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1 The Concept of 'States within a State' Admist Conflict and
2 Peace Building Ventures in Bafut, Cameroon By

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6 **Abstract**

7 This study looks at the perception and manifestation of the concept of 'states' in African
8 communities. A state, in African context, is an organisation of human beings connected by a
9 system of relations. Within the states, different groups of people exist and different
10 individuals have different roles to play. Some exercise special powers or authority, capable of
11 giving command, which is obeyed by the people they rule. In the Bamenda Grassfields of
12 Cameroon (present-day North West Region), these individuals are called fons and chiefs and
13 they rule fondoms. In Westernised societies, they would be called kings. Since colonial period,
14 government administrators refer to them as traditional rulers or natural rulers. Amongst these
15 rulers are some who rule over what is commonly referred to as semi-autonomous polities
16 within the fondoms.

18 **Index terms**— states, conflict, peace building, bafut, cameroon.

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25 Grassfields of Cameroon (present-day North West Region), these individuals are called fons and chiefs and
26 they rule fondoms. In Westernised societies, they would be called kings. Since colonial period, government
27 administrators refer to them as traditional rulers or natural rulers. Amongst these rulers are some who rule over
28 what is commonly referred to as semi-autonomous polities within the fondoms. They are called sub-chiefs on
29 grounds that colonial administrators came out with this appellation to differentiate the authority and position of
30 a ruler from that of his subalterns. In Bafut this classification spark waves of wrangles and conflict between the
31 fon and his subalterns. The problem revolves around rights over people. The chiefs in Bafut claim to have brought
32 their people into Bafut from various places of origin. Thus, according to them, the Fon's right to exert local control
33 and authority over their people is not legitimate. Such claims threatened the survival of traditional authority
34 in Bafut as the subaltern chiefs on several occasion attempted to declare their independence or autonomy inside
35 Bafut. They also incited ethnic diversity in the fondom. The conflict since colonial rule has sharpened and thus
36 endangers social peace and cohesion among the people. All efforts or attempts towards peace seemed to have
37 been futile. This situation generated our interest in the study of the various dimensions and dynamics of the
38 conflict and its impact on the Bafut society. The origin of the conflict, its evolution, magnitude; the role of the
39 colonial authorities and Cameroon Government administrators in the conflict, constitute the research problem
40 of this study. We adopted a chronological approach to the historical narrative here and exploited both primary
41 and secondary sources of information to buttress our discussions.

42 From our sources we concluded that the concept of states (semi-autonomous states) within a state as adopted
43 in African communities today is a serious potential to conflict. Its existence deters cordial relations, integration,
44 unity and peace building in a community. Such tendencies are speed brakes to progress, and development of a
45 people. They must be redressed in time.

1 II. STATE ORGANISATION

46 I. Conceptual Frame state, in the African context, according to Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, is an organisation
47 of human beings connected by a complex system of relations. In this study, emphasis is on this aspect which says
48 that a state is any organisation of human being connected by a complex system of relations. The complexity of
49 the system of relations is also a serious area of interest to us here given that at one point it is the complexity in
50 the system of relations that generates the conflicts under study. The various dimensions in the relations within
51 the organisation or system equally constitute the sensitive areas of analysis made in this study. Generally, as
52 the definition goes, a state is an organisation of human beings connected by a complex system of relations.
53 Some of the states are centralised societies while others are decentralised entities. The centralised ones are large,
54 composite, and heterogeneous polities made up of people of various ethnic groups and cultural background living
55 together in one location ??Fortes and Eans-Pritchard, 1967:15).

56 Semi-autonomous states in African context are smaller entities or groups of people within the bigger or
57 heterogeneous polities. A number of criteria determine the existence of these states amongst which are
58 conquest, ethnicity and indigenous (autochthone) status. Often, ethnic groups of smaller sizes and population
59 constitute semi-autonomous states within bigger ones. In the Northwest Region of Cameroon, the colonial master
60 attributed the appellation 'chiefdom' to distinguish a semi-autonomous state from the fondom. This automatically
61 distinguished the territorial jurisdiction and power of control of a subaltern Leader (sub-chief) from that of his
62 superior, the fon. The power legacy and paraphernalia of semi-autonomous states revolved around the following:
63 Their leaders were attributed hereditary dynasties and royal titles over their people and area of control. These
64 titles were those the leaders brought from their places of origin as they led their followers in the process of
65 migration to the new site or settlement. Once settled, the leaders established ruling dynasties over their people
66 and maintained the royal titles of origin. Examples of semi-autonomous chiefdoms (states) of this character in
67 the Northwest Region are found in Nso and Bafut fondoms.

68 However, some semi-autonomous states (chiefdoms) came to existence through conquest, assimilation,
69 association, alliances or colonial fabrication. Some powerful migrant leaders and groups conquered indigenes
70 (autochthones) and imposed their dictates and supremacy over them. In the position of weakness, the
71 autochthones and leaders were compelled to accept a subaltern position under the foreign invading leader and his
72 people. Some groups in search for security against invaders and predators, decided to either seek refuge under a
73 stronger, reliable group and leader or create a protective alliance (association) with the powerful group so that
74 a stronger front can be created against the invading enemy or aggressor. Alliances were common among groups
75 or states in the Northwest Region especially with the onslaught of Bali chambers invasion and aggressions in the
76 area. The Bali decision to ally with the Germans to bring the other groups or people in the area under their
77 swear increased the spirit of defensive and protective alliances (association) amongst the states and groups in the
78 area. A typical example was the alliance between Bafut and Mankon formed to fight their common enemy the
79 Bali and Germans.

80 Some alliances eventually resulted to the assimilation of the weaker groups by the stronger ones (against their
81 will) thus reducing them to a semiautonomous state or position in the union. Their leaders also become subaltern
82 to the leader of the stronger group. In other instances, some leaders by consensus, decided to hand over their
83 power and authority to a superior leader to legislate on their behalf while they support him from the rear. In
84 this case, such leaders automatically made themselves and their people subordinate to the stronger group and
85 leader. Others by means of coup d'état took control of an area or community and made themselves and leader
86 superior over the rest of the people whose leaders were bound to assume subaltern position under the superior
87 leader and group. All the aforementioned constitute the base of semi-autonomous states in African communities.
88 The Bafut fondom went through these processes at different times in its history and evolution.

89 The introduction of colonial rule came with a different interpretation and application of the concept of semi-
90 autonomous states in Africa. First, the procedure of willfully handing over power or ones autonomy to a superior
91 leader while assuming a lower position under him is what modern state systems refer to as federations (federated
92 states). This modern concept gave a different paradigm to what the Africans initially understood and practiced
93 within the context of semiautonomous states. In actual fact, federated states are created partly out of the
94 willingness of different groups of people to come together for a common interest and to leave as one body
95 (entity); while still maintaining some of their identities and cultures peculiar to the different people or groups
96 within the federation. Examples of such federated states in Africa are found in Nigeria, Cameroon, Mali and
97 many others. In local African context, this arrangement will be regarded or described as semi-autonomous states
98 (polities) within a state. In all these, one thing is evident and it is the fact that the form of the state in Africa at
99 any given time was determined by the interest at stake. Some states resulted from self-interest (orchestrated by
100 personal zeal, ambitions and anxiety) or common interest orchestrated by the desire to work for the general good
101 of a multitude. This brings to question the metamorphosing process of state formation in Africa from origin to
102 present. (Formation) in Africa

103 1 II. State Organisation

104 An understanding of the process of state formation in Africa requires a historical investigation from precolonial
105 to colonial and post-colonial Africa. State organisation in Africa took the form of groupings which ranged from
106 families, quarters, lineages, villages, tribes, clans, kingdoms and empires. Any of these forms could represent a
107 state at any given time in the process of evolution. According to Catherine Coquery, states in Africa were not

108 created or defined through specified lines or margins drawn on a map to differentiate a state from another. African
109 leaders (family heads, lineage and village heads) new the extent and limit of their authority and understood that
110 beyond a certain level, their authority was no more bidding on people ??Catherine, 1999: 39-54).

111 Group relations at the level of families, villages, kingdoms and empires were regulated within a complex and
112 diversified mechanism of links and network. Given the complex nature of relations, these structures could not by
113 any means be compared or reduced to the kind of vertical and hierarchical monarchies, dynasties and republics
114 obtained in Europe. In fact European structures (states) were regulated by a system of governance with well-
115 defined territorial jurisdiction and powers. African states were constituted based on relations that assumed one
116 of the following forms: Lineages founded on family links. That is, through blood affiliation or reconstructed
117 social relations such as marriages, religion, culture and traditions (Ibid: 39-40).

118 The second form was political relations based on the recognition of an authority over a group or state. Such a
119 group was characterized by a hierarchical territorial structure which existed long ago in the continent. Examples
120 include the Ashanti empires of Ghana, Mali, Songhai and other isolated creeks, Islands and lakeside communities.
121 The third form of relations had to do with personal dependence (interdependence). Such relations were created
122 between people, communities or villages by means of trade network or economic exchanges. Social needs and
123 obligations such as unity and security imposed dependence relations between lineages, villages and between
124 families. Even superior leadership at the helm of the structures (states) needed a kind of personal dependence
125 relations to disseminate their authority to the least commoner or grass root community in the structure. For
126 this to succeed, the authority had to pass through intermediaries such as subaltern leaders (subchiefs) whose
127 lineages, villages, tribes, provinces or states were linked to the superior leader by personal dependence relations.
128 This is where an apt definition of the concept of states within a state fitted well in the African political system.
129 Coexistence in the same system or structure also required personal dependence relations (Ibid: 40). All these
130 made state formation in Africa a complex issue. However, this arrangement did not stop the African leaders
131 from clamouring for a certain degree of territorial boundaries or frontiers that will portray their authority and
132 autonomy.

133 From colonial rule henceforth, a different interpretation of the concept of states in Africa emerged.

134 Here the concept was interpreted within the context of how much power and authority a leader wield or
135 exercised in society. In this, history, tradition, native customs and culture or status were not prerequisites
136 or determining factors in the eyes of the colonial masters. Colonial rule created new chieftaincies in African
137 communities which never existed before and empowered some. They empowered some subaltern leaders and
138 mounted some against their natural bosses and superiors. This situation caused the existence of the phenomenon
139 of warrant chiefs in the African states ??Afigbo, 1972: 1-35). Whatever that meant, the fact remains that
140 colonialists created such leaders and power structures for their interest so that they can facilitate their exploitative
141 administration in Africa. Out of this, a new mentality about power and subalternship emerged in African political
142 structures. The concept of states within a state took a different twist. Some leaders exploited their warrant
143 positions under colonial leadership to wield much power and authority in their respective communities or local
144 areas. Some exploited the security accorded them by colonial leaders to challenge the authority of leaders they
145 initially honoured and respected as their superiors. Some used new colonial ideas such as liberty, freedom, human
146 rights, democracy to liberate themselves from any form of oppression that had existed in the past. The sure
147 course was to assert their autonomy and independence. This attitude was encouraged by the fact that under
148 colonial rule, the power and authority of an African leader could increase or decrease depending on his relation
149 with the colonial master. Thus it became possible for a subaltern leader to woe the support of the colonialist to
150 fight or challenge his superior. This led to wanton power tussles and wrangles amongst the African leaders.

