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**ETHNIC CONFLICT AND PRIVATIZATION IN CAMEROON: THE CASE OF THE
CAMEROON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the trajectory of the on-going conflict between the state of Cameroon and the Bakweri ethnic group over the privatization of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC). The key finding is that the cause of the conflict is the tripolar authority system and therefore power fields in which the people find themselves today. Their lands were first appropriated by the German colonial administration for the development of plantation agriculture. When the Germans were ousted from Cameroon and their property declared 'Enemy property', following the First World War, Southwest Cameroon where the plantations are found came under the British colonial administration which upon independence ceded it over to the postcolonial Cameroonian state. The conflict shows the appropriation of the concept of neoliberalism by the Bakweri ethnic group to make it more appropriate to their needs and interests by asking for compensation for the exploitation of their land.

The contribution that this study claims to make to knowledge is that we should understand local processes particularly in Africa in terms of shifting national political economy of ethnicity and political patronage. Theoretically, I have directed attention to how present day conflicts can be traced to past and contemporary, larger historical, economic and political processes such as colonialism and how processes such as neoliberal globalization can have a different impact, reaction and outcome at the local level. It is therefore relevant to always see the local, national and international spheres as intertwined and affecting each other and to trace resistance

CHAPTER ONE

ETHNIC CONFLICT AND PRIVATIZATION IN CAMEROON: THE CASE OF THE CAMEROON DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

General Introduction

Neoliberal restructuring and development have often engendered conflicts between states and ethnicities within their borders. In fact, conflicts over the control of scarce resources between states and local communities have become the norm in recent times because states have lost control over their borders and economies. Such conflicts stretch from the Niger Delta in Nigeria, Gujarat, India, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda to Cameroon among others. Global economic changes have led to conflicts over the ownership of scarce resources among both ethnic groups and nations alike. This point of view is further evidenced by the reconstruction of Beirut after the war (Heiko, 2006) and the enrichment of the ruling class and their cronies in Nicaragua (Everington, 2001). My case study is the ensuing conflict of claims and counter-claims over Bakweri lands in Southwest Cameroon in the wake of the on-going privatization process in the country.

Cameroon like most African countries was negatively affected by the shrinking of the global economy in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the face of the multiple economic doldrums that this global economic downturn engendered, such as the fall in prices of agricultural goods, widespread economic crisis and consequently fall in living standards, structural adjustment came to aggravate an already bad situation as the government of Cameroon embarked on three consecutive salary cuts and hyper inflation set in at the same time¹. In the face of these economic difficulties and mounting riots for democratic reforms from its citizens, the Brettonwood institutions tied the disbursement of further development aid to two main but interwoven conditionalities: democratization and good governance in the management of public affairs and to the privatization and liberalization of the economy independent of the prospects that the adoption of neoliberal policies may threaten the well-being of some local cultural groups within their borders as the case of the Bakweri suggests. My research is preoccupied with the dynamics and trajectory of the defiance of the Bakweri against

¹ Approximately 20,000 people are employed as civil servants by the state of Cameroon while 14,000 are employed by the Cameroon Development Corporation which ranks as the second highest employer after the government.

the Cameroon governments' privatization of their land despite the latter's 'monopoly over symbolic violence' (Althusser, 1971) and its use of political patronage and clientelism to fragment the unity of the latter. I will further look at how they get mobilized and how issues become politicized as they confront the state for compensation.

In what follows, I will state the research problem, the objectives and significance of the study, the method used in generating the data and highlights the ethical issues in the study. Chapter 1 will provide a detailed historical context and trajectory of the conflict. Chapter 2 deals with the literature review and theoretical framework. Chapter 3 examines the position of various actors in the conflict and their agendas. Lastly, chapter 4 is a summary of the findings and the conclusion. I begin by stating the problem.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In this study, I argue that local society-state conflict is a complex social and historical process that has evolved over time within the context of specific, local, national, regional and international conditions. It is therefore important to understand how the relationship between the two actors has evolved over time and map out its changing patterns and trajectories. Specifically, my research will examine the dynamics of Bakweri grass root mobilization against the Cameroonian state over the privatization of the CDC. How do they get mobilized and how do issues get politicised? What kinds of relationship exist between the state and political society in Bakweri land and what implications does it have for the privatization process? How is local politics intertwined with the privatization process?

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to map the trajectory of Bakweri grass root mobilization against the Cameroonian state over the issue of privatization of the CDC through an examination of the evolving social and historical processes and their intertwinement with local, national, regional and international conditions. The specific objectives include:

- To map out the historical trajectory of the ensuing conflict which is still pending resolution at the African Commission on People's Rights in Banjul, Gambia.
- To explore the role of political clientelism and ethnicity in explaining Bakweri/state conflict over privatization or the use of clientelism and patronage to achieve privatization by the Cameroonian state.

Significance of study

Although conflicts between states and local communities are prevalent all over the world, the local, specific context in which they are played out are not well explored and clearly understood. Therefore, a study of this kind can eventually contribute to knowledge by providing local, specific, empirical data on the nature of local problems generated by the appropriation of western concepts of law and property rights. It provides a way for interrogating and deepening the theoretical expositions of such problems and their implications for peace building between local communities and states, national and international security. As a point in case, conflicts over natural resources have been linked to some of the wider conflicts in the West African sub region. These include tensions between the pastoralist Tuaregs and the state in Mali and Niger as well as the Chadian civil war. Thus, in an age of globalization, a problem like the one pitting the Bakweri Land Claims Committee against the Cameroonian state may be local, but is often nested in national, regional and global security concerns as the Darfur crisis tends to suggest, hence its policy significance at the global level.

The overall methodological approach adopted for this study is qualitative and interpretive. Emphasis will be placed on the collection and eventual analysis of qualitative data so as to help reveal the problem from the perspectives of the multiple actors. I have opted for an ‘extended case study’. I have chosen an ‘embedded multiple-case study design’ (Yin, 1994:51) involving members of the Bakweri Land Claims Committee, community leaders such as chiefs, and NGOs working in the research site, so as to explore the dynamics of Bakweri activism and mobilization strategies against the state².

² Through the extended case study method the researcher seeks evidence to describe, understand and explain the case(s) under investigation, rather than to test a hypothesis. Also called ‘situational analysis’ (Gluckman, 1940, Cocks, 2001), it was coined by the Manchester School of social anthropology to which, “extending out” from the field means looking beyond native claims as to what “natives” are doing and recording what they are actually doing, diarising ‘accounts of real events, struggles, and dramas that [take] place over space and time’ (Buroway, 1999:5). As Buroway, rightly notes, this approach is capable of highlighting the discrepancies between normative prescriptions and everyday practices-discrepancies that can be traced to internal contradictions ‘but also to the intrusion of colonialism’. This is the approach I adopted so as to describe and analyze the trajectory of the on-going conflict between the Bakweri land Claims Committee and the Cameroonian state.

The selection of the Bakweri is purposive. They are the most vocal against the privatization of state-owned industries. I am also familiar through personal interactions with some of the main actors and key informants who demonstrated their willingness to be part of the study. Purposive sampling, following Burns is useful if it 'serves the real purpose and objectives of the researcher by enabling him to discover, gain insight and understanding into a particular [process]' (2000:465)

Data gathering instruments

In line with the 'multi-method embedded case study' (Burton, 2000:219), the data for this research was collected using a wide array of methods: informal interviews, individual in-depth interviews, and documentary research respectively. Altogether, a total of 12 key stakeholders were interviewed while I also spoke with many villagers and workers of the CDC informally. These interviews were conducted between 20-25th of August 2007 and complemented with primary and secondary research between the 18-20th of March 2008.

Individual in-depth interviews took place with various actors in private and at the informant's convenience. Issues will be raised and discussed in strict intimacy. In keeping with anthropological conventions, interviews were usually a one to one encounter because third parties could negatively influence the discussions and its outcome. The beginning in keeping with conventional fieldwork practices was with less threatening subjects (Malinowski, 1922:5). I used a semi-structured interview guide, which guided and focused discussions around issues of interest while simultaneously permitting informants to articulate on issues as deeply as they please.

Written documents, be they governmental or non-governmental reports, newspaper articles, national legislations, international treaties are important for social research. They expose normative positions about social life and will permit a researcher to judge their implementation or otherwise, to identify the social structures preventing implementation, to see the gap between presumed government policies in a particular domain of social life and their effective translations in real life situations.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:158) have noted that in general, documents provide information on places, persons, events etc that cannot be acquired first hand. They thus enable a researcher to gather information that complements other data sets. It might be argued that exposure to written or printed materials provide useful support to observations and interviews. These stand in places where

researchers cannot be physically present and can be used as a follow up or a precursor to other methods like observations and interviews. I rely on these researchers to make my case for the importance of documentary sources for this investigation.

Given the impossibility to collect information on all relevant issues with specific reference to the claims of the Bakweris against the state of Cameroon, I also looked at national and international legislation with regards to social, cultural and political rights of minorities by inspecting various treaties entered into by the Cameroon government. Official documents are shaped by the structure and activities of the state both directly and indirectly and are a reflection of the organization and interest of state agencies'. They present only what the state wants the people to know about and should be treated with some degree of caution.

