



Interests Determining Friendly Relations between the German Colonial Authorities and the Chiefs of Wum Area, Kamerun

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Abstract

The paper argues that German colonial interests determined the nature of relations with chiefs. Where colonial policies were welcomed and protected wholeheartedly by the colonized, they became friends to the Germans and when they acted ultra-varies they were considered enemies. Collaboration from the Cameroon Chiefs came not because they cherished the Germans but because of fear of reprimand. This explains why the chiefs of Wum, Area deserted the Germans and went in support of the invading Allied Forces in 1916 hoping that they would be saved from the highhandedness of the Germans.

Introduction

The place of chiefs (fons) has remained non-negotiable in the administrative structures of Africa in general and Cameroon¹ in

¹ It has three different spellings denoting the three colonial experiences of the territory. The Germans spelled it Kamerun, the French, Cameroun and the British, Cameroon. It is worth mentioning that, Cameroon was colonised by the Germans in 1884 and after the defeat and ousting of the Germans in the territory in 1916, the territory was divided into two between the

particular as they continue to play the role of auxiliaries of the administration in their communities. This role dates back to colonial times. Before colonialism, chiefs had absolute powers over their subjects but with the coming of Europeans to Africa, their authority started waning. According to Panyin (2010) the imposition of colonial rule and control made chiefs auxiliaries of the administration and “they were brought into state governance as an extension of central administration to implement certain agenda of government” (pp.2-3). In this process, like in the case of German Kamerun, they lost their independence and became agents of the colonial administration when the Germans annexed the territory in 1884.

As agents of the colonial administration, they collaborated with the Germans in the collection of taxes, dispensing of justice and provision of labourers to German plantations and also for the construction of roads and infrastructural development as well as well carriers to European traders and officials for the transportation of goods (Ngoh 1996, p.143; Ad(1922)4, No. 227/27, 1922, p.11; Rudins 1968, pp.213 – 214; Ad(1933)5, No. 668, 1933, p.41; Ad(1927)4, No. 227/27, p.41 and Nkwi, and Warnier1982. p.214). The German policy made it mandatory upon the chiefs to adhere to government dogmas even if it was to their disfavour. They thus became facilitators for the effective exploitation of the territory (Ad(1922)4, No. 277/27, 1922, p.11). As such, German colonial authorities had to protect chiefs that defended their interests and those that did not adhere to their policies were heavily punished. It is as a result of the fear of the repercussions that

victorious Allies; Britain and France. This division endorsed by the League of Nations making them Mandates. The area under study fell under the British sphere of influence was made an administrative division in 1948 with the amalgamation of the Bum, Kom, Wum, Beba Befang, Esimbi and Fungom Native Authorities. The area remained a Division upon independence, though renamed as Menchum Division in 1968, and was only split in 1996 when Kom and Bum were cut off to form Boyo Division.

had to follow that most of the chiefs of Wum area had no choice but to collaborate and enforce German policies. However, the outbreak of World War I gave the people an opportunity to express their disgust and disregard for these policies and almost all the chiefs of Wum area went in support of the British.

The British did not divert from the German colonial policy with regard to the use of chiefs in the administration as their Indirect Rule Policy made them local authorities and the powers hitherto enjoyed were not discontinued. At independence, this policy was carried over to the postcolonial state as chiefs continue to be part and parcel of the administration. However, most of the privileges enjoyed by chiefs in the colonial state have long disappeared and they are at the beg and call of administrative officials. Besides, they are relegated to the background and their authority is constantly challenged by their citizens especially politicians making them unable to govern their subjects judiciously.

It is as a result of these shortcomings that the paper, traces the root cause of these problems with the hope that the government of Cameroon will learn from the consequences of the German actions and uphold the institution of chieftain, protect their positions and increase collaboration with them. This is because they are a veritable force and still holds legitimacy among majority of their subjects. At a time when dissenting voices, terrorism and the quest for separation are mounting in Cameroon, they can be veritable tools in minimising tensions and bringing their citizens under control. Without that, the consequences will be grievous for Cameroon, just like the case of the German colonial administration.