151 Another aspect was the creation of states in Africa by the colonialist. States were created out of the
152 balkanisation of African Communities and people with no recourse to the family, lineage, and village, ethnic, tribal
153 or cultural relations. The systematic fragmentation of the continent created arbitrary frontiers or boundaries in
154 the African communities ??Olufemi, 2003). The consequence of this situation was the disappearance of solidarity
155 and unity amongst the people. Brotherhood made no meaning any more as families became estrange to each
156 other. This turned out to be an indirect ploy that created 'states within state' in African relations and mentality.
157 That became a source of conflict. The situation was aggravated by the nature of the states created by the
158 colonialist in terms of sizes. Some of the states were either too big in size while others were too small. This was
159 done without any conventional formula to determine the sizes and creation of the states. This attitude became
160 imbued in the African mentality who now thought that at any time and in any form a state can be created in
161 the community irrespective of the size. Subaltern leaders thus developed a spirit where once they felt jilted or
162 uncomfortable in their relations with their superiors, the solution was to assert their autonomy and independence.
163 This has remained in the physical and mental psyche of African leaders more as a vector of conflict than peace
164 building. To them being autonomous is the only panacea to their problems. However the failure to consider the
165 context, environment and situation at hand in such bid has rather created more complex situations and conflicts
166 than solutions.

167 We earlier mentioned, the kind of power system instituted amongst African leaders by the colonialist. All was
168 geared towards serving colonial interest and causing it to succeed. One attitude cultivated by African leaders
169 from this was that while the authority of some leaders grew beyond proportions in their communities, others
170 thought that their opinion on issues of local state politics determined the final decision taken. In other words,

171 higher state authorities cannot decide on an issue without consulting them. Consequently, some communities and
172 leaders became permanent actors and acolytes of state machinery. Their opinion in state decisions and policies
173 could eventually influence the final decision taken by the state on an issue. In fact, where subaltern authorities
174 impact the policies and politics of the state, Africans ironically described such as a state within a state. In
175 north Cameroon for instance, the Lamido of Ray Bouba and his community are considered a strategic power and
176 political bastion in the area. When it comes to issues of state politics such as In the German colonial period, the
177 influence of Sultan Njoya Ibrahim and his Bamoun Sultanate on German administration made it indispensable
178 for the Germans to take some decisions or policies without consulting the Sultan of Bamoun. His image, power
179 and personality rose to prominence in the West Region as the Germans assisted in projecting Bamoun image
180 and prowess in the area. It was during the German Period that a magnificent edifice of German architecture was
181 built for the royal palace of the Bamoun (see fig. ??a above). Njoya fell in love with German authorities to the
182 point that he changed his traditional dressing code to embrace that of the German Kaisers (see fig 3b). This
183 was clear evidence of the degree of cordial relations and power romance that Njoya had with the Germans. The
184 Sultan of Bamoun was worshiped as a demi-god by his people (see fig ??c. With a German authority at close
185 watch). In such circumstances, the Bamoun kingdom and leader was seen as 'a state within a state' though no
186 defined geographical boundaries existed anywhere to show the demarcation. 1933 ??Matateyou, 2015: 7-8). It
187 was the dethronement of the Sultan that enabled the French to gain authority and local control over the people
188 in the western region of Cameroon. The Power of Sultan Njoya had grown to prominence and made his kingdom
189 to exist as though it was 'a state within a state.' His dethronement also depicts how an African kingdom and
190 leader can wield power to the point of being a threat or rival to the national government authorities or state.
191 This attitude is imbued in the mind and always it provokes the desire to be liberated from any form of alien
192 oppression or subordination.

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193
194 The fight for secession and independence has often occurred within the ambit of conflicts that impact peace
195 ventures negatively.

196 On the part of Bafut in the North West Region of Cameroon, the German and British colonialists he was
197 more or less a permanent consultant on matters of native administration in his area of jurisdiction. To begin
198 with the Germans, Abumbi I had resisted German rule for 6 years ??Niba, 1986:86-101). This was one of the
199 longest resistance faced by the Germans from an African leader. The long resistance also reflects the power and
200 authority an African leader wielded over his state or community. The German explorer, Eugene Zingtgraff (see
201 fig 4a) on his passage in Bafut had earlier remarked that the Fon of Bafut Abumbi I (see fig ??b) was the greatest
202 African despot he has ever seen nor was he to see again ??Ngwa, 2011:10).

203 Source:Bafut Customs, P. 42 Source:Bafut Customs, P. 36 Zingtgraff was struck by the punctilious protocol
204 and the regal and potent air exuded by the Fon. Thus, it prompted him to describe the Fon, Gwalem (Abumbi
205 I), as an African despot. Zintgraff had indeed painted the picture of the absolute power of the African leader,
206 and this clearly affirms why it took the Germans such a long time to institute German administration in Bafut.
207 However, Abumbi I was finally captured and dethroned by the Germans. As punishment for his actions and
208 attitude, the Germans exiled him to the coast of Cameroon where he was subjected under hard labour. 1 In the
209 absence of the Fon, the Germans could not succeed in ruling or administering the Bafut people. According to
210 Niba, a report from the military commander of the Bamenda station had strongly urged the restoration of the
211 Fon as "orderly government in Bafut was impossible without him ??Niba, 1995:66; ??hilver and Kaberry, 1963:
212 7-8)."

213 The German authorities accepted the recommendation to bring back the Fon. He was eventually reinstated
214 and recognised as 'a convenient agent of administration' and so long as he danced to years. The fact remains that
215 the Fon was exiled to the coastal area of Cameroon where the Germans established their headquarters or capital.
216 projected the image of the Fon of Bafut to a point that their tune, he went unmolested. Bafut internal affairs
217 were on the whole left alone ??Chilver and Kaberry, 1963:94). The interpretation given to this arrangement
218 holds that the Germans identified the Fon of Bafut as the only leader of substance and empowered him within
219 the context of colonial rule. Whatever happened between the Fon and his subaltern chiefs inside Bafut that was
220 not part of German business in the area. Thus such favoured fons exploited the German presence to grow their
221 power and influence to prominence in the area.

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222
223 In fact, the favoured fons took decisions in state politics when consulted by the colonial administration. But
224 one aspect of German responsibility which they did not border about were the smaller states they coerced and
225 brought into union with bigger chiefdoms to constitute a larger state. The colonialist neglected the smaller states
226 and allowed them on their own to face the wrath, whims and caprices of their superior or paramount leaders. It
227 is important to note here that German actions in the Bamenda area were viewed from the backdrop of the Bali
228 Nyonga paramountcy and the treaty Zintgraff concluded with Galega in 1891. Here Galega formerly surrendered
229 his powers of execution and war-making to the Germans in return for sovereignty right over the surrounding

230 non-Bali who were mostly widikum peoples. Galega was to collect taxes and tolls from those chiefdoms placed
231 under him and was the main labour recruiter for the Germans.

232 This constituted the principal policy of German administration and state organisation in the Bamenda area
233 namely, to prop up friendly chiefs wherever they could be found and to place as many smaller ones as possible
234 under them as vassals. This was the German dimension of creating 'states within a state' in Africa. The realisation
235 of this policy for the entire Bamenda District was problematic since it required the complete subjugation of the
236 area in order to unite people under leaders other than their own (Niba, 1995:66). In the absence of support,
237 there was no option left than for the small states to indulge in power tussles and wrangles with their superiors in
238 the bid to liberate themselves from oppression. Songs of freedom and independence became common place even
239 within local and 'remote' communities. In such circumstances, peace made no meaning to anybody and peace
240 ventures ended in deadlock given that all moves towards peace were punctured by persistent bitterness, envy and
241 conflicts. Expressions such as 'self-determination' became pivotal in state politics and relations.

242 By 1916, German colonial administration gave way to British and French administration. The British had their
243 own method of state organisation or better still, creating states within a state. They opted to involve natives in
244 colonial administration following the prescriptions of Indirect Rule policy. Besides, the Resident for Bamenda, E.
245 C Duff advised that for native administration to succeed it was necessary to enhance the powers of the principal
246 chiefs in the area by appointing them presidents of the native courts while subaltern chiefs and even ward-heads
247 within the 'principal communities' (fon doms) were to be recognised and brought in to support the principal
248 chiefs as court members (File Ja/d, 1916). In this arrangement, the disparity in the powers of the Chief (fon)
249 and his subaltern (sub-chief) began to surface in the British colonial political system. It was also the beginning
250 of British implantation of states within a state in African communities as viewed by the people.

251 In July 1917, G. S. Podevin, the District Officer, inaugurated an 'Instructional Court' in Bamenda (The
252 Nigerian Gazette, 1922:331). This was an assembly of chiefs from surrounding communities summoned to be
253 instructed in the new native court. Twenty-seven chiefs made up the court and the Fon of Bafut was appointed
254 president while that of Bali Kumbat was vice president. In the minds of the chiefs, the Fon of Bafut has
255 automatically become the boss and superior in a new political set up (state). They have eventually assumed
256 subaltern positions under him and by extension it was another ploy to create new states within a state.

257 In August 1932, the Bafut Fon, Abumbi, died and was succeeded by his son, Su Ayieh, who took the royal
258 name of Achirimbi, and ruled for the remaining years of British administration. Almost at the same time, in
259 1936, Fon Vugar of Babanki also died and was succeeded by his son Vubanghsi. The two fons, Achirimbi and
260 Vubanghsi Vugah, belonged to the Bafut Native Authority Area (BNAA) which was later on reorganised into the
261 South Eastern Federation Native Authority Area (SEFNAA). These fons had received some elementary western
262 education under the Germans and were expected to boost the new organisation under the British, given their
263 level of education. But the situation turned out to be the opposite. In the BNA area, the element of Bafut
264 'paramounts' remained with the Bafut Fon who was regarded as the most important dignity and received the
265 highest stipend from colonial administration (Niba, 1995:70).

266 This position was reinforced by the creation of a treasury at the Bafut palace in 1941 to serve the entire native
267 authority area. In 1943, through the assistance of the Bassel Mission architects, a monumental rest house was
268 constructed in the Bafut palace (see fig. ??c). The other chiefs did not take this kindly and thus under the
269 leadership of the Fon of Babanki, the rest of the chiefs of the BNA contested the coveted position of the Fon of
270 Bafut and requested the British to accept their demand for autonomy and separation from the BNA area. Fon
271 Vubanghsi Vugah is quoted to have written:

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273 The Bafut chief has no authority over us? his authority is only limited to his own village?. We have been
274 independent villages before the advent of European administration on the West Coast of Africa, and are still
275 independent and still wish to keep to our hereditary ways to remain like that. We the seven chiefs who make the
276 Bafut Area should be called fons or village Heads in place of giving the title to the Bafut chief alone which is not
277 correct (File N. A 1949 (File N. A /43, 1944)).

278 From this situation a number of things were made clear. First, in the Bafut Native Authority Area, respective
279 chiefs guarded their autonomy so jealously that any mention of cooperation with another chief was viewed as a
280 surrender of sovereignty. By 1949 it was clear that the delicate balance of power in the Bafut political system had
281 been upset by the loss of sovereignty. The colonial masters made things worse following the way they handled
282 issues related to the powers of chiefs. Here, when colonial authorities picked out the chief they wanted, he was
283 supported to the exclusion of other organs of indigenous or traditional administration. Such was the case with
284 subaltern leaders (chiefs) and Kwifor who now became tools in the hands of the all-powerful fon to carry out his
285 obligations to the white man (colonialist). The independent position which the sub-chiefs, kwifor and takumbeng
286 structures enjoyed in the past was therefore compromised.

287 The British reinforced this feeling by the differential treatment they accorded the Fon. He was given a gilded
288 state umbrella, a Union Jack to fly over the palace and a portrait of His Majesty the King of England (the
289 sovereign) to display in the audience hall of his palace. These were new symbols of power introduced by the
290 colonial master that were completely different from those that the African leaders in the Bamenda Division were
291 accustomed to (Ngwa, 2022: 141-168). This in the long run constituted an arena of conflict amongst the Bafut

292 leaders. Here the chiefs insisted to have their own power symbols (regalia) not so much out of love for the British
293 flag and majesty but rather to boost their egos and power especially in the face of treats from the big chief to
294 usurp and sap away their powers.

