

LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON: THE CASE OF THE BUEA AND DOUALA COUNCILS, 1961-1972

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Abstract: *The study investigates local governance in the Buea and Douala IV councils in Federal Republic of Cameroon. Emphasis is laid on the changes that were manifested in local government from 1961 to 1972 because of the union between British and French Cameroons respectively. Focusing on the objectives of local governance in Cameroon, the article argues that it has been unable to meet the development needs of the local population. The study further argues that the socio-economic progress made by local government in the Buea and Douala municipalities were insufficient. The study attribute local government's failures to attain their goal to persistent lack of resources and the inability of local people to participate in decision making processes. Findings also confirm that the legal nature of local government maintains an afferent and a centripetal state. For local governance to succeed in the study areas and Cameroon in general, there must be total transfer of devolved political-administrative powers and resources to the local authorities. The realization of the aim of this article is based on a thematic and chronological approach making inferences to diverse documentation. Main sources include interviews from actors and participants in local government activities and archival materials from the national archival Buea (NAB), the Buea and Douala councils, not leaving out academic research. The analysis of these sources has produced data based on facts presenting local government activities in Buea and Douala areas.*

Keywords: Buea and Douala Municipalities, Local Government, Federal Republic of Cameroon, British and French Cameroon, Development

1. Introduction

The foundation of local government in Cameroon in general and in Buea and Douala in particular was laid by the colonial Masters. First, the German used the natural Rulers in Local governance and later made them agents of administration. These Natural Rulers administered justice, collected taxes, recruited and initiated community projects. When the First World War started in 1914 in Europe, Britain and France extended it into their colonies. At the end of the war in 1918, Germany was defeated and sent out of Cameroon by Britain and France. Unable to administer Cameroon together, they came into a consensus to partition it into two, France taking the bigger share of the territory. The French share became French Cameroon and the British share was named British Southern and Northern Cameroons. They administered their spheres separately by instituting local government. Between 1922 and 1945, they both implemented separate policies in Cameroon. The British implemented the policy of Indirect Rule, which transformed the chiefs and traditional councils into Native Authorities. It was through these Native Authorities that they controlled the people of British Cameroons. In the 1920s and 1930s, they established Native Authorities in all areas of jurisdiction especially in the Victoria Division. They maintained law and order, collected taxes to fill native treasuries, recruited labour and took charge of public health and economic development. In French Cameroon, France introduced the policy of Direct Rule and Assimilation. They divided the territory into administrative units, which were made up of divisions and sub-divisions controlled by civil servants as administrators. In 1923, they established the Council of Notables made of chiefs who had only advisory powers contrary to Native Authorities in the British section. They also created district councils in rural and urban areas, for instance, the Douala

Urban District which became known as the Mixed Urban Council on 25th June 1941. The period 1945-1961 was characterised by nationalism on both sides of Cameroon. It saw the formation of political parties and credit unions that fought for the independence of the territory. French Cameroon gained independence on 1st January 1960 and in 1961, British Southern Cameroon voted to join French Cameroon while British Northern Cameroon joined Nigeria. Cameroon became a federation in a union between Southern Cameroon which was named West Cameroon and La Republique du Cameroon called East Cameroon. After the independence and unification of the two Cameroons, the elites who had attained a certain level of education, mostly in the West took over from the traditional rulers. Local government areas were created and elections became a new system of selecting council representatives. Chiefs had less influence as the power vested on them to manage their resources and affairs was transferred to local government. The central government implemented French policies whereby the local elites had no say in any project that directly and indirectly affected their lives, thereby undermining local government. During this period, the central government was the sole decision-making body with the influence of the French who still had a grip on the country. This system did not change until 1972.