German Colonisation and Penetration: Manipulations and Pretentious Friendship

The colonisation of the coastal areas of Kamerun in 1884 by the Germans paved the way for the occupation of the entire country. This was made possible by the movements of German explorers into the hinterlands which culminated in the establishment of a German

Military Station in Bamenda in 1902. The presence of this station served as a prelude to the German domination of the Western Grasslands where the area under study is located. The military station cum political headquarter of the Germans in the region served as a catalyst or facilitated the gradual but effective occupation of the area. Another military station was established in Wum in 1904. This was to take care of the area south of the Katsina River. To effectively administer the northern region of the same river, a station was established at Kentu and another one set up at Njinikom in 1909 (Nkwi 1982, p.31 and Tem 2005, p.26). The presence of these stations meant effective occupation and administrative polices put in place were geared towards the socio-economic exploitation of the area. This was in line with the exploitative tendencies of colonialism.

The colonisation of Africa by Europeans brought the entire continent into the European subjugation in the late 19th Century and fierce competition was involved (Young, 2004, p.26). The process of the colonization of the continent was facilitated by the unification of Germany in 1870 as economic and diplomatic rivalries had to be redirected elsewhere and Africa became a suitable ground for such developments (Mbuagbaw, Brain and Palmer, 1967, p.48). Germany, a newly industrialized state saw the need to catch up with Britain in its economic and political dominance overseas in general and Africa in particular. The entry of Belgium into the colonial race was another catalyst that facilitated the colonisation of Africa. The search for new markets sparked off fierce competition and in this process, Germany acquired South West Africa, Togoland, Tanganyika and Kamerun (Ibid.).

The Germano-Douala treaty of 1884 endorsed the territory that came to be called the Kamerun, a German protectorate. In line with the doctrine of 'effective occupation' that was designed by the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, an "Imperial title was not secured until a skeletal presence on the ground existed" (Young, 2004, p.26). To meet up with this prescription, treaties or accords had to be signed between the imperialists (colonialists) and chiefs or African natural rulers. It is in this connection that the Germans went into the signing

of treaties with the Cameroonian chiefs of Douala. Gustave Nachtigal signed on behalf of Germany. In these treaties, the local chiefs indicated the wish for the Germans to remain in the coast and preserved their middleman monopoly. They also insinuated that no land be taken away from them. Again, no territory could be ceded by the Germans to a third party and commercial treaties of old with other powers were to remain in force. The *Kumi* (annual gift to the chiefs) was to be continued. Local customs had to be preserved and settled and cultivated lands were to remain in the hands of the present holders and their offspring forever (Fanso, 1982, 83).

The terms of the treaty were not whole heartedly accepted by the Germans as they hurriedly signed it to prevent Britain and France from doing so. They wanted to secure the territory though the terms of the treaty were unfavourable. It was certain that these were temporary and they hoped to change them when they must have had a strong hold over the territory. To justify this argument, it was not long before the Germans abrogated the terms of the treaties. They discovered that limiting themselves to the coast was a vital error. This was motivated by the counter annexation treaties signed by the British with the chiefs around Victoria and Buea. The French were also threatening and signing treaties in the South of the protectorate.

The diversion of trade in the interior to the British in Nigeria through Bayang areas and also the French in Upper Congo made the Germans more determined to disrespect and abrogate the terms of the treaty. Interpretations of the terms of the treaty were done to suit the Germans. They argued the Douala rights were limited to the coast and did not extend into the interior or beyond the Douala estuary. As such, endeavours were made to end the Douala monopoly and assert their authority in the interior (Mbuagbaw, Brain and Palmer, 1967, p.55). This was in line with the principle of effective occupation. Added to this, a dire need of labour for the development of plantations was too tempting to limit the Germans only to the coast.

As a result, Eugene Zintgraff had to carry out an expedition into the interior in 1887 which led to the establishment of German

administration in the Bamenda Grassfields in general and Wum area in particular. Moving from Douala, he travelled through Mundame, Kumba, Barombi, Nguti and Bayang country before reaching Bali in 1889 (Ibid., 57). From Bali, he went to Bafut and passing through Esimbi in the Wum area, he moved to Adamawa in Nigeria. He thus became the first German to explore the Grasslands of Kamerun. However, his presence never meant effective German presence on the ground. Even when authorised to lead a second expedition into the area in 1891, it was only for the establishment commercial or trade links and the supply of labour and soldiers rather than the institution of German administration. In short, this was meant for formal contacts and opened up the area to German penetration (Ibid., 57). It was only after this that he was asked by the German authorities to lead another mission into the area and establish German stations in the Grasslands.