295 For instance big chiefs sought to compensate for loss of sovereignty (to colonialist) by arrogating to themselves
296 residual powers that sub-chiefs (batangchuo) had retain over land matters. Again, the batangchuo collected taxes
297 on behalf of the Fon but he received the collectors' rebate. Failure to share the rebate with the sub-chiefs led to
298 conflict where each chief in Bafut wanted to become autonomous or independent so as to enjoy the tax rebate
299 (Ngwa, 2021: Global Journal of Human Social Science The images presented a great sovereign African leader
300 meeting another great leader of European breed. This opportunity was rare and uncommon amongst African
301 leaders at the time. Many died without setting eyes on the Queen of England, in whose name they were colonised
302 and ruled by the British. Achirimbi II, Fon of Bafut had the single opportunity to meet the British sovereign
303 (Her Majesty the Queen), face to face. Generally at the end of colonial rule a number of secession conflicts
304 amongst the Bafut subaltern leaders were recorded. Each leader wanted to create his own autonomous state. At
305 independence therefore, African states inherited political structures and people that were atone to conflict related
306 to issues of states. They also inherited a faulty form of state whose foundation was laid by the colonialists.

307 However, it can be said that from the Lamido of Rey Bouba in North Cameroon to the Sultan of Bamoun
308 in the West an to the Fon of Bafut in the North West, the grandeur and honours attributed to these leaders
309 leaves no one indifferent to the fact that even in the midst of alien rule they were 'states within a state.' In the
310 minds of these leaders, it was clear that they rule independent states. In Bafut, the people called the fondom
311 in mother tongue: alah Befeu, meaning Bafut state. This state alongside others mentioned earlier were typical
312 African states par excellence, far from any resemblance with the European fabricated states in the continent.
313 The colonialist recognised this greatness and that is why they adopted a collaborative approach with the leaders
314 of these great states for the success of colonial rule. Within this context the powers of the African leaders were
315 sandwiched and embellished in colonial administration thus portraying them more as states within a state.

316 Besides, the nature of diplomacy and relations amongst the states depicted their autonomy and independence
317 from each other. For instance, shortly before the reunification of Cameroon, the Sultan of Bamoun from French
318 Cameroon paid a diplomatic state visit to the Fon of Bafut in Southern Cameroons. This visit marked the peak
319 of state relations in typical African style. The Fon of Bafut, Abumbi II, paints a picture of the visit of Sultan
320 Njoya to Bafut as follows:

321 We were hunting? in the palace forest when? suddenly we heard Fulani music and trumpets blaring in the
322 central court yard of the palace. We took to the darker part of the forest where we hid ourselves thinking the
323 palace was attacked by Fulani people. We came out of our hiding when we saw Bafut people pouring out to
324 defend the palace and were told by palace guards ? (ndongaries) that the Sultan of Fumban was on a friendly
325 visit to the palace. The visit took place one month before 1 st October 1961. The Fulani at the time were
326 feared and considered as a hostile people. The war in the Bamileke area was raging and women and children war
327 refugees were in the palace. My mother was given nine by the Fon to house and feed them (Abumbi II, Personal
328 Communication, 30 January 2023).

329 From the above it is evident that the sultan of the Bamoun came to Bafut to thank a colleague brother Global
330 Journal of Human Social Science -Year 2023 () who had opened the doors of his state to receive war victims
331 coming from his own state or area. The Fon and Bafut people had cordially welcomed the refugees with whom
332 they were cohabiting peacefully as the Bafut took care of their welfare. This was typical of African state solidarity
333 and relations in times of need. Secondly, the Sultan did not bring war per se; the Fulani music and trumpets
334 described by Abumbi II were part of the aura that went with the entourage of a great Fulani leader (Head of
335 State), on a friendly diplomatic visit to a colleague of another far-off state as Bafut. Our U-Tube sources on the
336 Lamido of Rey Bouba demonstrate this atmosphere of great power and aura that accompanied the great African
337 leaders in their public outings (see fig1cabove). Such outings were indeed moments of great demonstration of
338 African power and the sovereignty of its states.

339 Achirimbi II demonstrated this when he represented Southern Cameroons on the occasion of the visit of Queen
340 Elizabeth to Nigeria (see fig 4e above). The visit of Sultan Njoya to Bafut in 1961 partly explains the holding
341 of the Constitutional (Reunification) Conference in Fumban to ratify the existence of the two federated states of
342 Cameroon. It was another way of bringing together African states that had established wonderful state diplomacy
343 and relations amongst them without necessarily copying any lesson from Europeans on matters of state. When
344 Achrimbi and Njoya met in Fumban, they understood that two old-aged brothers have come to cement their
345 old state relations and to live cordially in peace while respecting their state integrity, values and traditions. It
346 was also an opportunity for them to cooperate closely and develop their sovereign states in a new arrangement.
347 That was the meaning Achirimbi and Njoya gave to the word federalism. For the fact that cordial relations,
348 peaceful coexistence and unity (even in diversity) are virtues of power and strength, Njoya and Abumbi gave
349 their blessings to the creation of the two federated states of East and West Cameroon embodied in the Federal
350 State of 1961 (Fusi Martin, Personal ??ommunication, 1996). This was a visa that legalised another dimension
351 of 'states within a state' in Africa and Cameroon in particular. How the African leaders battled it out (in this
352 new system) at independence, is another bonne of contention.

353 The nationalist politicians who fought for independence in a way respected the structures or organisation
354 which the colonialist left behind. Hence, the big fons (acolytes of colonial administrators), continued to enjoy the

355 power and affluence accorded them by the colonialist. In the first decade of independence, they lavish in affluence
356 of power and enjoyed government support while the subaltern leaders groan in anguish and agony. However by
357 1977, the Cameroon government put a smile on the faces of the subaltern leaders following the enactment of a
358 chieftaincy decree.

359 5 III. The Chieftaincy Decree of 1977

360 In July 1977, the President of the Republic promulgated a decree concerning the organisation of traditional
361 chieftaincies in Cameroon (Decree No. 77/245, 1977). The aim of Government was to resolve many litigations
362 that had plagued the chieftaincy institution by reorganising it so that order, good governance and administration
363 would be ensured at the grassroots. According to the Decree, traditional chiefdoms were organised territorially
364 into first, second and third class chiefdoms. Every chiefdom was placed under the authority of a chief assisted
365 by Traditional Council formed according to the traditions of the area. The chief could appoint from within the
366 council, a notable who would represent him in cases of absence or unavailability. First class chiefdoms were to
367 be created and the chiefs appointed by Prime Ministerial decree, the second class chiefdom by the Minister of
368 Territorial administration and third class by the respective Prefects.

369 In connection with the duties of traditional rulers, they were to act as auxiliaries of administration transmitting
370 the directives of the administration to their people, ensuring that such directives were implemented. Under the
371 direct supervision of the administration, chiefs were to maintain law and order and help in the economic, social
372 and cultural development of the areas under their control. They were also charged with the duty of collecting
373 taxes and other public funds according to regulations and conditions fixed by law.

374 In terms of remunerations, the first and second class chiefs were to receive a monthly salary and other financial
375 benefits such as rebates on poll tax collection, and special duties. They also received efficiency bonuses from
376 the Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINAT). These extra bonuses depended on the chiefs' dynamism,
377 output and recommendations from the Prefects or Sub-Prefects. Chiefs of the first grade received as salary the
378 sum of 100, 000 Frs. CFA while 75,000 Francs were allocated to chiefs of the second category. Chiefs of the third
379 category received 50,000 Francs.

380 On discipline, administrative authorities were to evaluate the activities of the chiefs in their administrative
381 areas taking into consideration their efficiency, output and the economic and social development of the areas under
382 their jurisdiction. In the event of any shortcoming, inertia or extortion from citizens, chiefs were to be sanctioned
383 accordingly. Sanctions included call to order, warning, ordinary reprimand, reprimand with suspension of all
384 allowances for a period of time and finally, deposition. All disputes arising from the appointment of Traditional
385 Rulers were to be brought before the authority vested with the powers of appointment and his decision should be
386 final. Matters were to be resolved in conformity with the dispositions Year 2023 () H of another law (Law No.
387 ??979). With this arrangement, all other previous regulations related to chieftaincy institution were henceforth
388 repealed.

389 By extension therefore, on 30 June 1979, the President of the Republic, further enacted a law related to
390 disputes arising from the appointment of traditional rulers (Ibid.). It stated that all such disputes should be
391 brought before the authority vested with the power of appointment and his decision should be final. However,
392 the decision taken might be revoked by the competent authority if such authority felt that he was misled. On 27
393 November 1980, another law was further enacted defining the competent jurisdiction in charge of affairs related
394 to opposition raised on the occasion of the appointment or designation of traditional chiefs (Loi No.80 ??31,
395 1980). According to the law, all law courts and practitioners of common law and administrative status were
396 barred from intervening or having jurisdiction over all matters brought before it in relation to protest against
397 the designation of a chief. The matters were to be resolved in conformity with disposition or prescriptions of law
398 No. 79-17 of June 1979.

399 With all these chieftaincy arrangements made, on 7 February 1981, the Prime Minister issued an arrête
400 determining First Class Chiefdoms and appointing first class chiefs in the United Republic(Arrête No.
401 019/CAB/PM, 1981). By this arrête, the Bafutfondom and its leader, Abumbi II were recognised as first class
402 chiefdom and chief respectively. On 19 January 1982, the Minister in charge of Territorial Administration issued
403 an order determining second class chiefdoms and chiefs in the national territory. According to the order, the
404 Chiefdoms of Mambu, Bawum, Banji, Mankwi, Obang, Mbekong, Mankanikong and Nsem were made second
405 class chiefdoms in Bafut (Order No. 36, ??982). This arrangement brought in a new traditional chieftaincy
406 organisation in Bafut in the post-colonial era. It was to an extent different from arrangements that had existed
407 under the Colonial and West Cameroon governments. By this act, Government seem to have official and formally
408 ratified the existence of states within a state in Bafut in modern times. These new arrangements came with their
409 own problems which generated conflict and aggravated other problems of relations within the Bafut community.

410 IV. The System of Relations and the Issue of Autonomous States within Bafut

411 The system of relations established in Bafut and even till date is so complex that political wrangles, tussles, are
412 common place amongst its leaders. The present deadlock keeps many wanting as to what is the way forward and
413 when peace and harmonious cohabitation will return in this great fondom. However, the cultural environment
414 and the traditional setting of the area in which the fondom is situated (North West region of Cameroon) is also
415 a contributory factor.