2. The geographical setting of the Buea and Douala

The Buea Municipal Council is located in the sub-divisional headquarters of Buea and the South West regional head quarter of Cameroon. Buea is a renowned town, which served as the capital of Kamerun during German colonial era from 1901 to 1909. It also served as the capital of the United Nations (UN) Trust Territory of Southern Cameroon from 1919 to 1961. It served as the capital of the seat of government of west Cameroon from 1961 to 1972, when the organizational structure changed from a federal state to a unitary system of government (Evelyn, 2007:66). The Buea Municipality has a surface area of 870sq km. It is located at the foot of Mount Cameroon (4095m) which is the highest mountain in West and Central Africa and one of the most active volcanoes in Africa. It is bounded to the north by tropical forest on the slope of Mount Cameroon (Fako) that rises to 4100m above sea level. To the south-west by the city of Limbe, to the south-east by the Tiko municipality and to the west and east by Idenau district and Muyuka municipality. The Buea Council area has a total of about 82 villages under four districts namely Buea Station, Soppo, Molyko/mile 17 and Muea (see Map 2).

With an equatorial climate, the temperature is moderate with a slight seasonal variation (rainy and dry seasons). The Buea Council has a moderate economy with agricultural administration, business, tourism and the financial sector which were greatly exploited by local government. Each village is headed by a chief who takes care of the affairs of the village. Thus they became agents of local government during the colonial period. Buea has an estimated population of above 200,000 inhabitants which consists essentially of the Bakweris (the indigenes) and a highly cosmopolitan population within the urban space. The Buea people speak 'Mokpwe' which constitute part of the family of Duala language in the Bantu group of the Niger-Congo family. The people of Buea are said to be closely related to Cameroon's coastal peoples (the Sawa), particularly the Dualas in the littoral Region of Cameroon. Under the British and French colonial rules, they were split, one part (the Duala) falling under the French administration and the other (the Bakweri) under British administration (Ngoh, 1987:5).

The Douala IV council is one of the six councils of the Division that makes up the city of Douala. It is related to the city council. The Douala IV Council was created by decree No89/1360 setting up the Douala City Council (Yeluma, 2020). The Douala IV Council has a surface area of 890km. It is made up of a total of about 10 villages and their adjoining quarters. The Douala IV Council is situated on the western part of Douala City precisely at Bonassama and located in the coastal plain of the Wouri estuary.

The Douala IV Council is bounded to the north by the Moundou Division, to the south by the River Wouri, to the west by the Fako Division (Tiko council to be precise) and to the east by the River Wouri again and the council of Manoka (Yeluma, 2020). (See map) It is a home of

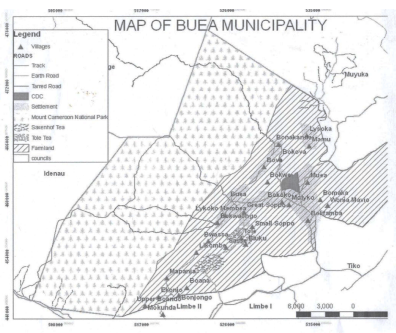
about 600.000 inhabitants of various origins and has an equatorial climate with four seasons. The Douala IV council area with its sandy soils has low retention capacity that has practically no drainage system to evacuate run off. Disposal of domestic waste causes a problem in such areas. The hydrographic network of the Douala IV council is quite dense and dominated by two rivers, the Wouri and the Mungo. These rivers are extremely polluted and drain a considerable amount of waste which is supposed to be exploited by local government.

Locating Buea XE "Buea" and Douala XE "Douala" IV Councils



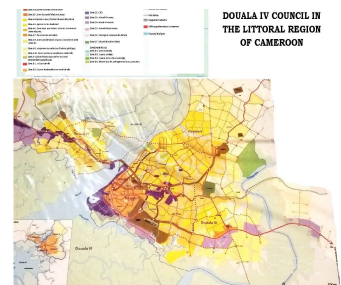
Source: Adapted from New Administrative Map of Cameroon 1996

Buea XE "Buea" Municipality in the South West Region



Source: Adapted from E.M. Evelyn, Local Government and Rural Development: A Case Study of Buea in Cameroon" (Master of Philosophy, University of Oslo, Blindern, Norway, 2007, p.43

Douala XE "Douala" IV council XE "council" in the littoral region of Cameroon



Source: Douala IV Council Chart, 19/06/2020

2.1. Bases of the new

Several reasons accounted for the new local government policy. They were first to set up new structures of local government. Second, to bring the local government administration closer to the people of Buea and Douala. Third, to unit two local systems that was first instituted by the British and French. Fourth, to generally manage the economy of Cameroon. Fifth, to educate council officials to have one focus and finally to transfer new revenue to councils.