While returning from Yola in 1889, Zintgraff mistakenly found himself in Bum (Ad(1927)3, No. 277/27, 1927, p.11). His Bafut and Bali guards had followed a group of Hausa men and women who moved to Bum to trade or buy kola nuts and ivory. He was warmly received by the people of Bum. From Bum, he went to Bikom. Worthy to note is the fact that he was preceded by Mosely of the Royal Niger Company who remains the first white man to have visited the area (Ibid.). Zintgraff moved into Bum again from Ibi in Nigeria. He was welcomed and spent two weeks in Lagabum and two nights in Fonfukka. From there, he moved to Munken, Fang, Mashi, Abar, Kung, Esu and departed through Gayama to Nigeria in that order and establish German rule in the area.

Mosely was another German who visited the area and established German control, especially in Mundabli and Mashi. Worth mentioning is the fact that an intrigue occurred between the people of Mundabli and Mashi. Mosely was made to understand by the Mundabli that the Mashi wanted to fight him. They also informed the Mashi that the stranger also wanted to fight them for refusing to aid him cross River Katsina from Mashi to Mundabli which had overflown its banks. These

two villages were arch enemies and the Mundabli wanted to manipulate the situation and settle scores. The Mashu could not understand why Mosely wanted to fight them. They had welcomed and offered him shelter and food in good faith. To prevent any scuffles, they decided to quite the settlement for fear that Mosely had gone into an alliance with the Mundabli. Though Mosley pleaded that he was not going to fight them, this plea fell on deaf ears. They left for Bum and then to Kwe near Kentu and only returned to their settlement after World War I When the Germans were ousted from Cameroon (Ad(1929)10, No. EP608, 1929, p.15).

From the initial stage, many groups in the area welcome the Germans by offering them food and shelter and in turn received gifts of clothes and friendship was established (Ibid., p.22). However, skirmishes erupted like in the case of Kom when Zingtgraff moved into the area in an attempt at establishing German rule. He found himself in trouble as he had to confront Kom warriors as was encircled for three days without food and twelve of his men arrested and detained. The Kom carried out the action because Zingtgraff did not take permission from the leader of Kom to pass through his kingdom. Without that, peace was finally made and friendship established with the Kom when he provided the Fon with a tin-plated box or trunk as a gift and in turn received supplies (Geary, 1975, p.68; Chilver, 1966, p.78).

However, no efforts were made to bring the area under German control until in 1891 when a punitive expedition was launched against the Bafut by the Germans and the Fon of Kom congratulated Captain Pavel who led the German forces in the war for a job well done by sending him a gift. At the same time, an alliance for the provision of labour for the construction of the Bamenda Military Station was made (Vries, 1998, p.12). However, this peaceful romance was short-lived as the Germans raided Kom leading to widespread destruction. The Fon found it difficult to adhere to continues German demands for food supplies and provision of labourers to the Bamenda Military Station. The increased demand in German activities in the territory had

necessitated more the need for more labour and food supplies and the Kom people found it difficult to respond to these requests.

The alliance between the Germans and the Fon of Kom had to be abrogated because the Germans demanded more than anticipated. This time around, they did not only demand for labour and food but these had to be accompanied by the Fon's daughters. Such a demand from the commander of the military station in Bamenda fell on deaf ears. The Fon was ready for war and so optimistic that his forces could withstand German assaults. True to his optimism, the Kom had never suffered any defeat from whosoever and the Fon was sure that they would defeat the Germans. In response, the Germans invaded but found it difficult to humble the Kom and the debacle dragged on for seven months before Kom was subjugated (Ad(1926)2, No. 59/26, 1926, p.37).