416 To begin with, in the Bamenda Grassfields, the natural rulers were people who had special duties and roles to

417 play in the social, political and economic life of their people. Their authority over them was legally recognized.
418 They had the capacity and legitimate right to command. They were endowed with privileges and duties of the
419 supreme judge, head of the army, chief priest or supreme ritual head (Robert and Pat ??itzenthaler, 1962:27).
420 In fact, the various duties, activities, rights, prerogatives and privileges of these natural rulers make up a single
421 unified whole. Also, the traditional rulers were the axes of political relations in the societies in this area. The
422 people and the subordinate chiefs saw the fonsas the symbols of their unity and exclusiveness, and the embodiment
423 of their essential values. The fons (in line with pre-colonial traditional norms) were more than secular rulers and
424 their credentials were believed to be mystical and derived from antiquity ??Fortes and Pritchard, 1967:16).A
425 distortion of this arrangement at any given time in history led to conflict. Since German period three great fons
426 have ruled Bafut namely, Abumbi I, Achirimbi II and presently Abumbi II (see figs 5a, b and c). For the fons
427 to fully succeed in their administration of the fondoms, there must be a kind of hierarchical cordial relationship
428 between the chief (at the grassroots) and the fons. Where such relations were strained or broken, conflicts
429 erupted. The conflicts were often characterised by wrangles within the ranks of the rulers and each struggle
430 ended up assuming a political dimension with subaltern leaders attempting to secede or create independent
431 autonomous states within the state. As mentioned earlier, colonial rule introduced a new system of relations
432 amongst the African leaders in this area. It distorted the traditional system that existed before. Unable to
433 master the complex colonial system or organisation conflict ensued in the relations amongst the leaders. Peace
434 and cordial cohabitation became far fetch. Solutions to the return of peace were only seen in separation and
435 autonomous living apart from each other.

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437 In Bafut these political conflicts involved the Fon (king) and the chiefs of some semi-autonomous chiefdoms
438 in the fondom. These chiefdoms were Obang, Benji, Bawum, Manbu, Mankahnkong and Mbebeli. Relations
439 between the chiefs and the Fon of Bafut were not always cordial. The problems started far back before the
440 advent of colonial rule in the Bamenda Grassfields. Long before the German and the British arrival, Bafut had
441 been a composite and heterogeneous kingdom. It was made up of several chiefdoms with the major ones being
442 Bawum, Mambu, Mankahnkong, Obang, Benji and Bukari. At the centre of the kingdom, clustered around
443 the Fon's palace (see fig. 6) at Mumalaa, were villages such as Bujong, which served as the capital of Bafut,
444 Manji, Mbebeli, Njinteh, Niko, Mankaa, Nchum and Njibujang. The Fon directly ruled these villages. The
445 chiefdoms referred to above were made up of people from different cultural and historical backgrounds that
446 constituted semi-autonomous entities in the area ??Hawkesworth, 1926). The Bafut group came to Ndog after
447 leaving Tikari. Following the death of their leader, a succession dispute, arose between two sons, Nkenjoh and
448 Aghanjoh. Aghanjoh left with his group of supporters towards what is today Bafut ??Niba, 1981: 12). On
449 arrival, Aghanjoh was received in the village of Mbebeli by Nibachi, the Chief. After staying with him as a guest
450 for some time, Aghanjoh won over Nibachi's subjects by his lavish generosity, because Nibachi was a selfish and
451 crafty ruler. Consequently, the council of elders conspired with Aghanjoh and urged him to depose their chief
452 and seize the throne. The newcomer did so in a cleverly conceived plan of stepping on Nibachi's foot in public,
453 a sign of deposition. The deposed chief subsequently committed suicide. Later on, one of Aghanjoh's successors
454 moved the palace from Mbebeli to its present site at Bujong in Mumalaa. Then the immigrants subdued the
455 Bukari and Buwe people, who, apparently along with the Mbebeli people were the autochthonous inhabitants of
456 Bafut.

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458 The expansion of the Bafut fondom from its original nucleus to its present size was due to both internal and
459 external factors. One important external factor was the incursion of the Bali Chamba into the Bamenda area
460 at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This incursion greatly affected the balance of power in the area. It
461 brought them into conflict with the bigger chiefdoms and drove the smaller chiefdoms to seek refuge under the
462 bigger ones. After initial clash with the Chamba, Bafut became a rallying point for refugees from the south
463 and southwest of the Ngemba area ??Tweed, 1926:6). Some of them eventually returned to their areas after
464 the danger was over but others who stayed were the Mambu and Mankanikong who claimed the same area of
465 origin, namely Mberewi ??Chilver and Kaberry, 1967:19). These chiefdoms became tributaries of Bafut through
466 voluntary submission.

467 The expansion of the Bafut fondom northwards into the Mentchum valley after the Chamba incursion, in the
468 middle of the nineteenth century was dictated by land hunger as well as by a desire for tribute (resources). In
469 a series of raids, the Bafut subdued some of the peoples of the area, such as the Otang, Buwi, Bugri and the
470 rest of them (Mbekong, Manta and Butang) had to voluntarily submit. Another area which the Bafut brought
471 under their control was Banji (Njimuya-across the Mezam River) with its rich savannah farming and hunting
472 grounds. They subdued the inhabitants and forced them to pay tribute. The Bafut also began to settle there
473 (File NW/QF/1933/1, 1933).

474 Thus, on the eve of the German annexation of Cameroon in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the
475 Bafut fondom had expanded to its present size, and assumed her present composition. It was a heterogeneous
476 fondom, ruled by an immigrant dynasty and prepared to defend her territory and sovereignty as a conquest state.

477 This is what gives the Bafut Tikars and leader the strong legal argument that none of these subaltern chiefs can
478 succeed in creating an autonomous state within Bafut.

479 However, Aletum discards this argument by intimating that the problem or conflict began when the Tikar
480 leader usurped the throne from the indigenous chief, Nibachi. From then, the central chiefdom developed the
481 tendency of setting the chiefdoms against each other in order to weaken their regional authority, thereby gaining
482 through a conflict situation the ability to enforce its central authority. Aletum made reference to the fact that it
483 was not easy for some of the chiefdoms such as those of Bawum and Mambu to Global Journal of Human Social
484 Science -Year 2023 () retain their hereditary sub-chiefs' privileges and titles. The retaining of these rights by
485 Ntoh of Bawum and Wanki of Mambu was not through peaceful means but through strong political competition
486 and conflict ??Aletum, 1974:31). In fact the usurpation spirit of the Tikar leader was at extreme and as time
487 went on, the conflict multiplied and increased in magnitude. The conflicts were openly manifested during colonial
488 rule.

489 Aletum further state that the seizure of the throne of Nibachi, the chief of the autochthones in Mbebeli, by
490 the Tikar leader on his arrival, to him was "a palace coup d'Etat" that effaced the political influence of the
491 chiefdom of Mbebeli, whose leader, Nibachi, lost his throne to the Tikar leader called Aghanjo (Ibid.). As time
492 went on, the Tikar leader in Bafut consolidated his authority in a new palace that was constructed in a valley
493 referred to today as Mumelaa. From Mumelaa, the Tikar leader began to wield a lot of power and control over
494 the rest of the chiefdoms in the area. For the fact that the political institution of the Mumelaa chiefdom were
495 far superior to those of the other chiefdoms in the area, the authority of the Bafut leader of Tikar origin grew
496 stronger. Open confrontation and political conflicts became common. On the one hand, Aletum noted, in some
497 of the semi-autonomous chiefdoms, the political institution were subdued but not to the point of rendering them
498 entirely ineffective. These institutions in the chiefdoms, though weak, still exist, but always as a point of conflict.
499 The conflicts are manifested in many different ways, cutting across the Bafut society and the core of traditional
500 politics in the fondom. The intension of the chiefs of the semi-autonomous chiefdom had been to break away from
501 the main society to establish or gain full autonomy over their chiefdoms in the area (Ibid.). However, colonial
502 rule aggravated the situation beginning with the Germans.

503 German colonial intrusion into Bafut was felt for the first time around 1889, with the arrival of the first white
504 man, Dr. Eugen Zintgraff (a German explorer) in the Bamenda Grassfields. The presence of Zintgraff in the
505 area terrified the Bafut people and their Fon, Abumbi I, and caused much anxiety and uneasiness among them.
506 Abumbi I was unwilling to accept German colonial rule and it was after a series of wars the Germans from 1900
507 to 1906 that he was compelled to succumb to German rule ??Niba, 1986: 86-101). As time went on, traditional
508 authority in Bafut suffered some mutations, difficult for the ordinary Bafut person to understand. German rule
509 in Bafut saw the emergence of conflict within the traditional political system caused by ignorance and the desire
510 to protect interests.

511 Internal cleavages between the groups of people in Bafut were conspicuous. They remained competitive with
512 each other, giving rise to political competition among the natural rulers. With the establishment of German
513 rule in Bafut, the traditional political institutions appeared to be dormant. But, even with the dormant nature,
514 the institution remained the core of political competition and political conflict, prepared for action when the
515 opportunity presented itself ??Aletum, 1974: 31). The situation was aggravated when Bafut came under British
516 rule. British colonial rule served as a catalyst that activated tension among the Bafut leaders. British rule
517 brought stress in relations between the Bafut Fon and his chiefs. Effervescence was added to old personality
518 conflict and skirmishes that existed between the Fon and his chiefs in the past.

519 First, before the arrival of the British, the status of the traditional rulers in Bafut was well defined. The
520 different people addressed their leaders as nfor (king). The status of the most influential of them, who was at the
521 head of the kingdom, was distinguished from those of the subordinates by praise names such as ati-njongnjong
522 (thorny tree), munah-ngwe(the leopard cub), nongubu (a python), mooh-kwifor (son of kwifor), tsabufor or atsah-
523 te-yeyah (he who passes and his footpath cannot be traced) ?? Suh and Mbungwa, 1995:7). When the British
524 established their rule in the area, they started differentiating the traditional rulers by using titles like "paramount
525 chief" and "sub-chief". In Bafut, Abumbi I and later on Achirimbi II were recognised as paramount chiefs. No
526 other leader within the fondom was recognised as such. When the title 'fon' was later adopted and popularised
527 in the Bamenda Grassfields, the title received official recognition in the circles of colonial administration. Thus,
528 the colonial masters recognised only one traditional ruler of great importance in Bafut in official circles as "fon".
529 This title thus became a source of conflict among the traditional leaders in Bafut. As time went on, the conflict
530 became tense and has continued unabated in recent times.

531 However, the problem was not with the title per se. It was with the colonial privileges and duties that went
532 with it. The Fon's duty to collect taxes, rates and dues in his jurisdiction caused the closer relationship between
533 the chiefs and the Fon to dwindle and the authority of the Fon over the semi-autonomous chiefdoms began to
534 be weakened. The chiefs refused to pay tributes to the Fon of Bafut and the controversy was that they viewed
535 the tax rebates retained by the Fon as a substitute for tributes from the people in the various chiefdoms (Chilver
536 and Kaberry, 1960:1-9).

537 In 1948, Nanoh, the chief of Obang village or chiefdom took a bold step and gave the spark of the struggle
538 for sovereignty when, for 2 years, he refused to pay his tributes of 2 tins of oil and 2 baskets of dry fish (per
539 annum) to the Fon, Achirimbi II (FileAb(1926)3, 1926; File No. 213). Achirimbi on his part decided to sue

540 Nanoh to court. Yet, before Achirimbi could have time to settle the dispute with Nanoh, news reached him that
541 Talah, the chief of Banji, had confiscated a leopard meant for him as tribute, and made use of the meat, skin
542 In 1951, Achirimbi sued Talah. In 1961 (the year of Southern Cameroons release from colonial rule), the ruler
543 of the Bawum chiefdom, Ntoh, sued Achirimbi for appropriating Bawum land ??Abumbi II, 1995). At the time
544 Achirimbi died in 1968, the conflict with Bawum chiefdom over land in Bafut has not yet been resolved. The
545 conflict was further aggravated by petty skirmishes and personality conflict between the Fon and the chief of
546 Bawum. A local market problem was the last straw that kept Ntoh and Achirimbi at reasonable distance apart
547 in their relations.