ETHICAL ISSUES IN THE STUDY

In keeping with standard social science research practice, ethical considerations will guide my actions in the implementation of this ethnographic study. An example has to do with the principle of access given the sensitive nature of the topic under discussion. They accepted to provide relevant inside information to me in strict confidence. I have used my social networks to make some prior contacts already. My knowledge of the local lingua franca, Pidgin English, the English and French languages permitted access unlike if I were a complete stranger in the community.

Respondents were on each occasion before the conduct of an interview informed of their right to freely participate or not to participate. In fact, the concept of voluntary informed consent is at the very centre of research ethics in the social sciences. The human subjects of research according to this notion are entitled to know the nature, purposes and implications of research and to autonomously choose whether to take part in it or not. The principle to respect the terms of negotiations with participants underpins this research. This basically has to do with issues related to trust, anonymity of persons, places and confidentiality is of utmost importance in this research initiative.

DATA ANALYSIS

After obtaining the necessary data, the next task will be how to analyze them. Tape recorded information was transcribed as soon as possible in the field. Analyses implies the grouping and eventual classification of information by type of information and informant. Generally, they will follow from the issues raised and discussed with the informants. These issues will reflect the objectives of the study. Therefore “cluster analysis” will be done. Analysis will be contextual taking cognizance of the circumstances of the conduct of the interviews as well as the non-verbal cues like the mood and facial expression of informants during the interviews. This will enable me to compare utterances across respondents and to arrive at similarities and nuances of meaning in their accounts of Bakweri activism against the state of Cameroon in the wake of privatization. Within and above, I will attempt to identify themes, patterns and processes, commonalities and differences of opinion (Miles and Huberman: 1994:9).

This study seeks to document the trajectory of the on-going conflict over land between the state of Cameroon and the Bakweri ethnic group. The main difficulties encountered included my short field stay, the reticence of most respondents to give information because the issue is sensitive and on-going. Some even felt that I was on a spying mission.

The remainder of this research paper is structured as follows. First, I examine the conflicting landscape of both traditional and modern authority systems within which the Bakweri find themselves today with specific reference to land tenure so as to provide historical context for understanding the genesis of the conflict between them and the state of Cameroon. I also shed light on the trajectory of the conflict. Secondly, I examine the position of various actors: the state, Bakweri elites and members of the BLCC with regards to the bone of contention. In the conclusion, I summarize my findings.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO BAKWERI-CAMEROON GOVERNMENT CONFLICT OVER PRIVATIZATION

Introduction

Cameroon is found in West-Central Africa. Cameroon was partitioned between France and Britain after the defeat of the Germans in the First World War. Britain and France divided the country among themselves into British and French Cameroon and ruled her until independence and subsequently reunification in 1961. The former British section, Anglophone Cameroon is made up of the Northwest and Southwest provinces while the French section has eight provinces with a demographic majority. French Cameroon attained independence in 1960 and then reunified with English speaking Cameroon, West Cameroon in 1961. See Maps of Cameroon that follows.

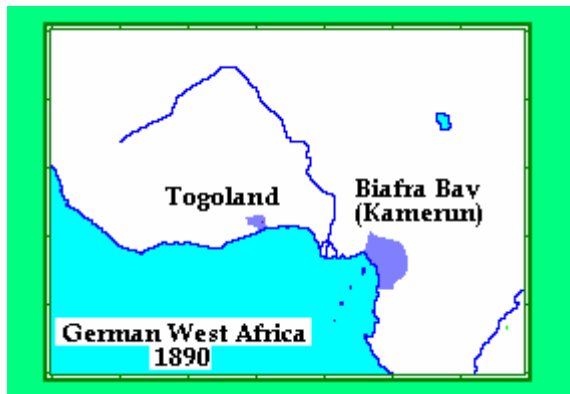


Figure 1: Colonial map showing German Cameroon. Source:<http://www.zum.de>. Consulted 25 th May, 2008.

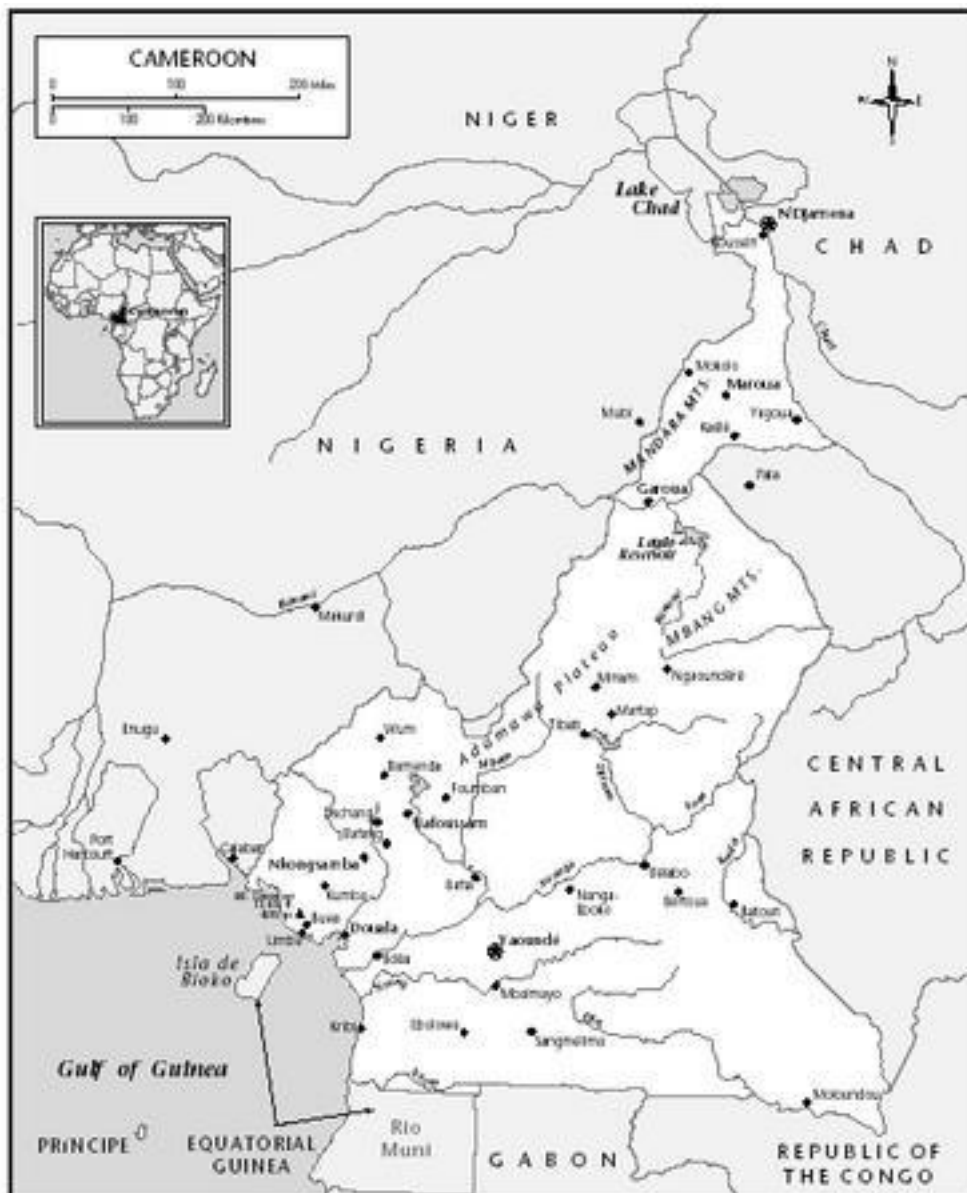


Figure 2: Map of Cameroon. Source: government of Cameroon cartographic service

Cameroon borders Nigeria to the west; Chad to the northeast; the Central African Republic to the east; and Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Congo to the south. Cameroon's coastline lies on the Bight of Bonny, part of the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean.

The country is made up of over 240 ethnicities with their own languages and cultures. Among these ethnicities are the Bakweris with an estimated population of over 800,000 people. They are closely related to Cameroon's coastal people (the Sawa) particularly the Doula and the Isubu. Principally concentrated in Southwest Cameroon; they live in over 100 villages, east and southeast of Mount Cameroon. They have villages along the Mungo River and the surrounding creeks. Traditional

Bakweri society was stratified based on land ownership. The native Bakweri had full landownership rights unlike the non-Bakweri or the descendants of slaves and the slaves at the lowest rung. Like their co-ethnics, the Doualas, the Bakweri as a coastal people were among the first to get in contact with the colonial administration, an event that has given their elites and Chiefs prominence and political leverage. Like other African people, the Bakweri are appropriating both modernity and tradition. Although some have converted to Christianity, they are still attached to their ancestral traditions and have retained their ancient tribal organization. Each Bakweri village is headed by a chief and his tribal council who are central to all cultural events. It is my conviction in this paper that we can only understand local level conflicts by looking at larger political, economic and social structures. Despite social changes, the institution of Chieftaincy has remained intact. The Chiefs are the custodians of the lores and customs of the people and claim to legitimately represent and act as mediators for them in the people's encounter with the state. They were first co-opted and used by the colonial administration as tax agents and are still being used by both the postcolonial states and local elites as spokesmen of their tribal groups and as 'vote banks'. In the immediate postcolonial political set up, they could mobilize their various tribes and determine the outcome of political contest even before the votes were cast. Today like in other Cameroonian tribes, they have constituted themselves into 'non-political' groups such as the Southwest Chief's Conference and the Southwest Elites Association (SWELA). The Chiefs like these outfits are often used as political bait by the elites in their quest for individual and collective political survival in the ethicized and clientelist political structure of Cameroon. It should be pointed out here that 'the state is the dominant economic agent and channel of accumulation' and state accumulation is intimately linked with individual mobility, power and wealth (see Bayart, 1986 cf. Gledhill, 2000:101-102). The chiefs often go out to lobby for the appointment of their sons and daughters in government ('development projects'). The present land conflict pitting the Bakweri against the state of Cameroon must be seen, I argue, within the larger geo-political context of ethnic society as based on both patronage and ethnic networks or on the appropriation of kin-based social structures by the postcolonial Cameroon state. I further argue that the core of the conflict must be seen from the colonial economic arrangement that led to the appropriation of native lands for the development of plantation agriculture.