2.2. Political consideration

The change of administration from collective local or traditional chiefs who presided over the native courts and acted as chairmen to local councils to executive secretaries. The new local government policy was also instituted in order to put an end to the boundary between Buea and Douala as well as boundary between Buea and Nigeria. Note should be taken that there was a historical link which existed between the local people of Douala of French Cameroon and the Bakweri chiefdom of the British Cameroon. The British Southern Cameroonians particularly the Buea hated the fact that local governance in their area was handled by Nigerians not the British. This angered them and they decided to go in for a new local government policy that will reunite them with the French Cameroonians" (Eyondetah, 1987:56). The new local government policy was also to re-establish the two local government systems into one as it was under the German rule. The Germans administered Cameroon through their Chiefs, devolved power to them to institute justice, peace and maintain law and order and became veritable institutions of local government. Hence in 1961, British and French

Cameroons through their leaders Ahidjo and Foncha thought of going back to the German era where local government was one (Ngoh, 1987: 41-43).

2.3 Socio-Economic impetuses

The lack of substantial socio-economic development in British Southern Cameroons (Buea) provoked the institution of the new local government policy. The British through local government neglected the development of Southern Cameroon (especially Buea) as compared to French Cameroon (Douala). Local government in Buea was poorly equipped since they were not being administered by the British but governors from Nigeria. For this reason, development projects in Buea were poorly constructed as compared to those in the Douala (Fanso, 1989: 236). Southern Cameroon (Buea) was ruled in an of hand and indirect fashion through Native Authorities who did little to expose its inhabitants to modern political and economic institutions. The locals of Buea complained that the administration in Lagos starved them of development funds and educational opportunities (Ngoh, 1987: 255). The Nigerians, particularly the Ibos and others like the Ijaws and the Ibibios dominated British Cameroon's social and economic life. This was especially so after the construction of the Kumba-Mamfe road via Buea, because it facilitated the large-scale movement of Nigerians in to British Cameroons (Buea). This hampered the socio-economic development of the people as most of the development would be carried to Nigeria. The Buea natives were not happy with the increasing number of Nigerians in their local government activities. The removal of custom duties between Buea and Douala made trade easier between them (Fanso, 1989: 242).

3. Constitutional Provisions

The constitution provided important modifications, for instance, citizens of both Southern Cameroon and la Republique du Cameroun had a single nationality that of Cameroonian. English and French were adopted as the official languages in both East and West Cameroon local government. Article 47 of the constitution was intended to enable local government in Southern Cameroon to have an equal voice in decision-making if accurately applied. According to the article 47 (Ngoh, 1987: 163):

... The revision of the constitution shall be voted by a simple majority of all members of the Federal Assembly with the provision that such majority shall comprise a majority of the representation to the Federal Assembly of each Federated state.

On September 30, 1961, the British Authorities constitutionally transferred the sovereignty of Southern Cameroon local government to la Republique du Cameroun. On October 1, Southern Cameroons' Local government was proclaimed an independent government and reunited with the republic of Cameroon to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon (Peter Ndeh, 2019).

