

Peace-Building Mechanism Among the Widikum of the Bamenda Grasslands, Cameroon, 1870-2014

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ABSTRACT: *The quest for sustainable peace is the primary objective of every nation or society. For any society to progress, peaceful co-existence become imperative. This article examines peace building mechanisms employed by peace actors in efforts to promote peace among the Widikum of the Bamenda Grasslands, Cameroon. Though several actors to promote peace have been deployed to scale down the multifaceted land and or chieftaincy conflict in the area under study, their efforts have registered limited success as the conflicts kept resurfacing after peace agreement because most peace effort were constructed from “top to bottom” rather than from “bottom to top” to include the indigenous mechanisms, their custom and tradition and primarily the failure to use powerful and skilful experts as mediators. Both primary and secondary sources were used in the writing of this article. An analysis of the data reveals that the British approach was the best for using alternative methods of both conventional and indigenous mechanisms. The British scale down the chieftaincy and or land conflicts, as justice was dispensed based on the native custom and tradition and sustainable peace was observed.*

KEY WORDS: *Peace-building, actors, mechanism, Widikum and Bamenda Grasslands.*

INTRODUCTION

Peace-building efforts remains a major trends over the globe towards preventing conflict. This pre-occupied the Widikum ethnic group of Momo Division, North West Region of Cameroon. The multifaceted conflict in the area and Africa in general, is a menace to development and has created tensions in human relations. Thus detrimental to development. The destructive nature of the land and or chieftaincy conflicts prompted the indigenous peace actors and other actors to pull resources towards maintaining sustainable peace and peaceful co-existence. They have adopted both short and long term peace building measures and or mechanisms for social cohesion to prevent conflict in the areas of chieftaincy, land boundaries and other forms. Various peace-building mechanisms have been used among the Widikum speaking people in Momo Division to maintain peace before during and after conflicts.'

The Widikum by this study should not be limited only to the people of Wdikum Sub Division created by presidential decree No.92/187 of 1/09/1992 creating the Widikum-Menka Sub Division. It covers the

entire area of Momo Division. The Widikum are located in Momo Division, some 22km away South West from Bamenda, capital of the North West Region in the Republic of Cameroon. The Widikum Ethnic Group is one of the major ethnic group that constitute the North West Region of Cameroon with others found in Mezam, Menchum, Bamboutos, Lebialem and Manyu Divisions due to their history of origin. According to Nkwi, Momo Division is the Ethnic home of the Widikum where a majority of them are located with others unevenly distributed in other Divisions. To Nkwi, the Widikum constitute the people of Momo Division and include the Moghamo (Batibo), Menemo (Meta), Ngwo (Ngunu) and Ngie. This geographical area constitutes the five Sub-Divisions that make up Momo Division and include Mbengwi, Njikwa, Widikum-Menka, Ngie and Batibo Sub Divisions. This geographical disposition covers an area of 1792km² and as of 2005 population census, it had a total population of 138.693.

The Widikum are located in the North Western portion of Cameroon. It is found specifically in Momo Division of the North West Region. She is bounded geographically to the North by Menchum Division, the South by Manyu Division of the South West Region, to the East by Mezam Division and to the West by the Country called Nigeria. Consequently, she shares her Western boundary with a Nation, the Southern boundary with a Region and the rest with Divisions of the same Region. These are all elements that can influence her political and cultural institutions.

This article therefore examine the peace building attempts made by the Indigenous actors, the colonialists, post-colonial Cameroon Government, Non-governmental organisation, Faith based and civil society to promote peace among the Widikum.