The colonial appropriation of land and the development of plantation agriculture

Colonialism brought about significant transformations in the meaning of land and private property as well as movements from the countryside to the plantation towns. Among the several colonial projects undertaken in Cameroon for the benefit of the metropolitan economy was the establishment

of plantation agriculture. This development subsequently transformed the kin-ordered mode of production into a capitalist economic arrangement, a system that challenges traditional notions of property and land tenure.

During the colonial period, Bakweri lands were appropriated for the development of plantation agriculture by the German colonial administration. These plantations subsequently became known as the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC). It is an agro-industrial complex incorporated in 1947 to acquire, develop and operate extensive plantations of tropical crops. The CDC is solely owned by the state of Cameroon, under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Its share capital is 15.626 billion FCFA including 3.8 billion FCFA representing the assets for the tea sector that was privatized in 2002. The Corporation grows three tropical crops: rubber, oil palm and banana in the Littoral and Southwest Provinces of Cameroon. Its plantations cover a total surface area of 38,296 hectares distributed as follows: rubber 19,517 hectares, oil palm 15,577 hectares and bananas 3,202 hectares. It is the second largest employer after the Cameroon state with a work force of 15,816. The history of the corporation dates back to the partition of Cameroon.

The German colonial administration established plantation agriculture all over Cameroon and created a huge plantation complex which was exceptional in West Africa for its size and intensity of cultivation (cf Konings 1993: 219). A British Parliamentary Publication, Report on the British Sphere of the Cameroons (May 1922:62-68), reports that the German plantations in the Cameroons were ‘‘as a whole....wonderful examples of industry, based on solid scientific knowledge. The natives have been taught discipline and have come to realize what can be achieved by industry. Large numbers who return to their villages take up cocoa or other cultivation on their own account, thus increasing the general prosperity of the country’’. The establishment of plantation agriculture in the fertile coastal areas of Southwest Cameroon gave rise to forced labour conscription, to an unprecedented upsurge in the population of these areas due to a wave of rural-urban migration. Young and energetic men were brought to the coast to supply labour. In fact, large numbers of young men from the western Grassfields flooded the coast to serve as labourers in the newly created German plantations. Even when the British took over from the Germans as of 1916, the pattern of forced recruitment continued unabated as evidenced by the forceful enlistment of labour and other inputs. Some 104 000 hectares of the most fertile land in Fako was originally forcefully expropriated by the German colonial administration and handed over to German plantation developers without compensation to the dispossessed natives. By 1914 the Bakweri protested

against the extortion of their lands to the German Imperial government in Berlin. Corrective measures were however aborted by the outbreak of the First World War.

After World War 1 plantations classified as enemy property. Only original German planters showed interest in buying them. At the outbreak of World War 2 in 1939, the plantations again became enemy property. Faced with protest from the BLCC, Her Majesty Government bought back all the German estates from the Custodian of Enemy Property and declared the lands Native Lands under the Lands and Native Lands Ordinance. They then created the Commonwealth Development Corporation which later became the CDC in 1946 after due consultation with the Native Bakweri who had been dispossessed of their lands. The stated aim was for the socio-economic development of British Southern Cameroons.

The Germans are reported to have alienated about 400 square miles of the most fertile land around the Mount Fako area and stripped the Bakweri of over 200,000 acres of their most fertile land with tragic consequences. The 1922 British Annual Report to the League of Nations stated that:

'Uprooted from the homes of their forbears, settled willy-nilly on strange soil, deprived of their old time hunting grounds, and fishing rights, the Bakweris have retained but a small sense of tribal unity or cohesion''

The lands were leased out to CDC for a period of 60 years from 1st January 1947 to 2007 by the Governor General of Nigeria representing the British Government as trustee. It should be noted here that the British Cameroon was a territory under Un Trusteeship. Since land did not belong to the CDC, it had to pay Ground Rent to the Trustee who would have in turn, paid it to the dispossessed beneficiaries. Over the years, it has instead been treated as state revenue. C.K Meek (1957) writes that:

And where the Government had itself assumed the position of landlord, it had done so to protective native interests: the vesting of the land in the governor had not implied a transfer of the ownership of the land of the territory to the Governor but had merely conferred on him a power of supreme trusteeship. Nor did it affect the existing titles, whether community or individual.

During the apogee of German plantation farming in Cameroon, a number of different schemes were tried out including the confinement of the local population so as to freeze up more land for the latter purposes. Surrounding areas like Tiko emerged as colonial agro towns in 1892. It was the site of private German plantations such as the African Fruit Company and Holforth Company. By 1914, as

much as 264,000 acres of land in Victoria and Kumba Divisions (present-day Fako, Meme, and Ndian Divisions) were under the monopoly and control of German farmers while a large portion of the rest was held as Crown Lands (Njoh, 2002, Arderner, 1996, Rudin, 1958). When Germany was ousted from Cameroon in 1916 by a joint Franco-British force, the French and British took over plantation farming. Paradoxically, by the close of the Second World War and immediately after independence in 1960, European companies continued to maintain overwhelming monopoly and hegemony over most of the expropriated land. Companies like the Likomba Estate and the German plantation firm, the Likomba Company jointly owned an estimated 15,584 acres of freehold estate (see Njoh, 2002) while the rubber plantations were owned and operated by the British-based Commonwealth Development Corporation which later became the Cameroon Development Corporation, the CDC. Everywhere, colonialism relied on forcefully appropriating the labour of native populations for public work infrastructures such as for the construction of railway stations, public buildings, roads and the implantation of plantations. In expropriating most of the fertile lands for plantation agriculture to produce raw materials such as rubber, banana, tea, and cocoa for the metropolitan economy, natives were alienated from their lands and confined on particular spaces. Like elsewhere in Africa, German, French and British colonialism in Cameroon had several similarities and parallels. One similarity was the confiscation of native lands by these colonial authorities under the pretext of land reforms. In the particular case of Germany, lands were declared “vacant and ownerless” and proclaimed property of the German colonial state by the Crowns Land Act of 15th July 1896 (Njoh, 2002). The principle of racial segregation, the fear of contamination and the maintenance of racial purity determined zoning. The spatial segregation called for zoning and the setting aside of large tracts of land for colonial agricultural development. Like in South Africa during apartheid, native populations were herded into “native reserves”. This policy in the case of Cameroon for instance, freed up large portions of land at the foot of Mount Cameroon for the establishment of German plantation farming (Fisiy, 1992, Fanso, 1989). Africans further paid rents for land use to the colonial administration and to ensure the success of this policy, the colonial administration set high artificial land prices in urban areas so as to discourage most natives from settling in the colonial cities (Simons, 1974) and from acquiring these lands. Several towns because of their economic or strategic importance to the colonial enterprise were singled out for the implantation of colonial rule. This led to the advent of plantation towns such as Tiko, Limbe and Buea in Southwest Cameroon.

Large numbers of young men from the western Grassfields were forcefully herded to the coast to provide labour in the newly created German plantations. Even when the British took over from the

Germans as of 1916, the pattern of forced recruitment continued unabated as evidenced by the forceful enlistment and appropriation of labour and other inputs. With the expansion of German plantation agriculture in Cameroon, a number of different schemes were tried out. These included the confinement of the local Bakweri population so as to freeze up more land for the latter purposes. Tiko for instance was the site of private German plantations such as the African Fruit Company and Holforth Company. By 1914, as much as 264,000 acres of land in Victoria and Kumba Divisions (present-day Fako, Meme, and Ndian Divisions of Southwest Cameroon) were under the monopoly and control of German farmers while a large portion of the rest was held as Crown Lands (Njoh, 2002, Arderner, 1996, Rudin, 1958).

European hegemony and monopoly over most of the land initially portioned out for plantation agriculture continued even beyond independence. The Likomba Estate owned by Messrs Elders and Fyffes Ltd and the German plantation firm, the Likomba Company jointly owned as much as 15,584 acres of freehold estate while the rubber plantations were owned and operated by the British-based Commonwealth Development Corporation which later became the Cameroon Development Corporation, the CDC. The advent of plantation agriculture led to urbanization and had consequences on both local social structures and on family relationships.

Plantation agriculture and transformation in land tenure

Perhaps the most important social impact of plantation agriculture is its transformation of traditional system of land tenure and property. Plantation agriculture poses a challenge to tradition and culture in terms of land ownership particularly between local communities and the state. This is instanced by the ongoing suit brought against the Cameroonian government by the Bakweri Land Claims Committee at the African Commission for Indigenous People's Rights in Banjul, the Gambia. The former is claiming ownership over the land it gave the German and later the British colonial administration for plantation agricultural development. In the wake of privatization, the government sold over the plantations alongside the land but the Bakweris on whose lands the plantations are found are insisting that the new owners of the agro-industrial complex bought only the plantation and not the land on which these plantations are found. They want compensation from the new plantation management.