548 Besides, when the British authorities carved out their first inter-tribal boundaries in the Southern Cameroons,
549 these groups were recognised as entities within the Bafut fondom. We refer to in this work as 'states within
550 a state'. These states within Bafut, were placed under the authority of the Fon. The Bawum, Banji, Obang,
551 Mambu and Mankahnikong leaders were eventually made subaltern leaders under the Fon of Bafut. They also
552 retained their original royal titles called Ntoh, Talah, Nanoh, Wanki and Muwah respectively. The ancestors
553 of most of these chiefs migrated into the area today called Bafut with the aforementioned royal titles brought
554 from their different places of origin. They installed their ruling houses in the various sites they occupied in the
555 area and have maintained their hereditary titles up till date. Recently, some of these chiefs (as explained in the
556 chieftaincy decree earlier) have been classified as "second-class chiefs" ruling "second-class chiefdoms" within the
557 Bafut fondom ??Aletum, 1974: 55-7).

558 Fortunately or unfortunately, the generations of chiefs from these chiefdoms have been in conflict with the
559 Fon and the central authorities in the Bafut palace. Sporadic tensions flare up each time the opportunity occurs.
560 The time and nature of the conflict is not determined but what is evident is that it imposes the need for peace,
561 in this way state and non-state institutions are bound to engage peace ventures and efforts to calm down the
562 situation. The dynamics of the conflict and its impact on the community are examined below.

563 8 V. Dynamics of the Conflict in Present Day

564 We asked the question as to why this conflict has continued in Bafut to recent times. What are the factors
565 that sustain this conflict till present? The dynamics of the political conflict among the Bafut traditional rulers,
566 which this paper examines, has been analysed by many scholars over the years. However the issue is not limited
567 to the Bafut fondom. It touches a good number of the great fondoms of the Bamenda Grassfields. It also
568 concerns a wide range of African traditional societies especially in states where British and French colonialism
569 was established. The conflict deals mainly with history, traditions and practices that acted as sources or causes
570 of secession tendencies among traditional rulers in Bafut and the Bamenda Grassfields' fondoms as a whole. In
571 this article and alongside other researchers on Bafut, we discovered an entangled and complex web of relations
572 and issues amongst the rulers and people. A number of concepts and practices imbued in the Bafut political
573 system are not working well as to shelve conflict in favour of peace in the fondom in present day.

574 To begin with, the name 'Bafut' was first mentioned in any historical document in modern times by Dr. Eugen
575 Zintgraff in one of his works which recorded his passage through Bafut in 1889. Here, Zintgraff's view about the
576 Fon of Bafut on his first encounter with Abumbi I is highlighted. Zintgraff described the Fon of Bafut, Abumbi
577 I, as an African despot such as he had not seen before or was he ever to see again ??Zintgraff, 1895:16). In fact
578 the Bafut worshiped their fon as a demi-god and even whites who came to Bafut joined the people to perform
579 traditional rites that honoured the Fon(see fig. 7). From Zintgraff's description, it is evident that the authority of
580 the Bafut Fon over his people was so strong that his decisions at one point could cause a conflict situation of great
581 magnitude. There is no clear evidence as to whether his successors changed from this despotic attitude as Bafut
582 evolved into modernism and democratic practices. In the Northwest region and in Mezam Division in particular,
583 the Bafut people were the last to receive modern administration put in place by the Cameroon government.
584 This is indicative of the fact that Bafut remained rooted in its old traditional practices and absolutism till 1994.
585 Even then, the state administrators in the exercise of their administrative duties met stiff resistance from the
586 traditional system in Bafut.

587 9 Source: Author's Collection

588 Chilver and Kaberry on their part highlighted the type of relationship that existed between the Bafut Fon and
589 the sub-chiefs since the inception of the Bafut dynasty. For generations, there has been tension between the
590 Fon and some of his chiefs. Such tension led to the killing in the Bafut palace of one of the chiefs of Bawum
591 shortly before the arrival of the Germans in 1888 ??Chilver and Kaberry, 1967:19). This assertion became an
592 issue of sharp controversy and disagreement among scholars studying the history of Bafut. While some, like M.T.
593 Aletum and Mathias Livinus Niba, hold the view that there is evidence that the said Ntoh was murdered through
594 mysterious means and buried under a tree near a riverbelow the Fon's palace called Nkinsare, other scholars
595 argue that Abumbi I was not responsible for the killing. According to them, the said Ntoh was eliminated within
596 the core of kwifor in conformity with the will of the greater faction of the Bawum traditional authorities and
597 princes who declared their intention to get rid of the chief and install their own favourite candidate in his place
598 ??Tumensang, 2000:6). Whatever the case, the fact is that the fifth Ntoh of Bawum was killed and the Bawum

599 people up till date have been using the point as a reference to justify their struggle to break away from the Bafut
600 fondom.

601 In this conflict among the Bafut rulers, ethnicity plays an important role in precipitating tension. Jean-Pierre
602 Warnier described this phenomenon as "ethnic processes." He pointed out that various societies constantly change
603 with modified institutions falling in line with changing fortunes. Thus, no matter the degree of integration and
604 change, ethnicity will sometimes lead to ethnic tension and conflict ??Warnier, 1975:78). Mathias Livinus Niba
605 added that such tension and conflicts increased in Bafut due to the misinterpretation or reinterpretations of
606 the three topographically demarcated geographical zones in the fondom (Ntare, Mumelaa and Mbunti). The
607 inequality in the distribution of resources in these three main zones is a serious problem among the Bafut ethnic
608 groups. Also, the integration of conquered peoples, slaves and captives in the Bafut society was received and
609 interpreted in various ways by the different peoples in the various chiefdoms. Hence, discrimination and open
610 manifestation of ethnic differences and strife for superiority in the fondom were not uncommon ??Niba, 1999:
611 22-33).

612 Crawford Young further buttress the significant role of ethnicity in traditional societies when he said: "Even
613 the least separatist sentiments among a group of people suffices to illuminate conflict in a state. Cultural cleavages
614 accompanied by different histories of people's origins are widely believed to cause tension within a society. They
615 broaden and deepen cultural identities, which ultimately strengthen secessionist spirit even in traditional societies.
616 The struggle has often taken the form of demands for sovereignty expressed by cultural or ethnic community
617 within an existing territorial entity ??Young, 1976:33)." In fact, there is no palpable evidence to show that vices
618 linked to ethnicity were eliminated in the Bafut community as it evolved into modernity.

619 Apart from ethnicity, the question of land remains cardinal in Bafut society. Miriam Goheen, in a study of
620 similar conflicts between the Fon of Nso and his sub-chief, the Fon of Nse, revealed that land and stewardship
621 constituted major symbols of political leadership. Thus, the least conflict over land and its resources could inflict
622 negative consequences on the entire society. Strained relations among traditional rulers could result to secession.
623 As society evolved, the conflicts multiplied and traditional authority gradually withered away ??Goheen, 1996:
624 399-424).

625 In this, the character of man and his attitude towards landed property aggravates the magnitude of conflict
626 related to land and power (authority). Robert Ardrey, pointed out that man's quest for territory and property
627 undoubtedly raised greater storms in traditional societies. To him, man is a predator and, from time to time,
628 he goes out looting, "raping" and raising general havoc in the surrounding countryside or neighbouring villages.
629 Ardrey described traditional rulers as people who will like to reap where they have not sown. The final outcome
630 is an unavoidable reprisal from the offended. A conflict thus erupts among the leaders involved. Ardrey draws
631 a number of conclusions. First, the common cause for any form of conflict revolves around man's ignorance.
632 Second, group of family loyalty to traditional rulers in local societies depends on joint attachment to private
633 territory or land. When the land is tempered with, conflicts with greater magnitudes occur ??Ardrey, 1966:46).
634 Land matters between the leaders of Bafut are seemingly going to balkanise the great fondom in modern times.

635 The conflict in Bafut today equally revolves around authority. The rulers here are so attached and full of
636 authority in such a way that none is willing to relinquish any iota of it. They all claim to be powerful and equal.
637 None accepts to be regarded as the subordinate Global Journal of Human Social Science- Year 2023 () H

638 of the other or to be treated as such. This is an attitude which Paul Nchoji Nkwi had earlier highlighted
639 and warned against when he examined the concept of traditional authority within the political institutions
640 of the Kom people. Nkwi pointed out that traditional authority is the centre of all relations. First, the
641 authority is built on consent and consensus rather than on coercion. To Nkwi, Bafut, Bali, kom and Nso in
642 the nineteenth century emerged as centralised states with centralised authority. The Fon was at the head of a
643 hierarchical political structure, which permitted him to delegate powers and authority to regional representatives.
644 In this political system, therefore, the king or fon, according to Nkwi, is a sovereign leader with a hierarchical
645 authority. In the nineteenth century, most of these rulers were also ruling over confederacies, which were often
646 a mixture of pyramidal and hierarchical authority ??Nkwi, 1987:56). Nkwi's view is that the groups of people
647 in the Grassfields' fondoms did not live in complete isolation. Friendly contacts dominated their history but
648 many of them too had hostile conflicts and contacts with one another. These hostilities could have been wars,
649 boundary problems and various forms of conflict that strained relations among the groups. Hostilities or strained
650 relationships among the traditional rulers themselves became a common feature too (Ibid.). Thus, in a situation
651 where subordinate authority discards history and rise to claim equal rights, privileges power, and position with
652 his superior in recent times, such a community can hardly be peaceful. It is the case with Bafut.

653 In fact, to deal with authority in Bafut today is to deal with a sensitive and precarious situation. Traditional
654 authority is in the blood of the rulers more as a vector of controversy, bitterness and deadlock. It provokes
655 senseless conflicts in a great fondom that by dint of its status is expected to be dynamic and evolving rapidly in
656 present day. One is quick to conclude that even in the midst of modern education nowadays many traditional
657 authorities have failed to learn from their history and construct better peaceful communities for their people.
658 Little wonder then that Fortes and Evans-Pritchard remarked that in dealing with traditional authorities, one is
659 dealing with law on the one hand, with conflict on the other, and with peace and order where necessary (Forts and
660 Eans-Pritchard, 1967: 27). Within a locally defined community, an authority may commit some acts or adapts
661 some modes of behavior, which may spur up conflict in the society. Traditional leaders who generate tension

662 in the society claim to be great men. Subordinate chiefs play the role of representatives of the people within
663 central authority (hierarchy). But, without cooperation among the people who hold these offices, it becomes very
664 difficult, if not impossible, for the administration of the society to succeed. The king himself confronts difficulties
665 in obtaining his revenue, assert his judicial and legislative supremacy, or retain his secular and ritual prestige.
666 Sabotage becomes a salient feature of conflict among traditional leaders (Ibid.). The circumstances prevailing in
667 the society at the time thus determine the magnitude of the conflict.

668 In Bafut the traces of colonial administration continue to reign havoc up till date. The bone of contention is
669 on issues emanating from acculturation which the people have been unable to manage several decades after the
670 departure of the colonial master. The relics of colonial administration had remained indelible in the traditional
671 political system of Bafut more as a source of conflict in modern time. Walters Che Fombong lamented on this
672 when he remarked that the Bafut society, which was purely traditional, gradually evolved into the colonial era
673 where foreigners and external influence infiltrated the "traditional society." Chieftaincy matters for instance,
674 were intricately linked to British local administration. The colonial classification of chiefs into grades (first,
675 second and third class) in the Bamenda Division was not necessary given that it became a source of conflict and
676 disagreements over titles among the traditional rulers of powerful states or fondoms.