INDIGENOUS PEACE-BUILDING MECHANISMS

Promotion of Communal Life

This approach of peace –building embraces both short term and long term peace-building process. This process of peace –building was most effective in pre-colonial period where individual ownership of resources such as land was not part of the socio-economic norms of the Widikum. In such a case, land as a resource was owned by the whole community under the guardianship of the Fon or chief. Every individual or family was given land for agriculture. There was nothing like “my” land rather was ‘our’ land. During pre-colonial period among the Widikum people there were no individual family or land boundary conflicts because land was seen as a communal property for the community. What existed was inter-village or inter-tribal land boundary problems caused by wars of expansion. The peaceful –coexistence experienced during the pre colonial times on land changed with the German colonialization. The European colonial masters altered the communal ownership of land and introduced individual ownership of land. The difficulties in adapting to this new land policy brought about the multifaceted land conflict among the Widikum such as the Batibo-Tiben land conflict, Anjing –Ngwo land conflict and Bali-Nyonga-Ngyembo (Meta) land conflicts today.²

Besides the promotion of communal land tenure system, birth and death ceremonies are part of the communal peace-building mechanisms among the peoples of Widikum particularly the Ngie, Ngwo, Menka, Moghamo and the Meta community. Birth and deaths are integral part of the social formation and the integration of the indigenous people to commune together in times of birthday were the sing praises to “God” and death ceremonies that they communed together for sorrow. Death ceremonies are one of the instances among the Widikum when communality and sociability are expressed as peace-building mechanism. The people stayed with the deceased for a week during which they mourned, ate, drank and danced together as one another’s keeper. This communal life style except of land which has changed has continue to promote peace and solidarity sprirt among the Widikum speaking peoples in MomoDivision.

Inter – Marriages

Inter-marriages were cardinal in peace –building amongthe Widikum speaking people in Momo Division. The contribution of inter-marriages in peace –building cannot be underscored. Inter-marriages among families, villages and between clans, tribes such as Ngie, Meta, Menka, Ngwo and Moghamo are encouraged. The significance of inter-marriages has gone a long way to help parties reconcile issues such as land and inter-clan or inter-tribal boundary conflicts. Inter-mariages creates an enabling environment for peaceful co-existence, interdependence, and the Ekoh –Ngwo land boundary conflict that was peacefully resolved due to respect for inherent ties.Inter-tribal marriages between the factions of Enongang and that of Mbafor have been encouraged to resolvethe Ashong chieftaincy conflict in Moghamo clan.³

Most importantly, inter-marriages tend to deconstruct ethnic and identity formations among the Widikum and rather neutralise notions of “we” versus “them’.The sharing of norms, values and institutions makes the people to engage in dialogue among them and appreciate cultural diversities.

Inter-marriages united in-laws and their larger social network among the Ngie-Menka, Moghamo and Meta,Ngwo and Menka. Marital conflicts were peacefully resolved through negotiations between in-laws often with efforts from the grooms’s family. In an interview, about 20 inter-marriages took place among Menka and Ngwo clan and Ekoh and Ngwo villages from 2000 to 2005.¹ Since then, inter-marriageshave increased among them and other villages of the Widikum.In contextualising the prevailing peace-building process among the Widikum. Mohammed support this view by noting that in Somalia:

When clans fight and there was death, steps were taken to organise the collection and payment of blood money. This she said was done by a marriage or marriages involving the two parties. This kind of marriage she observes occurs between a man who lost a brother

¹Duyan Marie. *A nested theory of conflicts warden in leadership (Washington DC.US institute of peace)*

² Fon Emene Micheal Tanga, aged 63, native in Menka,

³ Fon Edwin Mbah. *Batibo-Tiben land 1968-2010, resolution in history (the University of Bamenda, 2018)*

⁴Enene Michael Tanga aged 63 Native in Menka, interview in Meaka, April 20, 2021.

or close relative and a girl from tossing side. The goal of the marriage was to mitigate the wounds.

Achebe affirms a similar cultural practice among the Igbo of Nigeria where a young female was given in marriage as reparation to end conflict.²

The changing pattern of inter-marriages as a peace-building efforts among the villages and clans of Widikum was gradually dying-off for fear of the disadvantages involve such as divorce. Inter-marriage is more within or among members of villages than inter-clan marriages say Ngie and Ngwo.

Setting up of Traditional Councils.