3.1. Local government in Buea (West Cameroon) 1961-1972

In 1961, the system of local government was introduced in West Cameroon. As a result, collective local administration passed from the traditional chiefs who presided over the native courts and acted as chairmen of native authorities to local councils which were controlled by Executives secretaries (NAB, 1948-1967: 2). It was noticed that the Native Authorities in British Cameroon had failed to satisfy the war-time middle class people and thus there was the need for urgent reforms and reorganizations. When the British left their part of Cameroon, they hadn't established a well-organized system of local government. However, the State of West Cameroon continued to search for ways of rendering local government more efficient. Hence, local government was implanted in West Cameroon. With the reunification of British Southern Cameroons and la Republique du Cameroun in 1961, the local community elected their councilors. The Bakweri council notice of June 16, 1962 reformed the Bakweri Council to include non-indigenes (strangers) as councilors and elections into the council were on political party lines.

The non-indigenes were drawn from quarters, such as Buea Strangers quarters East, Buea Strangers quarters west, Buea Station and Great Soppo quarters, Ekona Mbenge East among others. These quarters had one representative each, but for Ekona Mbenge East, Molyko and Lysoka plantations, both had two council representatives each in the council. This was due to their population size and all council representatives were elected. (NAB, 1948-1967: 2). Unfortunately, the Bakweris were not in favour of the specification of composition notice of 1962, which gave the privilege to non-indigenes to become members of the Bakweri council. To demonstrate that they were not in favour of the notice they petitioned it because of the following reasons: first, they thought their interest was not protected. Second, they saw the non-indigene representation as intrusion into their interest. Third, they argued that none consultations were held with them before the decision was taken to include non-indigenes in their affairs. The issue was resolved by the Secretary of State for local government, west Cameroon, who called on the Bakweris not to yield to wild and ill-informed options pushed through by certain persons whose main aim was to distract honest people. The authority called the move of the persons distracting honest people as a “disgrace to democracy”. The authority also told the Bakweris that the speculations were judicious and fair (NAB, 1962:5). With regards to elections, councillors were elected in the inaugural meeting held on the 18th August, 1962 at the native Authority Court hall, Buea at 10:30am. After the elections, the Hon. Secretary of State for local government, Buea, read a masterpiece of this welcome address to the new councillors where he congratulated them and wished the Bakweri District Council to be a model to all other councils in the Victoria Division. He also warned councillors to abide by the Native Authority staff rules in Matters of staff discipline and promotions. They applauded him for that wonderful speech and advised themselves to look on one another as countrymen and work hard for the success of the council (NAB, 1962:5). In his explanatory speech Hon. J.M Lafon said.

“My speech is like a home work I am happy because responsible men have been elected in the new council. The council requires nothing but hard work. I will do all I can for the staff condition of service to be attractive as to be equal to that of government. The council is not a gambling house, therefore, I am appealing to you all for hard work. Your work will be seen through your minutes as I will want to see changes that will take place in Buea within this period of three years. I shall be visiting your council from time to time as I would not like to see irresponsible councillors bringing up unnecessary reports to me against their staff. I am appealing for justice to be your ward-strict in the council. I will fear no-body and I will treat things as they come. God bless you all”.

This speech opened the way for many changes in the Bakweri Council. Illiteracy and unexperienced persons were put aside. In 1963, the presidential decree n°63/DF/250 of 26th July, 1963, created the Muyuka sub-district. But it was until December 1963, that presidential decree n°63/DF/436 included some Bakweri villages into the newly created Muyuka sub-district. These villages included Ekona, Liola, Ndui, Masuma, Matangu I and II, Ikata Balong, Babenga, Bafia, Efote, Munyenge, Musone, Owe and Ekona Lelu. These villages all had councillors who regularly converged in Buea for council meetings. The transfer of these villages from Bakweri council to Muyuka sub-district meant that the councillors had to automatically switch their area of operation to the new council and court. The reasons of the transfer of the above villages from Bakweri council to Muyuka sub-district were first, difficulties faced by councillors travelling to Buea for council meeting. Second, the need to have a proximity administrative set up. This transfer brought down representation in the Bakweri council and sealed down its geographical space. The specification of composition notice in respect of the Bakweri Council was once again worked out in consultation with the people of the various groups. It was decided to retain the old name Bakweri rather than the name Buea in order to give a bathier sense of continuity in the new council (NAB, 1962:5).