677 Till date, the disagreement has not stopped. The word "paramount" used to clearly distinguish the authority
678 of few first class chiefs is still in conflict. While the paramount chiefs were placed on a monthly salary and held
679 in high esteem by the British colonial masters, the second-class and the third-class chiefs were less important
680 and thus ignored. Today, in spite the 1977 chieftaincy decree many paramount or first class chiefs still think
681 that the second and third class chiefs should be permanently ignored and deprived of any privileges. The envy
682 and jealousy aroused among the traditional rulers during colonial rule had seldom disappeared. The secession
683 tendencies among the traditional rulers in Bafut multiplied in recent times ??Fombong, 1980:79). The post-
684 colonial government inherited and continued with the system of classifying traditional rulers into grades and this
685 has never resolved the separatist tendencies among the rulers in Bafut.

686 Apart from the classification of chiefs, colonial masters created artificial or warrant chieftaincies. The
687 consequences of this act in Africa and Bafut in particular today are vividly described by Thomas Bierschenk who
688 pointed out that, some chieftaincies in African societies today are not traditional institutions originating from
689 precolonial times and extending into colonial era. The colonial authorities created chieftaincies where such had
690 not existed before. As time went on, traditional rulers became involved in modern politics. It became difficult to
691 distinguish chiefs from the modern elite for they did not constitute two distinct social groups. On the one hand,
692 some politicians took the chiefs as potential allies or opponents. The concept of "tradition" and Global Journal
693 of Human Social Science -Year 2023 () H "modernity" was not antithetical to the politicians. Thus, in the face
694 of this confusion, internal conflicts over the social status of chiefs became prominent among traditional rulers.
695 With the advent of colonial rule, chiefs with pre-colonial titles and history could not survive the democratisation
696 of the chieftaincy structures and institutions by the colonial administration. It became difficult to differentiate
697 a traditional chief from a modern politician ??Bierschenk, 1993:217-43). Up till date, it is indeed difficult to
698 distinguish a traditional ruler from a modern politician or elite.

699 Carola Lentz cues up to emphasis that the disagreement over titles among traditional rulers often resulted in
700 feuds, warfare and shifting political alignment. Sometimes, they weakened the powerful chiefdoms and made
701 them to lose control over their peripheral territories. Villages also ceased the opportunity of the conflict
702 situations to declare their independence ??Lentz, 1993:176-212). To Lentz, the impact of colonial rule on African
703 traditional stewardship was great. Chieftaincy matters were intricately linked to British local administration.
704 At independence, most African government and later regimes arrogated to themselves the right to have the final
705 say in the recognition of new chiefs. By so doing they were perpetuating the colonial policy of appointing chiefs
706 who had no traditional backing. This appointment syndrome today is breaking down many African kingdoms
707 or states which are bound to cope with the stigma of artificial states created within their states. Bafut had
708 its own bitter pill and the Fon, Abumbi II, has never been in accord with the government for recognising eight
709 second class chiefdoms in his fondom. To him, that was synonymous to creating states within a state in modern
710 dispensation.

711 The emergence of party politics in later years intensified the conflict and brought in new dynamics in chieftaincy
712 matters. These political parties offered themselves as national political counterparts to opposing factions in local
713 conflicts. Chiefs and would-be chiefs now needed to secure political support by siding with the national power
714 groups. Governments now used the chiefs to enhance their rural constituencies. As for the "earth priests" (the
715 kingmakers responsible for the enthronement of the chiefs) who were basically cut off from the sort of official
716 recognition, it now appeared that the only way open for them to increase their local influence was to ally with
717 various factions of chiefs (Ibid.). It is within this wider political context that many of the puzzling alignments of
718 chiefs in conflict can best be understood in Bafut and many other fondoms, which came under British rule and
719 thereafter. With the advent of multipartism in Cameroon in the 1990s, two prominent political parties existed
720 namely, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) and the Social Democratic Front (SDF).

721 The impact of these two parties on local politics and traditional authority in Bafut was enormous. It suffices
722 to mention here the consequences of political alignments created by these parties on the Bafut rulers and their
723 people. These parties carefully and cynically set up their political agendas and strategies to further balkanise the
724 Bafut people and leaders under the guise of supporters or followers. While each party struggled to make Bafut

725 its bastion, the syndrome of 'states' existing within the Bafut fondom was gradually fortified and consolidated
726 given the political strife that emanated amongst the political elite and traditional rulers, especially at the level of
727 the central palace. Many political elite accused the central palace for either withdrawing support from them or
728 supporting their opponent because they were not from the same chiefdom or origin. Of course the political elite
729 who had impressed on the government to create the second class chiefdoms within Bafut had a bone to contend
730 with during political campaigns and elections in Bafut ??Niba, Personal Communication, 2012).

731 We noted that the paramountcy and status of the Bafut Fon also became a source of bitter conflict among
732 the chiefs of the ethnic groups inhabiting the fondom. The problem has remained unresolved up till date as each
733 chief wants to be recognised as paramount fon, advancing various arguments to back up his claims ??Ngwebufor,
734 2000:3-4). During colonial rule, the powerful position of the Fon of Bafut permitted him to impose his will on
735 the other chiefs in his realm who were not fortunate to have their status recognised by the colonial masters.
736 He was made the paramount chief in the Bafut Native Authority Area (which also included Bambui, Nkwen,
737 Mendankwe, Bambili and the two Banankis). The colonial authorities paid him all the respect, "closed their eyes
738 to his wrong-doing," and gave him a higher allowance. They increased the Fon's power without considering the
739 traditional context or implications and this inevitably caused tension among the traditional rulers especially the
740 chiefs of the semiautonomous chiefdoms in the fondom. Although this tension has not resulted in any organised
741 armed conflict, it has resulted in violence (Niba, 1981). Traditional politics became more complicated because of
742 the envy and jealousy that surrounded the position of the Fon. The Fon felt threatened in his position and thus
743 adopted various strategies to deal with the situation and consolidate his position. In the course of doing this,
744 more tension arose in present day.

745 However, John Neba Chungong thinks that this tension should have subsided by now but for the fact that
746 independent governments and regimes continuously arrogate to themselves the right to have the final say in
747 chieftaincy matters or the recognition of chiefs.

748 Consequently, government authorities permanently intrude in chieftaincy matters such as Global Journal of
749 Human Social Science -Year 2023 () H succession to the thrones of traditional rulers, especially in the North West
750 Region of Cameroon. The involvement of government authorities in issues considered to be purely traditional
751 affairs to an extent increased tension in areas where succession conflicts occurred. In Bafut, political conflicts
752 among the traditional rulers in the fondom were aggravated by succession conflict where government authorities
753 and state functionaries were involved. ??Chungong, 1977: 43).

754 Divine F. Ngwa aligns with Chugong by illustrating the 1968 succession conflict in the Bafut palace. Here, the
755 involvement of some of the chiefs of the semi-autonomous chiefdom in the affair gave a wider dimension to it. Their
756 role in the issue created more tension and increased the magnitude of the conflict. The chiefs especially those
757 from Bafut, threw their support behind princes whose mothers' origins were from their chiefdoms. They mounted
758 a strong opposition against the prince who was apparently designated to succeed. Politicians and government
759 ministers from these chiefdoms in Bafut did all in their power to ensure that the throne was succeeded by the
760 prince they and their chiefs supported. Ngwa, in his conclusion, pointed out that succession conflicts were avenues
761 or sporadic opportunities where the chiefs used to revenge or manifest old grudges and grievances that they bore
762 against the Fon of Bafut and the central authorities in the palace (Ngwa, 1999). Such grudges and grievances
763 are not unconnected to the political conflict, rivalry and secessionist tendencies that have existed among the
764 traditional rulers till date.

765 For instance, when Achirimbi died in 1968, it was expected that the conflicts and wrangling among the rulers
766 in Bafut would subside following the occupation of the throne by a new fon, Abumbi II. But on his accession to
767 the Bafut throne, Abumbi found himself entangled in a web of bitter and estranged relationship with the chiefs of
768 the semi-autonomous chiefdoms in Bafut. These differences have continued up till date. Again, in 1995, Abumbi
769 II appointed some new "thirdclass" chiefs in the fondom. The appointment sparked new waves of resentment
770 amongst the chiefs of the semi-autonomous chiefdoms. This time around, the chiefs of Mambu, Mankahnkong
771 and of the recently revived Mbebeli chiefdom joined the old clique of chiefs in opposition to the Fon's authority.
772 The Chief of Mambu, Wanki Nibanchang II, spearheaded the strife. He wrote several petitions to government
773 administrators contesting the legitimacy of the "third-class" chiefs appointed by the Fon in the Mambu chiefdom.

774 The respond of government eventually embolden the chiefs to continue in their actions against the Fon. The
775 plea of the revolting Bafut chiefs gained sympathy within the ranks of government authorities in the area. At
776 one point in time, the Senior Divisional Officer for Mezam wrote a letter related to Chieftaincy disputes in Bafut
777 Sub-Division. The letter pointed out that the Fon had illegally created some chieftaincies in Bafut, which were
778 contrary to the decree of 1977. The Senior Divisional Officer in his letter informed the Fon that the list of chiefs
779 he forwarded to the administration was not the right one. Consequently, the Fon was requested to withdraw any
780 traditional authority and insignia conferred on any individual as a chief (Ref. No. 472/L/E29/SP, 1998). Such
781 ultimatum were nothing short of empowering the subaltern chiefs in Bafut and reinforcing the existence of states
782 within a state.

783 In fact, the decision of government authorities seemed to have added more insult to injury in the chiefs' revolt
784 against the Fon. In April 2000, under the canopy of the. Ntare chiefs," the traditional rulers of Bawum, Mambu,
785 Mankahnkong and Mbebeli addressed a letter to the Divisional Officer for Bafut Sub-Division concerning the
786 traditional titles of "chief" and "fon" in Bafut. They challenged the Bafut Fon's claim that he is the only fon in
787 the fondom. The chiefs argued that they too were fons and their titles must be recognised and respected (Note

788 of Information, 3 April 2000). It is this conflict among the traditional rulers in Bafut that is seemingly going
789 to tear the fondom apart in modern times. In this, the 1977 chieftaincy decree quoted severally by Divisional
790 Officers and government officials in Bafut is the bone of contention and source of all other conflicts among the
791 Bafut rulers in modern times. The impact on the community is enormous.

792 10 VI. Impact of Conflict

793 The traditional political system in Bafut is endangered. The conflict has diminished the mystical element of
794 the institution of kingship in Bafut. The authority of the Fon is gradually withering among the people in the
795 various chiefdoms. The development of the fondom is endangered. Also, the conflict discourages outsiders from
796 settling in Bafut. A stranger would not like to settle in an area where the first condition for the acquisition of
797 land forcefully compels him to pay allegiance only to a particular traditional authority and not to the other. The
798 Nsoh quarter in Bafut is a victim of this feat.

799 Furthermore, the conflict among traditional authorities (since its inception) scares potential wellwishers who
800 would have liked to help Bafut in one way or the other. The conflict today represents an impending doom for Bafut
801 development, which all Bafut people should aspire to. Disunity has entered the fabric of the society. The saying
802 that "united we stand divided we fall" means nothing to the traditional rulers in Bafut. Political, ideological,
803 personal and social differences have permeated the society. Social relation and inter chiefdom marriages have been
804 reduced drastically. Each person is suspicious of his fellow brother or sister coming from a different chiefdom.
805 All these are clear More fears are directed towards the future generation of rulers in Bafut. It has been noticed
806 that each generation of rulers inherits the conflict. The magnitude increase with the passage of time. The future
807 of the fondom as a political unit is seriously threatened. From the conflicts and wrangling that characterise
808 relations among the traditional rulers here, one can hastily draw the conclusion that, if efforts are not made to
809 arrest the situation, future generations shall inherit "arms" of genocide, massacre, hatred and jealousy.