The colonial masters by seizing and expropriating native lands introduced changes in the traditional relationship between native people and land. The native people were outrightly dispossessed with no compensation. Elders as custodians of culture were the most affected. Land is part of a

generational and historical complex. It creates links between the worlds of the living, the dead and the yet to be born (Mbiti, 1965). When the postcolonial state took over, this pattern continued as all land became the property of the modernizing state, unless it was “effectively occupied”. The colonial land reform measures led to the commodification of land. Unlike in the past land could now be bought and sold in the open market. This is in sharp contravention of the concept of land within the framework of African cultures and traditions. Njoh, (2002:244) quotes a Nigerian Chief as conceding that “I conceive that land belongs to a vast family of which many are dead, few are living and countless members are still unborn”. This has led to conflicts over ownership of land between individuals and between the state and local communities. As I intimated above, in the face of privatization for instance, the Cameroonian state sold off the CDC industrial complex, alongside the land.

This commodification of land has further given rise to stiff competition for land and to conflicts between locals and natives in the coastal regions of Cameroon, conflicts that can be traced to the social transformations particularly the introduction of the concept of private property engendered by colonialism. Members of local communities were first disenfranchised by the colonial and after by the postcolonial state which transferred rights to plantation farmers and corporations. In the actual sense, land belonged to members of a given community. In the dual political system and dispensation put in place first by colonialism and now being appropriated by the postcolonial state, lineage and family heads own family land while the Chief is de facto owner of all the land in the village. At the supreme level is the state which claims ownership over all parcels of land. Following Mamdani (1991:139- 146) there is no contradiction in the notion of communal ownership of land, as corporate and individual land rights co-exist explaining why the colonial notion of “private property” was a unilineal reductionism of community rights based on the universal European concept of legal tenure. This shows how the transplantation of theoretical concepts from elsewhere often fail to capture local level reality. In line with Mamdani (1991), Colson (1971:196-97) states “they assumed that the full range of land rights covered by the principle of proprietary ownership must exist in Africa as in Europe”. Stated otherwise, rights in the European sense had to be exclusionary with no possibility for multiple and overlapping ownership. The second problem with this Eurocentric reductionism was the conflation of ritual offices with proprietary rights over land whereas they were only concerned with ritual activities and not with the allocation of land. Thirdly, community was conflated with tribe. ‘Strangers’ were seen as having no traditional access to land whereas in most of pre-colonial Africa, strangers were considered as members of the kinship

network and welcomed as wives, clients, 'blood brothers', settlers or disciples thus enhancing the prestige and labour force of a household, kin group or community (Mamdani, 1991: 139-146).

The colonial notion of land tenure revolved around the above stated three conflation: community as proprietor of land, community leaders as wielders and executors of that proprietorship right and tribal affinity as defining access to community land. Following this logic, all owners of land had to be identified and protected against exploitation by being denied the right to freely dispose of their interests and land became a sole community ownership, what Colson,(1971) calls 'customary but untraditional'.

The state of Cameroon anchors its case for privatization on the 1974 Land Law (Ordinance No74-1 of July1974) which classified all CDC lands as National lands to be administered by the state so as to ensure development. In the spirit of the above law, CDC land fell under private property, for which the indigenes have a right to apply for a land certificate. CDC lands had been mapped and duly registered in official records before the Land Ordinance of 1974 entered into force. The German colonial administration entered these lands in the Grundbuch, and it therefore does not fall under the category of National Lands over which the state has powers of intervention.

BLCC maintains 60 year lease has ended and that upon attaining independence, the trustee relationship came to an end. The State, they argue, cannot arrogate to itself the administration of property it does not own.

In their memorandum of March 3rd, 1999, they called on President Biya in their memorandum to:

- i) Affirm that lands occupied by the CDC are private property, and therefore ground rents are payable to a Bakweri Land Trust Fund for the benefit of the dispossessed indigenes
- ii) In respect of unpaid rents over the years, these should be paid to the Bakweri Land Trust Fund and the amount charged to public Revenue, or deducted from the proceeds of the sale of the plantations to private companies.(As stated above, this non-payment amounted to misconduct by the Trustee)
- iii) The Bakweris should be fully involved in the negotiations with private companies wishing to invest, and grant them reasonable terms to make investment attractive

- iv) The Bakweri Land Trust Fund should use its resources to purchase shares in the private companies, among other things.

On June 16, 2000, the United States based branch of BLCC, called BLCC-USA, petitioned the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for its supposed sanctioning of the Privatization of the CDC without consultation with Native Landowners. It should be recalled that privatization is being carried out under the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAP)/ Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) program. The association expressed the Bakweri people's determination and "unwavering opposition to any privatization program that does not take into consideration the legitimate rights of the natives whose ancestral lands the soon to be privatized CDC and its colonial predecessors have exploited for more than a century. It is worthy of note to point out here that the Bakweri are not resisting the hegemony of western norms, rather, they are appropriating these to make them more applicable to their needs and interests. They stated for instance that they are not opposed to privatization but rather that they want clear rental terms under which their lands is leased to foreign developers to be clearly spelt out and acceptable to them. They further insinuated that given the availability of wildlife species, prospective lessees of land currently occupied by the CDC be made aware of their obligations within the framework of internationally recognized environmental norms.

Conclusion

This historical overview shows that the source of the conflict between the Bakweris and the Cameroon government over privatization of the CDC agro-industrial complex has colonial roots. It is also entangled in the larger geo-politics of ethnic society and political patronage. The Bakweris leased out their lands to the German plantation developers for sixty years and even when the British took over, the government of Cameroon continued to receive land rent taxes at the detriment of the Bakweris. These taxes have never been reverted to the Bakweris. Therefore we can state here that the conflict is partly the outcome of the conflicting landscape of authority systems in which the Bakweris find themselves today. On the one hand, we have the Cameroonian state which claims supreme authority over all parcels of land and on the other, customary/traditional authorities who are the custodians of native lands. As an all-powerful actor, the state is using its political clout and economic might to buy over prominent actors in Bakweri land through appointments as a way of fragmenting the people's unity. In the next chapter; I will discuss the literature review and the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I have argued that the origin of the conflict of ownership over Bakweri land with the Cameroon government must be understood from the colonial economic arrangement that led to deep transformation in the notion of land tenure and ownership as well as in the light of the geo-politics of ethnicity and power within the postcolonial Cameroonian state. In this chapter, I will review some relevant literature and state the theoretical framework informing my analysis.

The phenomenon of globalization has led to changes in traditional notions of land tenure and property ownership, to domination of the world economy by market forces and organisations that have no respect for the sovereignty of nation-states, national economies, national cultures and territorial borders. My research intends to describe and document the trajectory of the ensuing conflict between the Bakweri and the state of Cameroon over the privatization of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) which is still pending resolution at the African Commission on People's Rights in Banjul, Gambia so as to gauge the prospects for effective peace building between states and local communities.

In what follows, I will discuss the concept of neoliberalism and the relationship between neoliberalism, property and state-society conflict.

Neo-liberalism, property and state-society conflict

As a master concept, neoliberalism has been conceptualized to help make the critical link between the wide range of economic changes often summarised as 'globalization' and the actual ideological and political practices of governance that have orchestrated or are an offshoot of these changes (Kingsfer, 2002, Masvsky & Kingfisher, 2001). If globalization represents a new form of production that creates new relations of markets and states in an international sphere, the concept of neoliberalism is often invoked as a reference to the specific market-triumphalist manner in which capitalist globalization has been shaped and reproduced in recent decades. Several policy shifts that are typical catalogued as neoliberalism include: the privatization of public services, the elimination of subsidies and the restructuring of welfare provisioning to increased attachment to the workforce, and the reform of urban fiscal policies. Despite its multiple guises, neoliberalism carries the illusive notion of 'freedom' defined as the rights of individuals to participate in markets and of markets to act without being hampered by governmental regulation (Clarke, 2004, Harvey, 2005). The retreat

of the state from the market is inaccurate, rather, critical shifts in the ways that governments intervene in markets. Other critics of neoliberalism point to its links with rising social and economic inequality on the one hand, and on the other, to its ideological, political and governmental implications (Ferguson, 2006, Gledhill, 2004). Bourdieu, has for instance, baptised neoliberalism as having a paradoxical dual effect- the weakening of the ‘left-hand’ of the state- organisations that potentially safeguard ‘the interests of the dominated and subjugated, the culturally and economically underprivileged, women, stigmatised ethnic groups among others while simultaneously, strengthening the ‘right hand’ of the state through organisations and agents of finance, budget, militarism and the rule of law (Bourdieu, 2003:34-35). Following this, he characterises neoliberalism as ‘*a mode of production that entails a mode of domination through precariousness*’ (2003:29).