In 1966, the Bakweri District council was transformed into the Bakweri Care Taker council and in 1968, it was renamed Bakweri Area Council. The local authority (constitution) ordinance passed by the Prime Minister of West Cameroon reorganized local councils. The

ordinance created some 21 councils in the Victoria division. Among them was the Bakweri council made up of four village group areas namely, Buea, Bonjongo, Lysoka and Muea. There was the joy of living together and national unity prevailed. There was peaceful co-existence among the Bakweris and the strangers. However, there were some challenges such as stealing, tribalism, nepotism, tax evasion, patches of trade and land disputes, especially with the strangers, et cetera. The council's evolution resulted to socio-economic development of the Buea area.

Economically, the Bakweri council maintained some roads during this era. They maintained the short road from Muea to Lysoka which was a corporation road running through one of its plantations. The Buea-Bokwai road was maintained with 13 Labourers plus one headman and one yardman. Bonjongo-Ekonjo road with 13 labourers plus one headman and one yardman. Tole-Molyko road 11 Labourers plus one headman only. Lysoka road, 9 Labourers plus one headman and 2 yard men. In 1963, a Land Rover and 5 tons tipper were bought for the council to facilitate work. (Lyonga John Nganele, 2020). Under building construction, with an amount of fifty million Francs, the Bakweri Council constructed the Buea town market and the motor park. The Buea native authority court hall and office were repaired and maintained. The Bakweri council chambers and offices were constructed with the sum of 4 million Francs. Two stores and two offices were built in Muea needed by the market master and the health overseer. With regards to employment, drivers like Mr. Philip Dinga were employed as the Bakweri council driver for the tipper and Mr. John Ndiva, driver of the council land over. Mr. P.L. Mondo was employed as a tax messenger. Mr Mathias Kange was employed as the tax collector of Bwitingi village and Mr. Kota Fonde as tax collector of Bonyamavio village all in the 1963/1964 financial year. 2 000 000 Francs was allocated for the construction of the Buea new market. This sum as indicated by the administrative secretary was meant to finance the cost of hiring caterpillars and bull dozers for levelling of the new market site only. There was no sufficient money at that time to finance the actual construction of a good market for Buea town Lyonga (NAB, 1962: 5).

As concerns water supply, the sum of 3 ½ million francs was included and approved in 1963/64 estimates for the Lysoka water supply. Water was supplied to Muea town on an amount of 1920 000 francs (NAB, 1964: 2). Buea town, the native authority offices, native court hall and staff quarters were electrified in Buea town and Great Soppo by the electricity corporation at the expense of the council (NAB, 1964: 2).

Table 1: The Bakweri Draft Estimate for capital work in 1963/1964

n°	Capital work	Amount
1	Lysoka water supply	3500 000 francs
2	Council chamber and offices	4000 000 francs
3	Levelling of Buea new market site	2000 000 francs
4	Staff quarters for administrative secretary type B and treasurer type C	2 076 000 francs
5	Messengers, market master, health overseer	500 997 francs
6	Bafia native court and C.D.C	366 423 francs

Source: Ja/e (1964) 2 Minutes of the Bakweri Council meeting of 18th February, 1964 P.5.

In 1965, presidential election was held in the country and the Bakweri council participated fully in this election. All the councilors in the Bakweri council sensitized the masses in their respective areas on the modalities of election. Education rating was introduced in the Bakweri council area where children from class one to four were given free education.