810 Furthermore, the role of the Bafut people, scholars, elite and Cameroon Government administrators in the
811 conflict among the traditional rulers in Bafut is significant. They are also points of controversy, which need
812 critical examination. As far as the people are concerned, those in the various chiefdoms relentlessly support their
813 individual chiefs.

814 On the part of the elite, they manipulate the rulers for their own ends. In the main towns and cities of
815 Cameroon, the elite from the rebellious chiefdoms boycott the central Bafut manjong in obedience to the express
816 desires of their chiefs (The Bafut Observer, 2000: 6-7). Yet, most of these elite are traditional title holders in
817 the fondom. Their role in traditional politics in the face of conflict are equally damaging to the Bafut people.
818 The people are even more confused and misled by some writers of newspaper article who fall short of having a
819 mastery of the historical facts, political developments and traditional politics in the fondom. Some writers or
820 scholars writing on Bafut have contributed in sparking a controversy over the status of the Bafut fondom. Some
821 call Bafut a federation; others feel that it is a confederation while some are categorical on the fact that it is a
822 monarchy.

823 Beside, traditional authority is gradually decaying and great African states like the Bafut fondom are
824 threatened. The respect due traditional rulers in their societies had withered away. Their role as peacemakers
825 is virtually defeated. The moral values bestowed on the African tradition are seemingly being destroyed by
826 conflicts among the rulers who are considered as custodians of these customs, norms, and moral values. Our
827 greatest hope is that this article should arouse the interest of other scholars or researchers in the study thus
828 enhancing intellectual scholarship that will restore peace in this great fondom.

829 Today the North West Region has been affected by this 'state' syndrome that dealt a big blow to the local
830 communities in the past. With the advent of multiparty politics in the 1990s, the political elite from Ndonga-
831 Mantung Division, led by Honourable Tamfu (of late) campaigned for the split of the North West Region to
832 create a far-north west region with capital in Nkambe (Mbah Ndam Joseph, personal communication, March
833 2015). The benefits of this act could best be explained by its orchestrators or perpetrators. But one thing is
834 clear that it was an attempt to create a state within a state. This divisive attitude had remained in the brain of
835 the political elite from this division who think that whatever happens in the North West Region as a whole, is
836 not part of their business. To them they are by inference autonomous or independent of the North West Region.

837 For instance, with the insurrection of the amba revolution in 2016,ghost towns and school boycotts were
838 respected all over the North West Region but for Nkambe. With the creation of the Concept of Junior Senators
839 in Cameroon in 2022, the junior Senator from Ndonga-Mantung, Nseka Ndi Anatole insisted that there is no way
840 the North West can present a general project for the Region (Nseka Ndi, personal Communication, November
841 2022). Each division and its senators should concentrate in the development of projects in their divisions and
842 forward the reports directly to the Assembly in Yaounde. This attitude in a sense, sustained the vices of states
843 within a state. Donga Mantung won the presidency? the person who won? is the person the whole Donga
844 Mantung will pay respect to? any other arranged candidate is a farce. We worked for that, we are not going to
845 leave our efforts go in vain. Arrangements can be done on any other position, not the position of the person who
846 won the presidency. Youths? paid their transport from very far distance like Ako, Misaje, Nkambe? to come
847 for this event? if any other person should replace our president, it should be someone from Donga Mantung
848 and nothing else? stripping us from our position of responsibility is something we cannot condone (personal
849 Communication, 3 February 2023).

850 To emphasis that if the president is not from Donga Matung, people from that Division will not accept or
851 respect was in essence reiterating the fact that Donga Mantung wants to be a state within a state.

852 Today, the union between English speaking and French speaking Cameroonians created in 1961 is suffering
853 from socio-political crises that continue to threaten the foundation and existence of that union as the bid for the
854 creation of an independent English speaking Cameroon state animates the political scene. In fact, leaders of the
855 amba revolution of 2016 hold swear that the two English speaking regions in Cameroon must have an independent
856 or autonomous state of their own. The future and way forward in this crisis remains the million dollar question
857 to answer. Yet, all these had its origin in the colonial concept of states vis-à-vis the African concept as explained
858 in this article. In a follow up of the elections of the bureau of the Junior Regional Council for the North West
859 on 3 February 2023, Nseka Ndi Anatol declared:

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861 The consequences in the communities till date are enormous.

862 12 VII. Conclusion

863 This study focused on the perception and manifestation of the concept of states in African communities and
864 most especially where groups of diverse people exist as one body in a state. It is what we also referred to here
865 as 'states within a state.' Here, the problem is not about the physical and geographical form of the state(s); it is
866 about the welfare and wellbeing of the people concern. Where oppression exist and the state instrument cannot
867 satisfy the needs of the citizens nor provide avenues for them to fetch for livelihood, separatist tendencies will
868 occur. No human by nature is ready to sustain torture and misery for long. One state system in the world which
869 is a succinct example of unity in diversity is the American federal structure. In fact the American federated
870 states show how people from diverse background and origin can cohabit peacefully under the same canopy called
871 a state.

872 The Canadian state model also portrays vividly how people with different cultural and linguistic background
873 can live together in the same house (state). In the minds of Canadians, it is clear that before they were made
874 French and English speakers, they were first and foremost Canadians. The desire to live harmoniously and
875 peacefully is compelling. It is even a fundamental right and priority to them. America (USA) and Canada
876 translate to the world how 'states within a state' can exist and move on with life. They can serve as inspiration
877 to Cameroon in the bid to solve the secession or separatist revolution imbued in the English speaking regions for
878 decades now.

879 In fact, the issue is about self-determination and how a people are treated within the context of states. In the
880 Union of two cultures since 1961, the English speakers claim to be passing through life challenges sandwiched
881 with torture, discrimination, misery and marginalisation (Ngwa, 2022: 846-853). The subaltern chiefs (leaders)
882 and people in Bafut had accused their Fon for not giving them 'dash.' Meaning, he did not care for their welfare
883 and well-being. Besides, instead of using the much power he had acquired since colonial rule to enable them live
884 a better life, he used it to oppress them. This gave the sub-chiefs and people reason to secede. Attempts in this
885 direction led to conflicts with enormous impact on peace building ventures in that community. Till date, peace
886 is a relative and fragile issue in Bafut. Yet many yearn for peace. The resolution of conflicts and the restoration
887 of lasting peace in Bafut and Cameroon as a whole requires a revisit of the concept of states within a state as
888 perceived and practised in Cameroon.

889 The concept of states is an issue of people coming together in a political structure or arrangement made
890 in the society. When this happens, the people are bound to cohabit, live and work together in the system.
891 Relations amongst the people are dictated by the perceptions they have towards the structure or arrangement.
892 Always conflict ensue in the relations to jeopardise peace and harmonious living because of the non-respect of
893 the fundamental rights of each other. This brings to light the question as to how some people cohabit, cooperate
894 and develop within the context of 'states within a state.' We earlier mentioned the USA and Canada as glaring
895 examples.

896 In this article, we defined a state as an organisation of human beings connected by a system of relations.
897 From precolonial to colonial and post-colonial era, we saw the various organisations or structures put in place
898 to regulate relations amongst the Bafut and the people around them. Bafut went through a number of internal
899 arrangements which built a strong centralised but diverse kingdom (fondom) under the leadership of an all-time
900 powerful fon. We equally saw the organisation made by the colonial masters-Germans and British hoping to
901 create harmonious and peaceful relations amongst the people.

902 In this bid, the native authority areas and the south eastern federation were created. On a general note,
903 we will say that European structures dealt a big blow to African political arrangements and relations. First,
904 European powers in Africa were more interested in the economic and geographical mapping of states (structures)
905 for exploitation. That is, carving out spheres or areas endowed with resources for personal administration, control
906 and exploitation. They overlooked the socio-political relations that constituted the bases of state formation in
907 Africa. This eventually generated conflicts in the African communities including Bafut.

908 The post independent states came up with reforms and new structures (such as the chieftaincy decree in
909 Cameroon) yet conflicts continued unabated. Peaceful cohabitation continued to suffer strains given that peace

910 efforts were confronted with deadlocks. Generally for peace to reign in Bafut, Cameroon and Africa as a whole,
911 some colonial relics, oppression and influence from ex-colonial masters must however be eliminated in the states
912 and communities. This will permit development and peace to reign. The sociopolitical crisis in the English
913 speaking regions of Cameroon depict a conflict of states whose form and origin emanated from colonial relics.
914 Since inception in 1961, there is no evidence to show that a proper follow up is made to ensure that the welfare
915 of the people in the union (with La republique du Cameroun) as manifested in their aspirations during the
916 reunification is respected. Besides, in Bafut we saw that the Fon's authority and control over other leaders and
917 people in his state (fondom) is justified by some accepted African concepts of state formation such as conquest
918 and alliances. We also saw that by African dictate, assimilation as a vector of state formation caused conflict at
919 the very inception of the state. Such a state is hardly stable for always the political system or structure is subject
920 to fragmentation and strains. The use of assimilation to consolidate power or control over people (especially in
921 a state that is built by federated structures within it), is a potential seed of discord in that community. Reason
922 why the perception of the concept of 'states within a state' has to be revisited in Bafut and Cameroon as a whole.

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924 The conflict in the Bafut fondom created confusion and made people to attempt a redefinition of the term states
925 in search for a better and convenient application that can bring peace and cordial relations in that community.
926 While Bafut suffers from this at a local level, Cameroon suffers at the national level given that a proper and
927 acceptable definition of 'states' amongst the people had not been ascertain. The state has moved from a Federal
928 Republic to a United Republic, back to a Republic and now to a Decentralised Republic. In fact the Cameroon
929 state needs to answer some questions as to whether colonies or groups of people conquered by French speaking
930 Cameroonians exist in the state. Second, is assimilation a proper policy to apply in the governance of a state
931 made up of people with diverse culture and linguistic background?

932 From an African perspective, it is clear that assimilation as a policy has hardly succeeded in consolidating the
933 form of a state nor its existence over time. It is more of a vector to conflict and destruction in state formation.
934 From 1961, the construction of a state or nation for Cameroon has been on the move. Two states with two
935 linguistic cultures (within a state) are involved in the process. History and current happenings have shown
936 that the process of consolidating the foundation and form of the state is still porous and shaky. The numerous
937 and sporadic socio-political crisis emanating from the English speaking part of the country portray a conflict of
938 states within a state. Peace ventures have been futile as deadlock takes an upper hand in the crisis. Separatists'
939 propaganda holds that secession is the ultimate solution to the problem. But the Bafut example also portrays
940 that there is still possibility to hold states or people under one canopy (state).

941 To succeed in any peace venture here, frank dialogue is necessary for the parties concerned to sit and discuss
942 freely and agree on the form of state that will ensure the general welfare and well-being of the people. It is never
943 too late to redefine the form of a state for the sake of peace and progress of a people. It takes just the will to
944 do it. 'States within a state' are not only sources of conflict within that community; they can also become good
945 potentials for rapid economic development, industrialisation, progress, unity and peace in the state. The USA
946 and Canadian states are glaring examples for Bafut and Cameroon as a whole to emulate.