The success of the Germans was not on a platter of gold as the Kom proved to be excellent fighters. As masters of their terrain, the hills and mountains proved difficult for the Germans. But with more advanced war machinery and trained forces, the Kom had no choice but to retreat to the Akua Mullum forest. On their retreat, everything edible was poisoned leaving the invading forces in a very difficult position. In return, the invaders burnt down villages. Food scarcity ensued and brought famine and many perished from both sides of the skirmishes. The situation of the Kom was made worse by the outbreak of small pox epidemic and bad weather. Hardship on both sides could not go unnoticed by the antagonists as an armistice was signed. Hence, the Kom resistance that lasted for seven months with each side struggling for supremacy collapsed and Laikom (headquarter of the Kom) was brought under German Rule in 1905 (Nkwii, 1976, p.141 and Ad(1935)5, No. 688, 1935, 39).

Ijim also submitted to the Germans as well as the Bum and Fungom settlements. When the victorious German forces reached the headquarters of Bum (Lagabum), the Bum readily submitted. The defeat of the Kom had instilled fear in their minds and they were only wise to do what they did without resistance. As such, the people of

Fungom area could not remain indifferent as they toed the line. The news of the humiliation of the Kom spread like wild fire and the people were terrified. If mighty Kom could not resist, then they were no matches for the Germans. With the approach of the Germans under Commandant Glauning, many villages went into hiding. This was a common phenomenon through the Wum area.

From Bum, Mbe was Glauning's gate way into the Fungom area. Passing through Mbe, he went to Kuk, Weh and then to Wum. At Kuk, the people were courageous to return and supply Glauning with food and friendship was established (Ad(1929)9, No. 102, 1929, p.22). On reaching Wum, the fearful Aghem received Him and he spent one night there before returning to Bamenda (Ad(1922)14, No. 772/22, 1911, p.13). With this first attempt, there was no doubt that no opposition to German occupation would arise. On his second coming, he entered the area through Kentu and visited Munken, Kung, Zhoa and Gayam. The Kung welcomed and offered him food. In recognition of Kung's gestures, Glauning decided to buy a cow from them at an exorbitant price of sixty marks. This was far above the required price and in this process, friendship was established (Ad(1929)10, No. EP608, 1929, p.26). Befang and Esimbi areas were visited in 1907 when Glauning came in from Bafut and friendly relations with the German authorities were established (Ad(1922)14, No. 772/22, 1922, p.14).

Though many accepted German rule, there were some resistances. Just like the case of Kom, the Germans could not allow their colonial mission to fail and they used excessive force in subjugating the people. In Mbe, the refusal to supply food to the Germans saw entire villages burnt and their chief taken as prisoner to Bum. At Munken, an attempt by Glauning's official to open the chief's store house met with resistance and five German soldiers were killed and in return, many Munken lost their lives. On Glauning's second visit, peace was made and Munken accepted German rule. This was because the people of the area could not match their indigenous weaponry with that of the Germans which were superior and armed with a conventional force. Such factors and the consequences that were to

follow in case of failed attempts to resist German rule became the determining factor as many preferred to be collaborators rather than to resist. Faced with this, the Germans established their administration with very little opposition except that of Kom. In order to have a complete hold and enforce its exploitative machinery on the area, administrative stations were created and chiefs had to be used as agents for the facilitation of their colonial enterprise.

German Colonial Policies and Chiefs as Friends

The master-race theory became the guiding principle of the German colonial administration in Kamerun. By this policy, the indigenes were made to understand that the Germans were superior to them. Even though they claimed superiority over the indigenes, they did not disregard chiefs in the administrative structures of the colonial state. This was to facilitate and ensure effective implementation of the German colonial policies. Chiefs thus became agents of the administration and were obliged to expedite the socio economic exploitative tendencies of the German colonial enterprise. According to Richard, Morris and Goodson, the survival of a nation depends on the total exploitation of the available man power and material resources therein (Richard, Goodson and Morris, 1973, p.143). The German colonial authorities exploited this theory so well that the establishment of German Imperial administration through the use of chiefs opened Kamerun to the human and economic exploitations.

The preference for chiefs was sanctioned by the German Parliament because they considered it cheaper using Africans rather than expensive German civil servants. It should also be noted that tropical Africa was dangerous to Europeans because of the presence of malaria and many could not take up residence in the continent. Besides, before their coming, chiefs ruled their communities and had full control over their subjects. As such the fear of the unknown consequences of their presence in the interior made it impossible for them to sideline chiefs as local authorities. Because of communication difficulties, it was advisable to use chiefs as local administrators for it would have been suicidal for the Germans to

venture into territories they knew very little or nothing about. It was because of these factors that chiefs were used to facilitate and implement German colonial policies at the local level (Ad(1922)4, No. 277/27, 1922, p.11). As such chiefs were thus favoured in the administrative set up of German Kamerun and remained veritable instruments in the day to day running of their communities (Ngoh, 1996, pp.74-77).