3.2. Local government in Douala (East Cameroon) 1961-1972

The move towards the federation of West and East Cameroon Local Government was cemented by president Ahidjo on September 1, 1961, when he signed the Federal constitution. The constitution took effect on October 1, 1961. According to the constitution, the president

was both head of state and Head of Government. He exercised complete control over the courts, the magistracy, the civil service and he was empowered to exercise emergency powers without control from either the legislative or council of Ministers and Local Government. Local Government in East Cameroon had no power of its own as compared to the local Government in West Cameroon. The colonial high commissioner supervised local government because he insisted on having authority over them in order to keep the natives under control. The central government was the sole decision making body with the influence of the French. But the 1958 and 1959 laws governing Local government remained in force as well as the mandate of current municipal councilors (NAB, 1964: 2).

On the national political scene, multiparty politics was abandoned in favor of one-party system. In November 1961, President Ahmadou Ahidjo launched an appeal for the creation of a unified national party. After the work of the commission composed of the Cameroon Union (CU) and the Kamerun National Democratic Party of John Ngu Foncha (KNDP), the political parties of East and West Cameroon merged to form the Cameroon National Union (CNU) on September 1, 1966. It was during this period of monopolyism that all municipal elections were held from 1965 to 1987 (Willard, 1982, 245). During this period the electoral laws were modified as well as the municipal system. The Mixed Rural Councils created in 1952 and the Full-Function councils created in 1958 remained the same. In addition, their different mandates of councilors did not change. In Douala in particular and Cameroon in general, electoral laws although were not repealed in their entirety, they were modified in some of their provisions. These changes were in line with the authorities concerned to make the councils more accessible and more adaptable to the Cameroon context. The laws n°59/44 of June 17, 1959 and n°60/83 of December 31, 1960 created and extended the rural communal movement of average councils. Changes were however made at the level of the municipal councils in the mode of designation of its members. The composition of these councils in Douala corresponded more precisely to the concern of the legislator who has to associate the ruling class made up of chiefs and Notables to these councils. He justified his statement by claiming that, the sub-divisional councils which are superior in the scale of values, must also be composed of Notables. It seemed paradoxically in a country where we want to establish democracy but I believe absolutely necessary (Willard, 1982, 245).

On the contrary, the laws of July 7, 1966 modified provision of the Act of 17 June, 1959. In the old article, the Municipal Councils were elected for six years and the renewal of their mandate was to take place the same year without regarding the month of election. On the other hand, the new article maintained the six-year term but specified that the advisers should be renewed in full on the same date. This decision was intended to put an end to the ambiguous situations and violations of the law that stemmed from the vagueness of the previous election laws. Unlike the 1959 Act, the mayor was henceforth to be appointed by the Secretary of State for the interior, no longer by the Minister even the deputies were chosen from the members of the municipal councils (Willard, 1982, 245). The law of 1 March 1967 that was concerned particularly with councils in Douala got rid of any colonial character in the councils. Municipal councilors remained elected for a six-year term by direct universal suffrage. They were re-eligible and their number varied according to the importance of each municipality. Each council was divided into an electoral section, which was to elect a number of councilors proportional to the number of its inhabitants. The type of ballot provided for by the said law was a single-list ballot. Eligibility concerned citizens of both sexes aged 21 and above. But candidate exercising certain administrative functions could not run for office or be elected. These included Federal inspectors of administration, magistrates and state inspectors (NAB, 1964: 2).

As a matter of fact, the period between 1961 to 1972 in East Cameroon was characterized by Municipal elections and appointment. In the Douala area, councils were created and the names of others were changed. The ministerial decree n°108 of 27 February 1961 repealed the presidential decree n°150 of 27 June 1960 amending the polling stations of the district of Douala. In article 24 of the law of 1 March 1967, the Secretary of State could refuse

to register titles or signs that would have a subversive meaning. This provision placed them at the heart of a rather tense period governed by exceptional laws. Moreover, the expression 'subversion' had deeply muted people in a one party system where electoral competition had disappeared. But the socio-economic development of the council, the undeniable role that it played in the political development of the populations, the advent of the unitary state of Cameroon in 1972 brought the public authorities and council authorities in Douala and East Cameroon in general to take a new electoral law, which repealed the one of 1st March the law of 5th December 1974, reorganizing councils in Cameroon (Arrete, n°123 du Mars 1961: 373).