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948 1 2 3

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²The Concept of 'States Within a State' Admist Conflict and Peace Building Ventures in Bafut, Cameroon

³The destination of the Fon on exile is controversial amongst researchers of Bafut origin. While Niba states that Abumbi was exile to Doual for 1 year, Aletum holds that he was exiled to Bota Island for two



Figure 1:



3b

Figure 2: Fig. 3b :



4a

Figure 3: Fig. 4a :



Figure 4:



Figure 5:



Figure 6:



Figure 7:



Figure 8:



6

Figure 9: Fig. 6 :



Figure 10:



7

Figure 11: Fig. 7 :

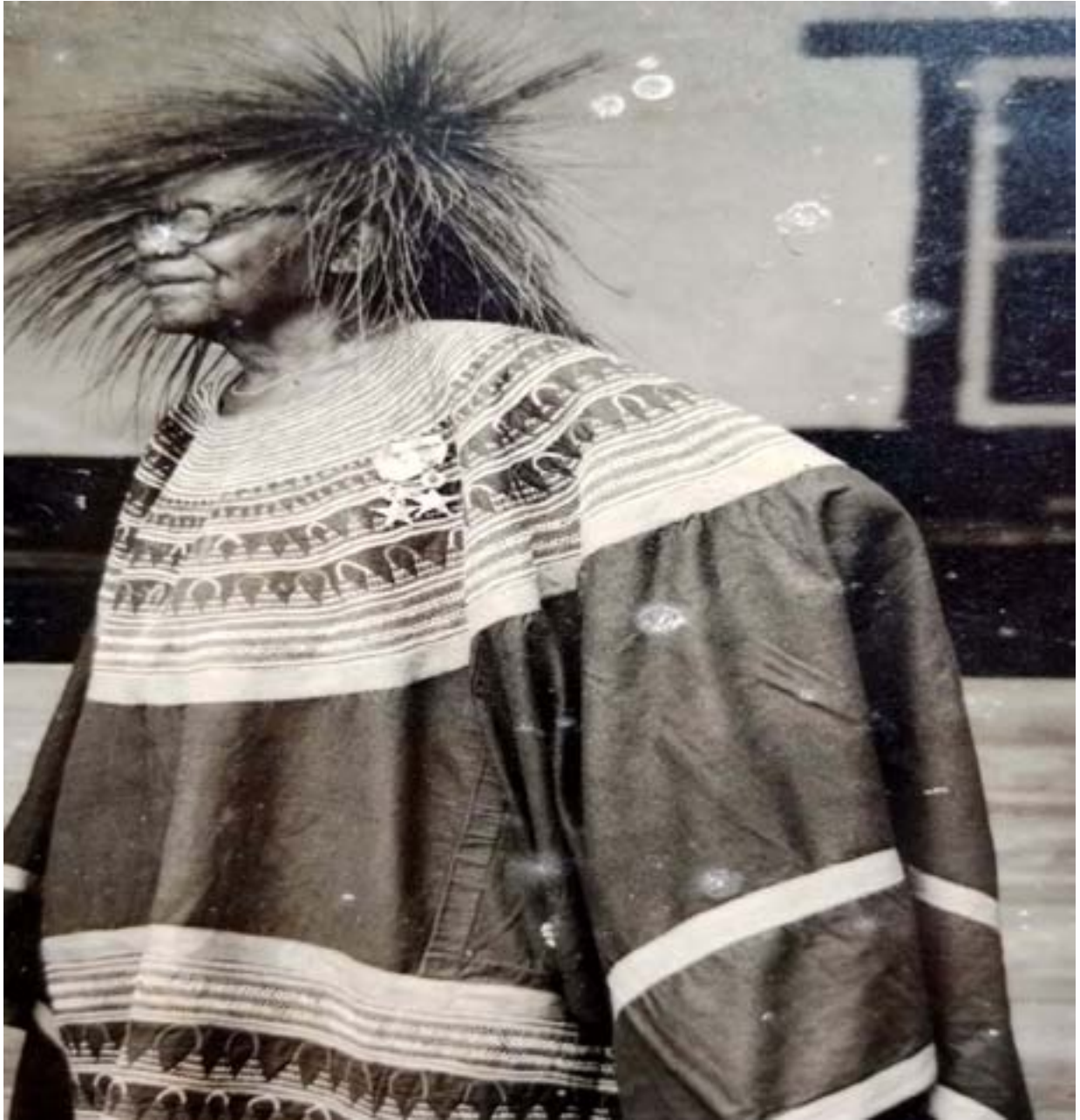
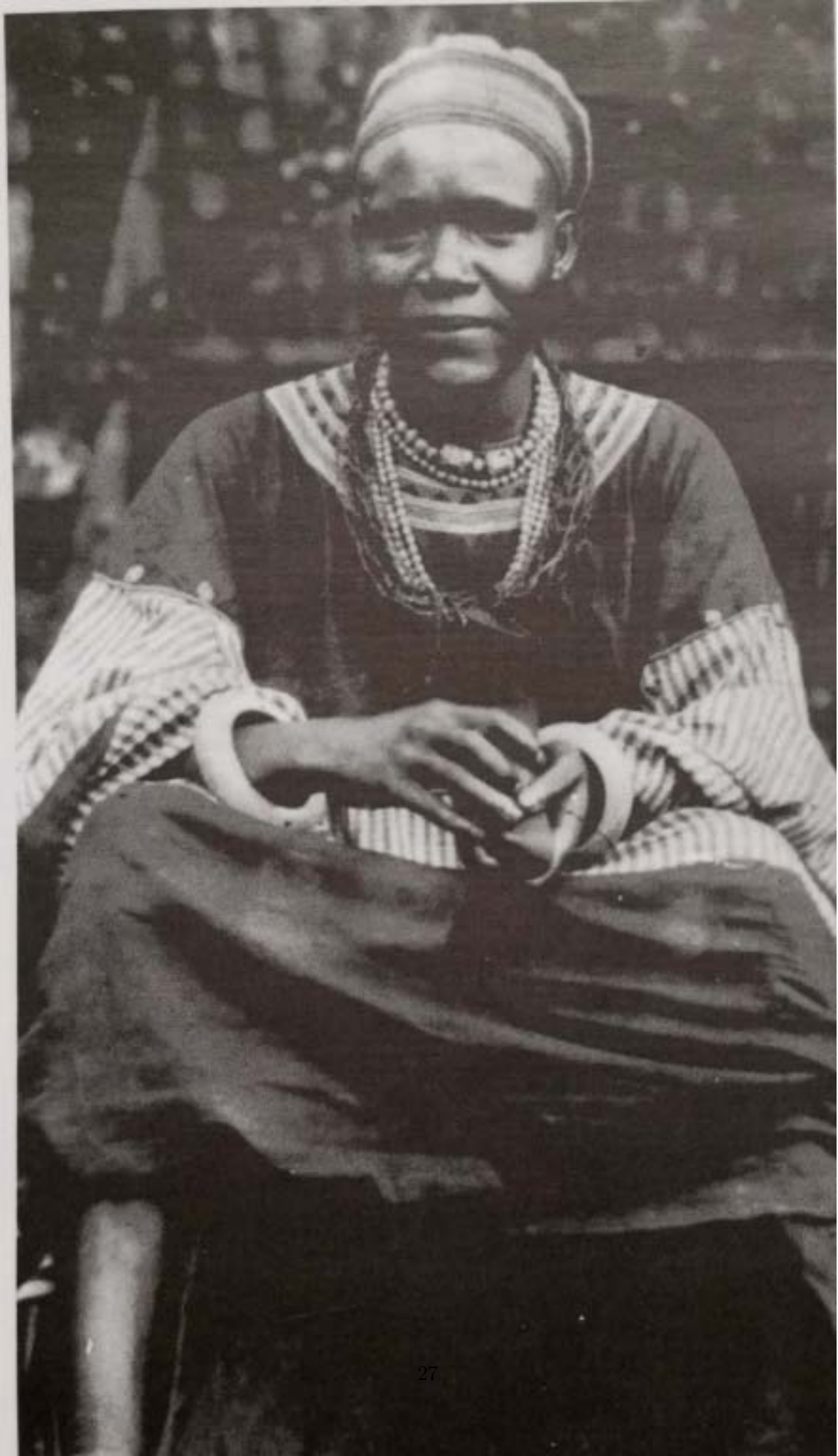
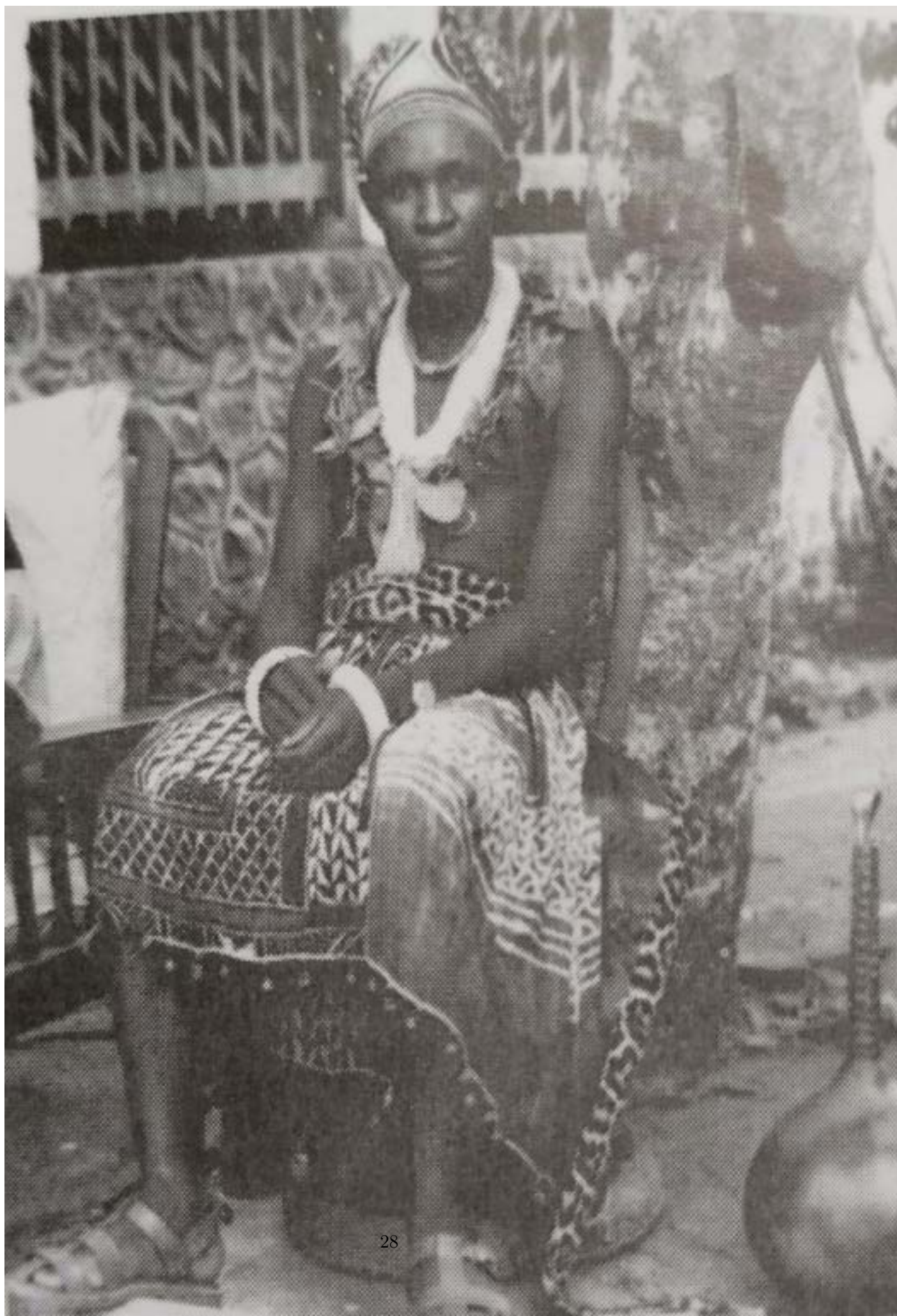


Figure 12:







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