I do not conceptualize neoliberalism as a thing; I rather call attention to the need to focus on specific projects, people, institutions and places. We need to locate neoliberal cultural formations in their specific context of occurrence, ‘neoliberalism being ‘a fragmentary, incomplete process through which competing projects of governmentality are taken up and operationalized in historically and geographically situated situations’ (Maskovsky & kingfisher, 2001:117-118) enmeshed in unequal power relations. Three paradigms have dominated anthropological studies of neoliberalism. The first, influenced by Marxism and the work of Harvey (2004) conceptualise neoliberalism in terms of individual entrepreneurship, the celebration of private property, free markets and trade as the organising principle of economic management. Neoliberal reforms in this light become associated with the restoration of capitalist class power amidst global economic crisis (Harvey, 2003). The second, influenced by post-structuralism, explores shifts in governmental regimes whereby a governmental regime based on social intervention and Keynesian welfare statism is transformed into a form in which the workings of government (the state and the conduct of conduct(Foucault, 1979) are declared autonomous and economised in line with an entrepreneurial model that lays emphasises on personal, familial, community responsibility and risk, and the proliferation of NGOs (Clarke, 2004, Rose, 1992). Thirdly, followers of Giorgio Agamben (2005) see neoliberalism as a ‘malleable technology of government’ that produces new ‘graduated forms of sovereignty’ and a new ‘interactive’ mode of citizenship in which rights and benefits are shared out in the light of entrepreneurial capacity, not necessarily nation-state membership (see also, Ong, 2006). Privatization, as Verdery, argues, is a process, not of creating new ownership rights but of transforming socialist property regimes, the creation, not only of rights but of debts, obligations, and liabilities, overemphasis on rights as revaluated lands were returned after 1989 to

its former owners in Transylvania (Verdery, 2000:139). In Chapias, Mexico in the late 1990s for instance, the intersection of new modes of production led to deeply sedimented conflicts over land tenure, sovereignties, and indigenous rights (Hayden, 2000: 115-138). On their part, Comaroff & Comaroff (1997) discuss the confounding effects of rampant liberalization in South Africa due to the concentration of capital circulation to a few major sites. They report ‘epochal shifts in the constitutive relationship of production to consumption, of labour to capital’ in the occult economy of South Africa.

In Marx’s political economy, he postulates the idea economics (relations of production) determine class relations and relations within and among individuals in a given society. The key notion here is that of the structure and the superstructure. While his concept remains useful in certain circumstances, such an economic reductionism of society is not very reliable for the analyses of political conflicts. For one thing, Marxism negates the very existence of ‘society’. Marxism fails to capture extraneous forces beyond the confines of the nation-state. Polanyi (1957) brings useful insights which captures the influence of globalization with his idea that the self-regulating market could serve as the dominant ‘mode of integration’ free from society’s constraints. His concept of ‘one big self-regulating market’ and his belief that ‘simultaneously a counter-movement was afoot’ provides an interpretive lens for both understanding and for examining the various dimensions of the counter-globalization movement. His ‘double movement thesis’ (market expansion and social protection respectively lead phases) provides a useful corrective to the economic reductionism of Marxism.

However, a political economy perspective reveals both the systematic nature of colonial economic exploitation and the less visible dimensions of colonial politics. In the case of South Africa for instance, the transformation of the country’s economy into a form associated with apartheid involved in the first instance, state intervention to limit African farmers from competing commercially with whites, and second, the forceful eviction of Blacks to the so-called ‘homelands’ where poor agricultural conditions and biting poverty forced them into wage-labour migration (see Gledhill, 2000:72). In other words, the politics of the dominant white stratum of colonial society contributed to the deteriorating economic conditions of blacks since it was partly the outcome of pressure from poor whites on the white elites within a political system from which Blacks were excluded. But the economic exploitation of the colony, I argue, was also shaped by international political factors despite the local structure of economic exploitation. This is attested by Dutch colonialism in Indonesia which was structured by international political factors.

Traditional neoliberal approaches to the concept of property often equate property with political liberty and as a precondition for economic efficiency (Ryan, 1984) despite differences in specific social and political context. In the wake of privatization in numerous Western capitalist countries, some authors have been quick to attribute the collapse of communism to lack of any alternative to private property as the basic organising principle of human economy. For instance, Von Benda-Beckmann (2006), describe the emerging trend as ‘the fetishization of private property rights’ while Siegrist, (2003) talks of ‘the penetration of private property into diverse spheres of human social existence’. Despite this recurrent tendency, there are equally contrary tendencies such as the increasing importance of ‘access’ rather than ownership (Rifkin, 2001). Within the specific context of neoliberal globalization, Engel (2002) talks rather of the ‘thinning out’ of property rights because owners are increasingly under control from states and other regulatory bodies. State creation of the prior conditions for liberal dominance was captured by Polanyi’ (1957) Collaborating Polanyi (1957), Hann (2007) suggest that the rise of neoliberalism and private property are intimately intertwined with each other and that the present phase of ‘neoliberalism’ can rightly be viewed using Polanyi’s spectacles.

It is behind this backdrop of the dominance of neoliberal ideologies that states are most often, dispossessing their citizenry through the rhetoric of collective well-being (governmentality racket, see Foucault, 1979) as justification for the adoption of neoliberal policies. They frame policies such as Structural Adjustment and privatization in the rhetoric of protecting the well-being of everybody whereas only the interests of the elite class really matters and not that of the local masses. In the case of Nicaragua for instance, political elites shared the spoils of privatization with many cronies of the Somoza regime getting back their plantations (Everington, 2001:64) while in Chile, Mapuche workers by strategically using state resources for their movement’s gains were reflexive towards the prospects of co-optation and tended to maintain a hybrid subjectivity (Yashar, 1998, Zeitlin & Ratcliff, 1988).

One further line of research has investigated the impact of neoliberal globalization in various countries. Through the political lens of agricultural property rights, for instance, Nicaragua’s transition from a revolutionary to a democratic, neoliberal state was characterized (Everingham, 2001) ‘by failed bargains, legislative initiatives and constitutional reforms leading to ambiguity over coveted assets’, including land. The same scenario is observable in the privatization of the reconstruction of Beirut. As Heiko (2006) points out the key stakeholders involved (former tenants and owners, refugees who had occupied properties in the city centre) were frozen out. A strong market orientation which was contrary to public interests and humanitarian considerations was

equally adopted. South Africa's land reform programme shows similar competing interests. The government's plans to develop commercial agriculture clashed sharply with the desire of local residents for rural land as security in the context of high levels of unemployment (Mathis, 2007). In Thailand there is a discrepancy between legal and customary rules and practices. An open land frontier initially permitted people to move away as a conflict avoiding mechanism, but the government's new policy to promote commercial tree plantations, led to increase in conflicts over forest reserves (Christensen, 1994). Similarly, land ownership policies instituted by the Chilean government and large private investment projects led to the loss of control and resources over the territory of the Mapuche-Pehuenche giving rise to youth migration, socio-cultural changes and conflicts over access and use of ecological zones (Azocar et al, 2005). These instances suggest that state policies purportedly meant to guarantee the general welfare of its citizenry may lead to the dispossession of local communities and generate conflicts. These studies are important to my case because the same policies are likely to produce different outcomes depending on the ground level circumstances.

Unlike the authors cited above, Isumunah (2003) debunks the political autonomy by subjugated group thesis as part of competition for scarce resources or state economic adjustment programs as a paradigmatic model for explaining communal conflicts in Africa. Rather, he posits that land tenure of first settlers or groups affects assimilation or dissociation of later settlers, and that it determines nationality and citizenship for later immigrants despite a shared language and culture. Although my own study deals with state dispossession of indigenous people as a consequence of structural adjustment, one of his contributions is the view that 'traditional authority has remained resilient, if not defiant of state authority on land (Isumunah, 2003:17).

The past provides clues for understanding contemporaneous changes. Comaroff & Comaroff (1999) point out that present struggles in Africa unveil more about larger historical forces in the post cold war context. Though their preoccupation is with the development of civil society, one of their contributions is that they make the case for historical anthropological insights to inform contemporaneous discourses on the rise of a 'New World order' of globalization. Their contribution to this discussion is that they show how global processes affect local processes in diverse and complex ways with different outcomes depending on context. They thus emphasize on the need to look at the source of social change and conflict in history. I argue that the colonial and postcolonial historical and political context provides an understanding of the source of conflict over land between the Bakweri and the state of Cameroon. In the same vein, Cooper (1996) analyses the

British and French colonial systems of recruitment, control, and institutionalization of African labour forces from mid-1930s- late 1950s. African workers, trade unions, and political leaders, he concedes, appropriated the concept of social change (“modernity”) to lay claims to equal wages, benefits and share of power. This appropriation of modernity dovetails with the claims of the Bakweri ethnic group for land royalties and compensation.

Having considered some relevant literature above, I will in the next section look at the theoretical framework informing the conceptualization and implementation of this study before delving into the analysis and conclusion in the last part.

Theoretical Framework

I intend to combine Marxist neoliberal political economy and state-society interaction theories (especially the Foucauldian notion of ‘power and governmentality’ (Foucault, 1994, 1979, Rose and Miller, 1992) and theories of hegemony (Gramsci, 1971, Guha, 1999) and Wolf’s broader notion of power (Wolf, 1990, 1999) in which he describes power as (1) power as personal potency (2) interactional power, or the power to shape social action, (3) tactical or organizational power, or the ability to shape instrumentally the environment or settings where others act, and, finally (4) structural power, a mode of power that shapes the social field of action, making some behaviours possible while others are impossible or even unthinkable (1990:586-7, Wolf, 1999:5) to explain the problem. Theories of neoliberal political economy maintain that a combination of common and competing interests in the context of globalization will push the state to adopt market-orientated policies which will lead to the eventual transformation of state-society interaction (Polanyi, 1957, Anderson, 1976). This will in turn, affect the relationship between local communities and the state. The neoliberal political economy model captures the impact of global forces on local conditions, and is analytically relevant for the examination of the local, specific contexts of globalization and privatization. On the other hand, by combining Foucauldian and Wolf’s notions of power and theories of hegemony, allow me to explicate the use of the ‘collective interest’ racket underpinning state neoliberalism as a form of governmentality regime, a mechanism for the reinforcement of the state’s position in a particular social field of privatization and to simultaneously situate Bakweri resistance from below.

