	Research questions	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
1	Peace must be built on a local level			
2	A peace education curriculum is necessary for schools to teach peace effectively			
3	Maintaining peace is the responsibility of the community			
4	The relationship between culture and peace can help prevent and resolve conflicts			
5	To prevent future violence in the community, culture must be taken into consideration			
6	Maintaining peace is the responsibility of the government			
7	Culture is a catalyst for violence in the community			
8	Culture should be considered when peace building initiatives are taken in the community			
9	The government alone is responsible for conflict in the municipality			
10	Arts is not a major tool for peace building			
11	Educating on the culture, language and tradition of the region should be introduced in the teaching curriculum			
12	Mixing ethnic groups in the community is a threat to peace			
13	Arts promotes local cultures, create awareness about one's culture, develop leadership skills and can be sourced as a peace building initiative			

14	Traditional methods are old and inefficient than government methods in peace building			
15	Cultural methods are more inclusive and open to the people			
16	Women are not encouraged to partake in peace talks and take up initiatives to promote peace			
17	Women are major stakeholders to promoting peace in a cultural context			
18	All religions in the community are actively participating and driven towards a common goal; peace building			
19	Religion is not a hindrance to culture as far as peace building is concerned			
20	Language does not affect nor is it a necessary factor for peace building			

SECTION 2: Factors that influence peace building

1. In the scale given below, how would you rate the following in terms of causes of conflict in the Bamenda municipality

Causes of conflict	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Strongly disagree	Disagree
Ethnicity					
Disrespect of human rights					
Cattle rearing					
Marginalization					
Poor economic and social development					
Gender inequality					

2. Using the scale below, how would you rate the following factors that promote peace in the municipality

Factors that promote peace	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Strongly disagree	Disagree
National government services					
Positive cultural traditions					
Arts and education					
NGOs services					
Other specify:					

3. From the scale below, how would you rate the elements of culture that promote peace in the municipality

Elements that promote peace	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Strongly disagree	Disagree
Arts and literature					
Religion					
Symbols and beliefs					
Customs and traditions					
Education					
Women organization					

Thanks for participating !!!

Appendix 3: CAMEROON TIMELINE OF EVENTS OF THE ANGLOPHONE CRISIS

1 January 1960. The République du Cameroun achieves independence from France, with Ahmadou Ahidjo as President.

11 February 1961. In a plebiscite supervised by the UN, British Southern Cameroon votes for independence and reunification with the already independent République du Cameroun, forming the Federal Republic of Cameroon.

20 May 1972. President Ahidjo, via a national referendum, abolishes Cameroon's federal system, replacing it with a unitary state.

2 June 1972. The government adopts a new constitution. The country's name changes from the Federal Republic of Cameroon to the United Republic of Cameroon.

6 November 1982. Prime Minister Paul Biya succeeds Ahidjo as president, following the latter's resignation.

4 February 1984. President Biya changes the country's name from the United Republic of Cameroon to the Republic of Cameroon, a return to the Francophone part's name at independence.

19 December 1990. The reintroduction of multiparty politics in Cameroon

23 October 1992. Biya wins the presidential election by a small margin (39.9 per cent) over his Anglophone opponent John Fru Ndi (35.5 per cent). Fru Ndi has the support of many Anglophones, having promised a return to a federation. Protests and general strikes paralyse parts of the country.

2-3 April 1993. The first All Anglophone Conference takes place in Buea, resulting in the Buea Declaration. Anglophones demand a return to the federal state and separate Anglophone institutions.

1 July 1993. The government succumbs to pressure after months of school boycotts and creates the Cameroon General Certificate of Education Board to run Anglophone exams. The authorities split the University of Yaoundé into six institutions, creating the University of Buea, the first higher education institution in the AngloSaxon tradition.

29 April-2 May 1994. The second All Anglophone Conference takes place in Bamenda and reiterates the call for a return to a federation as agreed at reunification in 1961.

18 January 1996. Following five years of surging Anglophone nationalism, with

proponents calling for either a return to the two-state federation or secession, the government adopts a new constitution making Cameroon a decentralized unitary state. Decentralization exists primarily on paper.

22 July 2004. Key decentralization laws are voted on the policy's orientation, the rules applicable to councils and regions.

11 October 2016. Lawyers in the Anglophone regions boycott courts and commence demonstrations calling for a return to a federation or outright separation to protect the Anglophone minority. Police crackdown on protesters in Buea and Bamenda.

21 November 2016. Teachers in the Anglophone regions join the lawyers' protests. Anglophones start boycotting schools.

22 September 2017. Following government arrests of civil society leaders and hundreds of civilians because they refused to call off the general strikes, there are mass pro-independence demonstrations in the North West and South West regions.

1 October 2017. An Anglophone protest leader declares symbolic independence for Southern Cameroon, which separatists call Ambazonia. Government troops brutally crack down on pro-independence demonstrations, killing dozens of civilians.

As the government intensifies arrests, people start to form self-defense militias.

30 November 2017. President Biya's government declares war on Anglophone separatists who killed about a dozen government troops.

2 March 2018

The government creates the Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development.

30 September 4 October 2019. The government organizes the Major National Dialogue, without the participation of key Anglophone separatist leaders.

3 October 2019. The National Dialogue discusses a proposal on the "Special Status".

24 December 2019. President Biya signs a law granting Special Status to the North West and South West regions.

Appendix 4: RESEARCH AUTHORISATION



ATTESTATION DE RECHERCHE

Je soussigné, **Professeur BOKAGNE BETOBO Édouard**, chef de Département d'histoire de la Faculté des Arts, Lettres et Sciences Humaines de l'Université de Yaoundé I (FALSH), certifie que l'étudiante **NANDJI KWEKEU Fatima Fotuna Lee** matricule **18U583** est inscrite en Master 2 au Département d'Histoire et poursuit actuellement un travail de recherche sur le thème : *"Culture and Peace Building in Cameroon: case of the Bamenda Municipality, 1990-2019"*. La présente recherche est sous la direction de **DZE-NGWA Willibroad** (Professeur).

Nous la recommandons aux responsables des administrations, centres de documentation, archives et toutes institutions de recherche nationales ou internationales et tout autre support de diffusion de l'information relative à son thème de recherche en vue de lui faciliter la recherche.

En foi de quoi, la présente attestation lui est délivrée pour servir et valoir ce que de droit.

Fait à Yaoundé, le 16/01/2024...

Le chef de Département
Bokagne Betobo Edouard
Maître de Conférences