Worth mentioning is the fact that when German explorers or authorities moved into an area, they made treaties with chiefs and offered them flags. This was a symbol of German authority and recognition of the authority of the chiefs by the Germans. With these gestures, chiefs had to collaborate with German colonial authorities in their districts and were charged with the responsibility of collecting taxes for the Germans. In return, they were entitled rebates (five to ten percent of the amount collected as rewards). They thus collaborated in the economic sphere as they were nominated or appointed official tax collectors as from 1909 when direct taxation was introduced (Ad(1933)5, No. 668, 1935, p.41; Rudins, 1968, p.213).

They also rendered other services to the Germans as they supplied labour for German plantations in the south. The Western Grasslands in general and Wum area was a veritable source for labour to the Germans and the first assignment for the chiefs upon the arrival of the Germans was to provide labourers for the plantations. Those recruited mostly went to *Geselechaff Nordwestand Westafrcanische pfanzungesellechaff* in Victoria (Nkwi and Warnier, 1982, p.214). Though such recruitments were looked upon as voluntary, captives from expeditions and those recruited under special contracts were also provided by the chiefs (Nkwi, 1976, p.141). Among the Menchum Valley settlements, Mubadji village is well noted to have cooperated in this domain. The Aghem also contributed enormously and Kuk was also prominent in the supply of labourers to German plantations. All in all, recruits left from Wum area to work in the coastal plantations, recruited with the efforts of the chiefs.

Added to these services, chiefs also provided labour for the quarrying of stones for road constructions and other infrastructural developments in the territory especially during the building of the Bamenda Station as well as the Brick Kiln at Bamenda (Ad(1922)4, 1922, p.11). They equally provided potters to the Germans (Fanso, 1989, p.36; Ad(1933)5, No. 1935, p.41; Nkwi and Warnier, 1982, p.214). Most of these potters carried goods for German traders between Bansa and Banyo. Again, they were used for the transportation of wild rubber from Wum to Nkongsamba Railway. Chiefs kept the peace and maintained law and order. Hence, they administered justice and made sure that law and order reigned. Germans hardly interfered in the administration of justice as chiefs dispensed it using local laws and customs under the supervision of Germans colonial authorities (Ad(1922)4, No. 27, 1922, p.11). The Germans maintained friendly relations with the chiefs as they came visiting the chiefs' palaces on monthly bases. During such visits, the chiefs consulted them before passing judgements or verdicts (Ibid.). It was German colonial policy not to interfere in Native Courts which were manned by chiefs. They did as much as they could to respect the customs and traditions of the people (Rudins, 1968, p.213).

Where mutual trust and confidence was inherent, the German colonial authorities did everything possible to protect chiefs and maintained them in power if they were sure that their interest would be protected. This could be elucidated with the Kom instance where the coming of the Germans was seen by some sub chiefs as a means of reasserting their independence *vis a vis* the Kom. As a result, they refused paying taxes through the Fon of Kom. Most prominent was Mbesinaku whose chief had to be arrested and imprisoned but later released for since he promised to continuously adhere to the Kom's overlord ship. Again, three Kom Princes were had to be arrested for challenging the authority of the Fon and his court. Those that could not escape were executed. The Germans therefore indicated their preference and support for Fon Ngam as his authority over his subjects were upheld (Nkwi, 1978, p.38; Ad(1926)2, No. 59/26, 1926, p.8). In Weh, the Germans applied similar means when twenty two

persons were arrested and twenty killed for refusing to adhere to the orders of the Fon. The others were confined in the Bamenda Prison.

From the above analysis, it is clear that the Germans collaborated with the chiefs in the implantation of colonial rule and showed little opposition to them right up to the end of their rule. They believed that maximum benefits could only be derived from support to traditional rulers. In this direction, traditional institutions became very vital in the day to day running of local affairs. Such zealous use of traditional authorities caused them to contemplate, in 1913, applying the indirect rule system that was practiced in Northern Nigeria by the British. Before then, everything was done to use local authorities and not to force a system on the people that was at variance with their customs and traditions (Nkwi, 1978, p.38; Ad(1927)5, 1927, p.1). More success in the colonial empire could only come with increased authority of chiefs over their subjects while they remained inferior to Europeans though they had to be treated at least with respect.