Conclusion

What the above literature shows is that neoliberalism, a buzzword of anthropology and the social sciences leads to the transformation of property relations, giving some groups more leverage

over others but the outcome is not unitary. At times, it disempowers, 'rolls back' the state while simultaneously empowering the weakening of the 'left-hand' of the state- organizations that potentially safeguard 'the interests of the subaltern groups (dominated and subjugated, the culturally and economically underprivileged, women, stigmatized ethnic groups among others while simultaneously, strengthening the 'right hand' of the state through organizations and agents of finance, budget, militarism and the rule of law. Neoliberalism is not the retreat of the state. It is therefore necessary to examine diverse settings where neoliberalism has 'touched down' and to highlight the type of problems raised by the indigenization of neoliberalism. I have argued following the lead of others (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1997, Gledhill, 2000 on Latin America, Hayden, 2000 on Mexico) among others.

CHAPTER FOUR

BAKWERI MOBILIZATION AND THE AGENDA OF VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS

The Bakweri land problem brings together local, national and international stakeholders occupying different and shifting power fields with some actors having more clout and resources and therefore able to frame the social field of action than others (Wolf, 1990,1999). In this light, the state of Cameroon might be said to have monopoly 'over symbolic violence', the economic resources such as top administrative opportunities with which to lure some Bakweri elites with (the strategy of political clientelism). At the local and global scales are the native Bakweri alongside their intellectuals in the diaspora constitute one, diverse field of power. Like their diasporic elites, they are framing the issue in terms of indigenous rights. They have successfully internationalized the issue by citing the government of Cameroon to the African Commission in Banjul, the Gambia thereby halting the privatization process. Despite unanimity that the people have a historical and legal case in their favour, the various stakeholders within the Bakweri community are divided on political and self-interest grounds showing how even the notions of culture and identity are contested issues. In this chapter, I will examine the different positions of various stakeholders involved in the conflict. I argue that the Bakweri land problem throws light on the Cameroonian state's policy of privileging certain ethnicities and individuals at the detriment of others. I begin with the government of Cameroon, then Bakweri Chiefs and the BLCC/BLCC-USA. These are not isolated actors, but rather, stakeholders occupying different power fields and having different resources and amounts of power. For instance, some individuals such as the Chiefs and elites as political actors are multiply located and therefore tend to maintain an ambivalent perspective in the light of shifting circumstances.

The Government of Cameroon

When the matter pitting the BLCC came up for hearing before the 34th session of the African Commission on Human & People's Rights, the government representative and head of the delegation asked to know why 'the Bakweris wanted to be treated differently'. This was in reaction to the request of the BLCC that land rents be paid to the natives for the exploitation of their land by the CDC for agro-industrial development. The Minister, an Anglophone, Dr. Deon Ngute, was simply giving vent to the view that CDC lands were 'government land' and that local community were not to be entitled to revenue generated for the exploitation of the land in question. This is

unlike the case of other local communities in the country who regularly receive compensation for the exploitation of their lands by multinational corporations.

A similar view was expressed by Mr. Michel Meva'a m'Eboutou, then Minister of Finance during an interview granted to Cameroon Tribune on October 22, 2002 when the tea estates of the CDC were sold to Brobon Finex, the so-called "South African Consortium". Asked who owns the CDC lands, the bone of contention between the Government of Cameroon and the indigenes of Fako Division, he categorically stated that:

'Elles restent la propriété de l'Etat. Elles sont plutôt données en bail emphytéotique dans le strict respect de la législation et de la réglementation en vigueur et sous la vigilance du Ministère de l'Urbanisme et de l'habitat' (They remain the property of the state. They have been leased out in strict compliance with the existing legislation and regulations (and have been placed) under the supervision of the Ministry of Town Planning).

The present General Manager of the CDC, a native Bakweri, Njalla Quan maintained the same government position when he pointed out that:

CDC is exploiting the whole land put at its disposal by the Government of Cameroon. It is an error to say that the land belongs to the CDC. It is the land which the CDC is exploiting which is government land. We have only a few thousand hectares which we acquired as CDC for which we have a title deed but the rest of the land is under leasehold. We have a leasehold agreement by which the government has put this land at our disposal for exploitation (Interview of 21st August, 2007, Buea).

The view of these government officials is that the CDC lands belong to the government despite the fact that the 1974 land law states the contrary. Ironically and true to the government position, the Stakeholder's Agreement of October, 18, 2002 between Brobon Finex and the Government failed to mention the rights of indigenous land owners or of any financial gains due to them. This is contrary to World Bank policy that requires the preparation and implementation of an *Indigenous People's Development Plan* (IPDP) for groups such as the native Bakweri who are adversely affected by World Bank-sponsored activities. Although the Government has persistently insisted that the lands on which the Tole Tea Estates stand were leased to Brobon Finex, the shareholder's agreement does not make a single reference to the said lease. The document only states that the shareholding of the Cameroon Tea Estates (CTE), the company created to manage the estates, will be divided between Brobon Finex (Pty) LTd (65%) and the Republic of Cameroon (35%) with Brobon Finex ceding 5% of its shares to workers within 2 years. In fact, no reference is made to any lease document.

What seems clear is that the Government of Cameroon is claiming, as shown by its resistance to Bakweri land claims that it neither recognizes nor applies the universal Principle of Derivation.

According to this principle, a percentage of the revenue accruing from the exploitation of natural resources in a given region is supposed to be shared among the communities of the region.

The Government's double standard is further exposed by the special treatment given to other communities particularly those of the South, Centre and Eastern provinces as shown by laws and practices with regards to royalties and rents in the forestry sector.

On January 20th, 1994, the Cameroon parliament passed Law No.94-1, which regulates Cameroon forestry activities. This was followed by decree No. 95/531/PM, which laid down the implementation of forestry regulations. The 1994 Law incorporated the Principle of Derivation (the same principle which the Government has refused to apply with regards to the case of the CDC) and instituted the Annual Forestry Royalty (RFA) which is an area tax paid by logging companies. In the light of this law, 40 per cent of logging royalties go to the Local Council(s) where logging is taking place, 10 per cent to the village communities adjacent to the exploited area, 50 per cent to the State. According to the Government, the portion of the RFA allocated to local communities is supposed to be used to build roads, hospitals, schools, provide other social amenities, alleviate poverty and raise living standards. It is worthy of note that forests like the CDC lands is defined as 'Private Property' within the framework of the 1974 Land Tenure Act.

What this shows is that indigenous communities whose forests are being exploited by logging companies are paid royalties proportionate to the exploited surface area. While some communities deserve and are paid royalties for the exploitation of their forests, which are 'national lands and resources', others such as the Bakweri are not. In fact, in consonant with the Head Lease Agreement of December, 29, 1960, between the Commissioner of the Southern Cameroons and the Cameroon Development Corporation (Registered on March 15 1961 as NO.42 at page 42 in Volume 24 of the Lands registry at Buea). While rents are paid on so-called 'national lands', the indigenes of Fako are denied compensation for the exploitation of their estate, defined by law as 'private property'.

Barrister Ngale Monono pointed out on the Fakonet internet forum:

When it comes to paying royalties to communities of the ruling clan the Biya/Musonge regime is very prompt.....The communities and council areas concerned are informed to immediately come for their cheques.....When it comes to the Bakweri we should not get a brass farthing for our own land. It has even gotten into the national psyche. You hear Cameroonians talking of 'le bois de l'est,' 'le bois du centre' then of course, they say 'notre petrole'. Theirs is for them but ours must be shared (see www.fakonet.org, consulted 20th May, 2008 at 5:30 p.m.)

In the face of perceived opposition to the privatization of the CDC, the Government of Cameroon appointed a Bakweri indigene, Peter Mafany Musonge who until his appointment was General

Manager of the CDC to the post of Prime Minister. N. Susungi, like many other respondents pointed out that ‘Musonge is PM merely to serve as a guinea pig for the CDC privatization’. Corroborating the same point of view, Bille Fende asserted that Musonge was replaced with yet another Southwesterner Chief Ephraim Inoni because as a Chief, he has a lot of political leverage and clout. He can either impose or buy over his colleagues to accept the privatization of the CDC. In fact, since 1988, all General Managers of the CDC have been Bakweri people, but for one, John Niba Ngu, who was from the Northwest Province of Cameroon.

What this shows is that the Government of Cameroon is using political clientelism by appointing people with significant tribal clout to influential positions within the top brass of the administration so as to have its way with whatever agenda it has to impose on the natives. This is one strategy that the Government has used to fragment the unity of the Bakweris over the privatization of the CDC. These individuals are multiply located. They are natives, have allegiance towards their ethnic groups but at the same time, have their political privileges and self-interest to take care of. Asked about the position of other Bakweri elites, Mola Njoh Litumbe, Secretary general of the BLCC pointed out in the case of parliamentarians who coincidentally all belong to the ruling CPDM that:

The parliamentarians are ex-officio members of the Bakweri Land Claims Committee if you are not aware. Their voices as to the interest of the Bakweri are conditioned by the system under which they operate. But it is left to free citizens like myself and others who are not fed by the very state which is not respecting its own laws on our land to come and say it is not fair (Interview of 22nd August, 2007).