3.3. Social-economic development of the Douala municipality

Despite the changes and elections that were carried out during this period in East Cameroon, development activities were not left out in the Douala municipality.

3.4. Economic development

The population in the local areas in Douala maintained commercial relation between them with yielded revenue. Trade concerned two inspects. The sale of agricultural and manufacture products, which included cocoa, fruit, food and oil. The sale of cocoa supervised by SOCODER was done in cooperative centers scattered all over the municipality. Despite the existence of these markets, commercialization was slowed down by lack of roads in most localities. The state of affairs made the transport of sellers and their goods quit difficult (Arrete, n°123 du Mars 1961: 373). In the domain of Agriculture, the contribution of these local councils in Douala was on the development or exploitation of fire wood and charcoal, forestry and the building of agricultural methods for the production of firewood and charcoal which brought in revenue for rural development. In 1962, Mr Maneng Issac, residing in Douala was given or issued a license of exploitation of firewood and charcoal bearing on a portion of forest of 50 hectares, located in the department of Wouri (District of Douala) and thus demarcated. The authorization for this exploitation was valid for a period of one year (Willard, 1982, 245). Still under agriculture, agricultural schools were created in order to educate agricultural personnel who could better manage the agricultural sector. In these schools, deputy heads, agricultural engineers were trained. Mr. Voundi Mbila Stone was trained as an agricultural engineer.

As concerns roads and bridges, some roads and bridges were improved and constructed during this era in Douala. Most of these roads were financed by the road investment department of the councils. The transportation of people and goods between cities, towns and villages was facilitated at least by one main road. For instance, Douala trip to Yaounde and development of the road laboratory. Local councils during this era did not have enough means, financial, material and human that could enable them to engage in major projects such as construction of bridges and maintenance of roads. Other economic development included the maintenance of air field of the city of Douala, the Municipal stadium, the building of communal housing services and the urbanization plans of towns and cities (Arrete, n°123 du Mars 1961: 373).

3.5. Socio-cultural development

Educational facilities in Douala Local government were left mostly in the hands of missionary societies while the councils only supervised the smooth running of the schools. These missionary societies included the catholic, protestant and the advent of Islam. They constructed a lot of schools from primary to secondary and professional schools. For instance, especially in Bonajo and Bonamoussadi, Catholic missionaries created primary schools which encouraged the people of the area to send their children to school. As time went on the Douala government and councils also created several rural and regional primary schools, professional schools, professional health schools and agricultural schools (MINATD Archives, Journal official federal : 456-457). Local government also helped the government in carrying out vaccination against diseases. Nurses were trained in local health schools in Douala and Ayos and an institute

of hygiene was spared by local government to prevent diseases. With the help of wood, many artists made various objects drums, statues, traditional guitars, local language, motor boards, balafons spoons and plates. Many of such artists in Douala composed songs that were sold to local musicians and councils sponsored them. Craftsmen made baskets and chairs, bamboo beds, raffia mats that served as roofs. All these helped the councils to raise revenue since these cultural things were sold around and out of the various municipalities in Douala. The councils also encouraged games like football. Tournaments were organized where every locality participated. Such activities were generally limited during this era because of a lot of politics in councils (Ngoh, 1987:255).