Governor Seitz also called on Africans to respect chiefs and warned administrators against the disrespect for natural rulers and the weakening of their authority. He signed a decree in 1913 insisting that no chief could be dismissed or appointed by colonial administrators except with the Governor's approval. This was to curtail arbitrary acts orchestrated by administrators on chiefs and their traditional governments and instil respect for their authorities (Rudins, 1968, p.213). Though the privileges enjoyed by the chiefs may sound glorifying, this only worked well when they remained submissive to the colonial administration and any of them that faulted was heavily punished. As such they had to collaborate or better still pretended to be friends than enemies.

Vacillating Friendship and the End of German Rule

The romance that reigned between African chiefs and colonial authorities did not mean that the Germans were so liberal and accepted all aspects of African culture and socioeconomic political organisations they met. Actions were taken to suppress anyone who

went against the German colonial administration or could stir up trouble or anything that could work against the socioeconomic exploitation of the area. With these perspectives, relations between the chiefs and the Germans were inconsistent. They were constantly changing based on the interest and usefulness this had on the Germans (Tem, 2005, p.27).

For instance, Von Puttkamer even passed a decree that a village that refused to provide labour and went into hiding on the approach of labour recruiting teams or officials should be burnt down (Nghoh, 1996, p.85). It would appear that after the Kom uprising, uneasy calm reigned in the Wum and Kom areas. This was not because the people had fallen in love with the German policies but because they but they feared repercussions that would follow. On mere suspicion, a people could be attack and their village burnt or plundered. A case in point was the Aghem in 1905 where many were killed and the entire village burnt down with the exception of Waindo (Ad(1922)14, No. 772/22, 1922, p.13).

The village head of Waindo, Mbunji, made the Germans to believe that the clan head, Muambi, was ready to stir up trouble. In a pre-emptive strike to avoid conflict between Mwuambi and Mbunji, possibly supported by the Germans, the clan head and other village heads were arrested and one was flogged to death. Those that could not escape into the bush were either flogged or shot to death. Mwanbi and two village heads were imprisoned in Bamenda but all died within a month of confinement. Mbunji, the principal master planner and source of the conflict was immediately nominated clan head in replacement of Muambi (Ibid., 13). Beyond all reasonable doubt, the Germans were ready to receive maximum collaboration from Mbunji as he was their protégé. This was in sharp contrast to the principle of protecting chiefs that collaborated with the Germans. In spite of the fact that Mwuambi had welcomed and collaborated with the Germans, little or nothing was done to protect him as mere suspicion led to the termination of friendship hitherto enjoyed with the German colonial authorities.

Though many chiefs were protected against their subjects, recalcitrant natural rulers could not escape the wrath of the Germans. This is true in the case of Mubadji whose palace was burnt for refusing carrying out an order in relation to the supply of labour. In Nyos, the chief refused supplying carriers and labourers and he was arrested and many of his subjects were killed. In Munken, the natural ruler was publicly whipped for refusing to supply carriers. Abar was also attacked and the whole village burnt for refusing to supply labourers.

Such refusals came as a result of German demands for carriers and labourers. This was because many resented force labour and poor working conditions in the plantations as wages were too low. Besides, many who went to work in the plantations never returned and were not accounted for. Pressure from their people made it difficult for chiefs to continue providing labourers when demanded. Even when German recruiting themes arrived any village, chiefs became the objects of scorn and ridicule by the Germans. Those that supported the Germans fell out with their people and the reverse was true. Such acts of impunity from the Germans were frowned upon by the chiefs and their people. To show disgust for German policies, their officials in the Wum area were nicknamed. For instance, Menzel was nicknamed *Kuso*² and *Quelle, Ekanga*³.

This therefore means that the fear of reprisals from the Germans made it impossible for the people to openly express hatred and disgust for colonial policies. However, the outbreak of World War 1 and the people's response indicated that they were neither in support

²Meaning the reaper. This was because he launched an expedition against the Zhoa in 1910, destroying all crops on their farmers.