The land dispute between the Government of Cameroon and the BLCC has become a weapon in the hands of Anglophone nationalists who are opting for secession from the state of Cameroon. They see the CDC as the last evidence of their identity since it was expressly set up to be a catalyst for development in the English speaking region of Cameroon. They ground their argument in International Law. A diehard Anglophone activist, N. Susungi declared that:

The substantive point to be retained from the March 1950 UN resolution is that following the 1946 CDC ordinance, the UN Trusteeship Council passed a resolution endorsing the creation of the CDC including the provision that ‘more than 250,000 acres of land formerly alienated have been declared to be native lands and are being developed for the common benefit of the inhabitants of the Trust Territory by the Cameroon Development Corporation’ (Interview of 22/07/07, Buea)

According to the Un Trusteeship Council resolution of March 1950, the CDC is the common property to the people of the Un Trust Territory of Southern Cameroons. This suggests that the common ownership of the CDC has been enshrined in International Law since 1950. This further

implies that the Government of Cameroon has no say whatsoever in the privatization of the CDC because the matter concerns the people of the former Un Trust Territory of Southern Cameroons. Despite reunification in 1961, this agro-industrial consortium was never transferred to the government in Yaounde, nor did it ever become the common property of the whole Cameroon. This argument of Anglophone nationalists is however problematic because according to the 1951 report of the United Kingdom to the Un General Assembly, the BLCC has never accepted the principle that the CDC is the common property of the people of Southern Cameroons because over the years, there has been the conflation of the land and the company.

One of Gramsci's theoretical insight which is particularly useful to this discussion is his model of hegemonic historical bloc and the state which has been appropriated by Reid,(2006) in his study of the democratic impasse in the Philippines. This is suitable for conceptualizing the Cameroonian state's conflict with the Bakweris. On the one hand, the conflict can be traced to the impacts of nationally and globally induced forces which have led to poverty and the social exclusion of the local masses such as pastoralists and traditional landowners with the Bakweris included. It should be recalled here that structural adjustment and privatization forced the government to adopt neoliberal policies.

In this case, co-optation of some elites by the state through appointments in various administrative positions partly as a way to quieten the Bakweris and to fragment their unity and subjectivity might be seen as a direct process of consensual governance that masks relations of exclusion and exploitative power. The privatization process, has most often, witnessed the exclusion of the ordinary man to the benefits of elites. The Southwest and Northwest provinces were embedded into the German and later, into the British economy through the establishment of plantation agriculture, leading to the transfer of Bakweri lands on which the Germans established the plantations before leaving it to the British and the British later transferred it to the postcolonial Cameroonian state. The inheritance of colonial institutions at independence by the state with a strong presidentialist system of government has led to the monopoly of political power by the president and a few elites and politics and decision-making has been based on social exclusion, clientelism and inequality. The state's co-optation strategy of Bakweri elites to facilitate privatization is in keeping with a hegemonic logic, although it has instead led to the production of a hybrid identity among some of the people.

The state's co-optation strategy has placed some Bakweri elites into a dilemma of shifting allegiance. In fact, they have been forced by the present circumstances to engage in both resistance and consent at the same time. In other words, they tend to maintain a hybrid subjectivity- some work for the state in various capacities. Many take part in the Bakweri Land Claims Committee, and at times, represent the same state in negotiations despite the on-going court case pending resolution. This has reminiscences to the situation of the Mapuches in Chile who work for the state, are reflexive but simultaneously appropriate state resources for the benefit of their movement³ (Yasher, 1998, Zeitlin and Ratcliff, 1988). This is where it becomes necessary to broaden the theoretical framework by bringing in poststructuralist perspectives, especially the insights of Michel Foucault. The Foucauldian perspective views the state as a multidimensional actor with both its actions and intents. Following Gramsci (1971), the state often uses both coercion and the incorporation of the interests and priorities of certain social actors for the achievement of its hegemonic agenda and projects. Hegemony becomes an extension of the state into civil society (Buroway, 2003). Co-optation of certain elites might be forwarded as a way of dissolving their tribal identities by conferring on them a national identity so as to mobilize consent for the state's goal of privatization.

In line with Gramsci's ideas, my argument has greater focus on actors and the prospects for resistance given the multiple capillaries of state power. Foucault's (1979) key notion of governmentality and by extension, subject formation becomes essential too here. Governmentality can be defined as "a system of thinking" that deals with issues in relation to the practice of government. It addresses questions such as 'who can govern? What is governing and what or who can govern? (Gordon, 1991:3). The essence of any form of governmentality is to give "unitary and unifying expression to what are in reality multifaceted and differential experiences of groups within society" (Corrigan and Sayer in Ong 2006:738). This concept lump people together, identify them as individuals, establishes the terms for defining Bakweris on the one hand while at the same time constructing particular types of subjects (Foucault, 1979). In poststructuralist terms, the state is not a unitary actor with intent. This implies that as indigenous actors within the state, the Bakweris who have been co-opted can potentially create policies that are favourable to them if they have the leverage. After all, to attract 'development', they have always voted for the same state that is now being presented as oppressing them through the privatization of the Cameroon Development Corporation, an agro-industrial complex found on their land (though the conduct of the elections are

³ While this situation resonates well with the vindication of indigenous rights by the Mapuches of Chile, their situation is characterised by violence and overt crackdown by the Chilean state unlike the case of the Bakweri who are using the force of argument and the African People's court to claim their rights.

never free and fair) . We might say that although the state tends to be colonized by dominant interests, these interests shift with time and are reproduced and redefined.

Foucault's concept of subject formation becomes important in understanding the relationship between the Bakweri and the Cameroonian neoliberal state. People become and are constituted as subjects of a given regime of governmentality, 'the governmentality racket' through a process of "self-making and being made by power relations that produce consent through schemes of surveillance, discipline, control and administration" (Ong, 2006:737) The making of subjects in this light works both ways- citizens are constantly making themselves and being reconfigured through their relations with the state. Here Gramsci somehow merges with Foucault through his notion of generating consent but Foucault highlights the role of subjects as purposeful agents, giving way to the prospects that subjects are strategically positioning themselves into particular forms of relationships with the state. This might include in the case of most Bakweri elites, belonging to and showing allegiance towards the ruling political party, in which case, they critically weight the advantages and disadvantages as they do so in terms of appointments and other economic benefits that are likely to follow. Such a combined approach makes it clear that the state is not the only actor promoting a given subjectivity. There are equally civil society actors who participate in subject making projects for the state. In this case, individuals shuttle between the state and their ethnic groups depending on the prevailing situation as they may tend to represent both and to manipulate political rhetoric.

Hybridity becomes another useful concept in this regard for theorizing the Bakweri-Cameron government conflict. Following Bhaba (1994) conceptualizing identities and practices as hybrid means factoring in our conceptualization the tensions and imbalances among the various parts that make them up instead of attempting to reconcile them. This takes us beyond perceiving racial difference as a system of binary opposites or polarized political consciousness "(Bhaba 1994:207) seeing the Bakweri and their actions in this regard implies looking at their hybrid, shifting and context-driven positions. Preliminary discussions show divided views with regards to privatization-perspectives that are at times dictated by political affiliations and the need to make political capital. Most members of the ruling CPDM party among the Bakweri present privatization as good for the economy and country, a way to fight and alleviate poverty so that everybody benefits. A similar rhetoric was used to calm down tempers when salaries were cut for as much as 70% in 1993 in Cameroon. Most members of the opposition among the same Bakweri on the other hand, condemn privatization and particularly that of the CDC as depriving local communities and therefore

detrimental. This process actually involves the negotiation and simultaneous reinterpretation of state policies. Hybridity can in fact, be seen as a form of resistance, marked at times by both indifference/consent and discretion/resistance.

THE CHIEFS

Although Bakweri society is a decentralized polity, the Chiefs representing various influential clans are political actors and most often, militate in the ruling Cameroon People's democratic Movement (CPDM) party. There is no separation between the party and the state. Most of the Chiefs belong to the Central Committee of the party and are obliged to follow 'party discipline'. Some (3 of the 6 Chiefs) however disagreed with the government that the CDC is government land. Chief Endeley, a reputed jurist for instance, snubbed the Government of Cameroon when the former solicited his private services as an international legal practitioner to appear in Banjul against his own people (see www.thesuncameroon.com), last consulted on 21st May 2008 at 4:00p.m.

As a group, they reacted following the signing of decree NO.94/125 announcing the privatization of the CDC. These traditional leaders alongside politicians mobilized to revive the then moribund BLC. A crisis meeting bringing together 150 representatives of the Bakweri, Mungo and Isubu clans was convened on July 23rd barely eight days after the decree of July 15th, 1994. They prepared and issued a memorandum on the Bakweri position and expressed their determination 'to pursue relentless at all levels this matter of privatization or sale of the CDC.