3.6. Federal government influence on local government

The Federal government of Cameroon had both negative and positive influence on Local government during this period. Positively on October 10, 1965 Ahidjo inaugurated work on the modern Douala-Tiko road which was also extended to Victoria. The construction of the road was partly financed by France and work started on both ends. It was scheduled to be completed at a cost of 800 000 000 CFA Francs. The Douala-Tiko road literally wiped out the physical barrier between East and West Cameroon. The Federal Government brought the North into greatest contact with the south by extending the Douala-Yaounde road to the North (Carlos, 2000: 123-128). Several kilometers of secondary roads were constructed in the North. The North was also provided with a railway line which linked Douala to Ngaoundere via Yaounde. In 1961, the Federal government received about 33 million in loans and grants on the first phase of the construction of the railway. All this was just to promote Local governance in these areas. After 1963, the Federal government launched the construction of a railway line between West Cameroon and East Cameroon and in December 1965 the first passenger and goods railway line reached Ediki in Kumba via Buea West Cameroon which eased local government activities in the area. Furthermore, the Federal government provided a deep-water port for the exportation and importation of goods which helped local government to increase their search for revenue. It constructed a natural harbor at Victoria and its linkage with Douala via Tiko by road (Ngoh, 1987:255).

Negatively, the National party was to centralize local government at the detriment of the autonomy that local government enjoyed in colonial days. Even though the Federal Government described the party as one that will prevail democracy, Freedom of expression and where several tendencies would co-exist, it had a different intention that of controlling all the affairs locally and nationally. This explains why Charles Assale, the prime Minister of East Cameroon rejected the principle of national party by recalling the fascist experiences in Mussolini's Italy, Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia (Ngoh, 1987:255). Administratively, the Federal Government influence Local government negatively in the area where the Divisional officers in Victoria Division were to perform the role of the Prefect. Strictly speaking, they were going to perform both state and Federal government functions. In addition to this, there were only very few of the Cameroonian staff in the district administration who were acquainted with the local government system as was practiced during the colonial period. This threw a lot of difficulties in the control of local government finance and staff. It became necessary to use only local authority staff available and they were granted additional responsibilities, for instance, the control of expenditure (Bayart, 1980: 70). As a result of this, Administrative secretaries were appointed authorizing officers for the councils. But this was just for a short time as such powers were later given back to Divisional Officers (Bayart, 1980: 70).

The reorganization and reforms of Local government system was governed by the Federal Government, resulting from the new division, sub-divisions and districts not the councils themselves. The prefects appeared to be the central point of administration taking into accounts both Federal and state set-ups. The prefects were not only authorizing officers but they were also advisers to councils. As advisers, they involved and participated in council affairs. They attended all council meetings in order to ensure that the decisions arrived at by

the councilors favoured the Federal government activities (Ngoh, 1987:255). Federal governments influence on local government greatly hampered development projects in the various municipalities during this era and even when councils in west and East Cameroun were harmonized in 1974, the situation become worse. Councils completely lost their autonomy and everything was central. Council's finances became centralized not leaving out the economic and social progress of council areas.

Between 1961 and 1972, British southern Cameroon became West Cameroon and former French Cameroon named East Cameroon. Local government systems in the Buea and Douala areas were still administered separately. The State of West Cameroon gave many localities the opportunity to decide their own development by reorganizing some councils. The Victoria Divisional Council underwent changes where other councils were created like the Bakweri District Council which later became the Buea Council. The Federated State of East Cameroon did not change their municipal system although their electoral laws had changes that led to series of elections in council areas especially in the Communes of Douala. The Buea and Douala councils both encountered problems which needed solutions. Their revenue sources which did not change enabled them to carry out some development activities. The revenue came from taxes, grants, subvention, and loans. The Federal Government also helped the councils by constructing roads, railways and supervising their projects through the Prefects and Divisional Officers at the detriment of council autonomy. Councils completely lost their autonomy and everything became central. Councils finances were centralized not leaving out the economic and social progress of council areas. The incompetence of some local council officials, the fact that councils self-financed themselves and depended on the workers they trained made the government to adopt a radical reform in 1974. One may think that at this juncture, council's problems were solved but no the government only wanted to have a firm grip over the whole territory by harmonizing the Federated states of West and East Cameroons. President Ahmadou Ahidjo decree of 24 July 1972 concerning the administrative organization marked the beginning of the harmonization process. Local government was harmonized by law n°74/23 of 5 December 1974 and by legal texts, which completed the fundamental stage by putting in place institutional structures.

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