³ This was the name of a half-witted woman who was always moving from place to place in the area. He was named after her because he was constantly touring the area and his preoccupation was the collection of taxes, recruitment of labourers and carriers which was much resented by the people and chiefs of Wum area.

of the German colonial policies nor real friends to the Germans. This was because they neither supported them nor showed signs of sympathy when the British attacked the area in 1915. However, the fear of the Germans' response made the chiefs to be cautious in their reactions towards the warring factions. For instance, Chief Ngam of Kom provided one hundred men for the defence of the Bamenda Military Station in 1915 against the British. But when he discovered that the tides were turning against the Germans, he went for the British as he offered them supplies and sent his people to convey Crokenden, the British Military Commander through Banso from Kom (Ad(1926)2, No. 59/26, 1926, p.39).

On learning that the Germans had been defeated in Kentu, the Fon of Bum together with some elders moved there to welcome the British. In their absence, a German force retreating from Banso moved into Bum when they heard that the Bamenda Station had fallen. They were provoked into burning down of Lagabum by the people's reluctance in supplying them food as well as the hysteric jubilation on information that the Bamenda Station had collapsed (Ad(1927)25, 1927, p.12). Meanwhile in the Southern part of Wum area, German soldiers were deployed to Esu, Gayama and Esimbi. The Esimbi people saw this as an opportunity to avenge their constant humiliation by the Germans. A German Sergeant, who was in command of the troops there, was persuaded to send some of his men to a hunting expedition for bush pigs. In this process, the sergeant, a European and remaining soldiers were killed by the people. Those in the Bush were also killed (Ad(1933)23, No. 360, 1933, p.57).

Mafiamba believes that only one European, a woman, escaped the wrath of the Esimbi as she escaped to the Bamenda Station and reported the incident to the German colonial officials there (Mafiamba, 1956, pp.7-8). In retaliation, the Germans regiment in Esu was withdrawn and an expedition launched against the Esimbi. The German were supported by the Aghem under Muambi, a German protégé as well as the Babadji (Ad(1933)23, No. 360, 1933, p.57). Many were killed and survivors who could not escape were handed over to their captors as booty (Ad(1922)14, No. 772/22, 1922, p.16).

When the British reached Kentu from Nigeria, some chiefs from Fungom went up to pay their allegiance (Ad(1929)10, No. EP608, 1929, p.29). Those in Wum and Esimbi, Beba and Befang went up to the Bamenda Station (Ad(1922)14, No. 772/22, 1922, p.16). The fall of the station signalled an end to German rule in the Bamenda Western Grasslands in general and Wum area in particular.

Conclusion

The paper analyses the relationship that existed between the German colonial administration and chiefs of Wum area between 1904 and 1916. Findings reveal that, the German annexation of Cameroon and penetration into the Western Grasslands and subsequent establishment of the Kentu, Kom and Wum Stations or Districts saw the beginning of German rule in these parts of Cameroon. Immediately, German colonial officials sought the collaboration of the chiefs or traditional rulers who became auxiliaries of the administration. As agents of the colonial administration, they collected taxes, dispensed justice and provided labourers to German plantations in the south and for the construction of roads and infrastructural development. They also provided carriers or porters to European traders and officials for the transportation of goods.

In spite of all these romances between the chiefs and German colonial officials, the study contends that this friendship was fallacious and not genuine because this was only a means to an end and not an end in itself. The Germans used chiefs for the protection of their colonial interests and to ensure that colonial policies reached their logical ends – the effective exploitation of the area, and would not entertain any chief who was to be a stumbling block to their goals. Meanwhile, the people of the area accepted and sustained these relations for fear of the German reprisals. The pretensions of the chiefs were exposed during World War I when almost all chiefs and their subjects went in support of the invading British soldiers. These reactions were simply sanctions to the harsh German policies. This was also to demonstrate hatred for the unconventional methods used by the Germans in subjugating the people as chiefs were not given real power but had to

implement policies laid down by the colonial administration. There were neither guiding principles that determined the extent of their authority nor any constitutional provisions for the system as they (chiefs) were never genuinely part and parcel of the administering machinery but only acted as facilitators of exploitation.

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