I should state here that the Chiefs due to their lack of power when confronted with the state can neither frame the social field of action (Wolf, 1999) in their favour and against the state nor have any 'monopoly over symbolic violence' (Bourdieu,). Secondly, exposure to or lack thereof to political power determines support or lack of support to Bakweri opposition to the purported privatization of the CDC alongside the transfer of the land to the new owners of the corporation.

THE BLCC

The Bakweri Land Claims Committee (BLCC) is the legal representative of the native Bakweri in their land claims against the state of Cameroon. It has been in existence since 1946 when it was created to protest against the appropriation of the people's land by the German colonial administration. The organization is controlled by a board of trustees headed by a president, four vice presidents, a secretary general, 4 assistant secretaries, a communications department, a host of legal, technical, diaspora and other advisers. Ex-officio members include former and current Members of parliament and the Bakweri Land Claims Committee in the USA (see

http://www.bLCCarchives.org/2006/07/the_bakweri_lan.html),last consulted on 15th of April 2008 at 2:00a.m. It is a registered charity both in Cameroon and in the diaspora. It was registered and incorporated as a charity goal organization in the state of Texas, Dallas, USA for easy access to the financial contributions of Bakweri people living and working in the diaspora. According to Prof. Kale Koeffelle, the BLCC lead Counsel, there is Bakweri people in the US who want to donate to the land reclamation struggle and wanted a channel through which to do that in order to have tax grace.

The BLCC-USA has played a primordial role in advancing the course of the Bakweri claim over their appropriated lands. Apart from bringing the struggle to world attention, it has mobilized Bakwerians all over the world through the internet, got them to sign protest letters that were sent out to any stakeholder such as the world bank and interested buyers warning them against buying any parts of the corporation until the court case against the state of Cameroon is determined by the African Commission on People's and Human rights. In fact, the BLCC-USA has publicised and internationalised the Bakweri problem and may be said to be playing role both in terms of its financial and intellectual clout towards fighting for the restitution of Bakweri lands or the payment of land rents and compensation to the native Bakweri population back at home.

Instead of suing the Cameroon Government at various courts, the BLCC-USA preferred to cite the Government at the African Commission. They justified their decision by pointing out that the country's judiciary is not independent and that it is riddled with corruption.

THE WORKERS

Workers of the CDC are divided on ethnic lines. They are the subaltern in the game of power that characterises the privatization of the CDC. It should be recalled that promotion in the plantation often depends on one's network in the tribalized plantation service. In claiming their rights, the workers have most often than not been represented by senior workers, some of whom are allied with the ruling party. In the specific case of the tea estate, the only section of the plantations that have been successfully privatized, tribalism was a key issue and determinant factor in who gets compensated and who does not. This led to public outcry and disenchantment among the workers. Some staged protest matches but the government sent out troops and water canons instead of negotiating with them.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study is an extended case of the conflict of claims and counter-claims between the Bakweri ethnic group and the Cameroonian Government over Bakweri lands on which the CDC is found. These lands were expropriated by the colonial German administration, transferred to the British as enemy property when they lost the First World War by the League of Nations and later became the property of the postcolonial Cameroonian state at independence. The lands were leased out and not sold by the Bakweri to the CDC for an initial period of forty seven years that ended in 2007.

In the wake of the on-going privatization and liberalization process imposed on African governments due to economic hardship caused by bad governance and the privatization of the state, the Brettonwood institutions (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) prescribed democratization, privatization of state-owned industries and the liberalization of the economy. Like other African governments, the adoption of neoliberal policies in all facets of national life came to threaten the cultural well-being of some ethnic groups such as the Bakweri of Cameroon.

On the basis of local level ethnography, archival and historical sources, I have traced the roots of the conflict to the colonial economic arrangement that was marked by the establishment of plantation agriculture to supply raw materials such as bananas, tea and rubber for the benefit of the metropolitan economy.

The key finding that emerges from this historical reconstruction of the origins and trajectory of the Bakweri land problem shows that the dispute is caused by the tripolar conflicting landscape of the colonial, postcolonial and modern social, economic and political authority systems in which the Bakweri find themselves today. Like during the colonial period, the state has declared itself as the supranational authority with rights over all parcels of land. This infringes on the communal rights of the Bakweri ethnic group over their land. As we already know, plantation agriculture was established on lands that had been expropriated from the native Bakweri population who were then herded on infertile lands. In line with the colonial logic of property rights, the lands were declared to be 'vacant, unoccupied and ownerless and thereby confiscated and claimed as Crown Lands. The notion of private property in the European sense was totally misappropriated with the end result being the expropriation of native lands.

This study further shows that the Bakweri-Cameroon government conflict can only be understood within the larger context of the ethnic geo-politics of Cameroon. It is my conviction that we can only understand local level conflicts by looking at larger political, economic and social structures, structures that are grounded in the colonial power structure. For instance, despite social changes, the institution of Chieftaincy has remained intact. The Chiefs as the custodians of the lores and customs of the people always claim to legitimately represent and act as mediators for them in the people's encounter with the state. They were first co-opted and used by the colonial administration as tax agents and are still being used by both the postcolonial states and local elites as spokesmen of their tribal groups and as potential or real 'vote banks', even before effective rigging strategies are put in place. In the immediate postcolonial political set up, they could mobilize their various tribes and determine the outcome of political contest even before the votes were cast. Today like in other Cameroonian tribes, they have constituted themselves into 'non-political' groups such as the Southwest Chief's Conference and the Southwest Elites Association (SWELA). They often send motions of support to the powers that be promising 100 per cent victory. The Chiefs like these outfits have become political baits in the elite's quest for individual and collective political survival in the ethicized and clientelist political structure of Cameroon. Given their lack of economic and social power, they have become toys in the hands of the elites in the game of politics. It should be pointed out here that 'the state is the dominant economic agent and channel of accumulation' and state accumulation is intimately linked with individual mobility, power and wealth (see Bayart, 1986 cf Gledhill, 2000:101-102). The chiefs often go out to lobby for the appointment of their sons and daughters in government ('development projects'), the political elites. The present land conflict pitting the Bakweri against the state of Cameroon must be seen, I argue, within the larger geo-political context of ethnic society as based on both patronage and ethnic networks or on the appropriation of kin-based social structures by the postcolonial Cameroon state.

Unlike other Cameroonian ethnic groups whose resources particularly forests are exploited and they receive compensation, this is not the case with the Bakweri although they have often voted for the same state and have historically been given political prominence given their coastal location and the fact that they were among the coastal tribes that Europeans first came in contact with when they landed in Cameroon. Given their large following, the state has often co-opted them into strategic and prominent positions in government as part of the politics of ethnicity. In the face of opposition to privatization of the CDC, the state has resorted to old tactics. Apart from bench marking its case on the 1974 Land Law which gives it monopoly over all parcels of land in the country, the state of

Cameroon is using political clientelism and patronage by co-opting individuals among their fold into top administrative positions. In the process, the state has successfully fragmented the people's unity. However, we are now witnessing a deadlock particularly as Bakweri intellectuals conscious of the state's divide and rule tactics have decided to not only to cite the state in front of the African Commission but also to send out warning messages to all potential buyers. For the time being, the privatization of the CDC is at a standstill.

The contribution that this study claims to make to knowledge is that we should understand local processes in terms of shifting national political economy of ethnicity and political patronage. Theoretically, I have directed attention to how present day conflicts can be traced to past and contemporary, larger historical, economic and political processes such as colonialism and how processes such as neoliberal globalization can have a different impact, reaction and outcome at the local level. It is therefore relevant to always see the local, national and international spheres as intertwined and affecting each other and to trace resistance from below.

While this case study highlights the appropriation of Western norms by the local Bakweri people to make them more applicable to their needs and interests, there is the need for more comparative studies of this type in various Cameroonian communities. One key issue that I have not explored in detail for lack of time is the role and effectiveness of the diaspora in making claims at the national level within the context of neoliberal globalization. This might be a fruitful and productive line for further investigation.

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APPENDIX

Interview Guide

Questions to the Bakweri Elite and the Chief

- Please can you tell me something about CDC, the history of CDC?
- What are the advantages of the creation of CDC to the Bakweri people in particular and to the southwest province in general?
- Is there any aspect of the Bakweri culture and tradition that has been affected by the presence of CDC in this area?
- How is the relationship between settler groups and the Bakwerians?
- Are you pleased that the CDC has been privatized? How do you feel about it?
- What steps have been taken by the indigenes to reclaim their land?
- Which section of the Bakweri people is mostly affected by the conflict between the state and privatization?

Questions for some government officials and CDC Manager

- How long has the Corporation been operating?
- How long have you been manager?
- What are some of the problems caused by plantation agriculture in the area?
- Are there any conflicts registered between the corporation and landowners?
- How does the organization of the corporation look like?
- What criteria are put in place for the promotion of workers in the corporation?
- How can you evaluate the general living conditions of your workers taking into consideration working hours and wages, leaves, retirement among others?
- We hear that CDC has been privatized, is it true?
- What are the differences between the privatized CDC and when it was not?

Question for the CDC workers

- How long have you been working with the CDC?
- Are you happy with what you receive as salary?
- How many of you live in your house?
- How many rooms do you have in your house?
- Are you a native or a settler?
- Are you happy that this corporation was opened in your area?
- When do you usually go to work and when do you close?
- What is your area of work in the corporation?
- With the privatization of the corporation are there any changes in your working conditions and in your general life style?
- Are there any conflicts between you the indigenes and the settlers?