The setting up of traditional councils was a mechanism to keep peace among the villages of Widikum. These councils can either be village councils or clan councils. The elders formed a dominant component of the customary mechanisms of conflict resolution and peace-building. In Ngie and Menka, the elders had three sources of authority that made them effective in maintaining peaceful relationship and community way of life. They had access to networks that went beyond the clan boundaries, ethnic identity and generations, and possessed super natural powers reinforced by superstition and witchcraft. Among the elders were found the diviners, oath swearers, heads of families and villages. The village council functioned as a court with broad and Flexible powers to interpret evidence, imposed Judgements and manages the process of reconciliation. The mediators led the discussion of the problem.³ Parties in conflict did not address each other, thereby eliminating direct confrontation. Interruptions were not allowed while parties presented their cases. Statements were followed by open deliberation which at times integrated listening to and cross examining witnesses, visiting disputes scene, seeking opinions and views of neighbours, reviewing past cases and holding private consultations. Thus avoid Judgement which was imposed from top to bottom with their aim of building sustainable peace. Our informant talked about the role of the village council in resolving conflicts and maintaining peace in the following words:

Our parents made us to understand that their methods of resolving conflicts was far more better than what was brought by the whiteman. Decisions were based on consensus and was rendered on the spot. From Ngie, Ngwo, Meta and Menka, conflict resolution involved forgiveness and reconciliation.⁴

In case a party was falsely accused of a crime such as murder or practicing witch craft in an interview Aba Andrew has this to narrate about Menka, the council order for catching of a squirrel by the accused and hand to the entire population to prove that the accused was innocent of the⁵ crime levied on him or her. For how this is done in Menka villages, the accused is accompanied by some selected members of the village to go to the uncles of the accused. The accused go along with a Jug of palm

²Anweting, Kevin Bok and Ogar Tony, Ogar. "Traditional Roles of African women in peace-making and peace building An evaluation in BGO SI: An inter disciplinary Journal of Human theory and praxis, vol 2018 (role in inter marriage), 48

⁵Aba Andrew, of Ahsong village in Menka, aged 70, councilor along traditional council, interview –February 2, 2021.

wine, a cock, a goat and other traditional items to present the matter to them. The selected members of the council of the said village must accompany the accused to make sure the accused narrates the story well. The uncles on the part will send some selected members or notables to accompany the accused back to the council of the said village were the matter was. A day was fixed for the hunt. The uncles of the accused provide a net to trap the squirrel. Both parties move to a nearby forest where the presume squirrel can be found. Two members were chosen to stand by the net and the rest go up the forest to drive or guide the squirrel to the net. The two by the net invokes as followings:

if you the accused is guilty of this crime, let no squirrel appear and if you are not guilty let the squirrel appear and enter without any difficulty or delay. After these words by those by the net, the others up the forest will start beating the bush towards the net. If the accused is guilty of the crime, the squirrel would not appear or might appear but will never enter the net, but if the accused is guiltless, the squirrel will appear and enter the net and those by the net will grab the net and carry the squirrel to the village council alive singing songs of success.

The accused was then declared free. He was rubbed with cam-wood, specially dressed with local cloth and beaths worn on him. If the squirrel was not caught, he was declared guilty and punished according to the tradition ranging from payments of goats, pigs, money and sometimes the accused. If he was accused for murder, he was asked to replace the deceased (dead) one with another person preferably a girl (a girl because she might likely give birth to another child who will be named after the deceased).⁶

A case in point was Ajang Jacob of Atong Village who was accused of poisoning the son of Anyi Joseph to death in the late sixties. This matter dragged for several months taking all necessary measures as mentioned earlier. At last it was resolved that to catch a squirrel was the final verdict. This was agreed by both parties, villages and uncles of Ajang Jacob. After all necessary arrangement had been made, a day was fixed for the hunt. People selected from both parties went to a nearby forest set the net, beats the forest and no squirrel appeared. The people then transferred to another part of the forest. Here they succeeded in catching the squirrel. I can assure you if you saw or witness the ambiance and happiness you can only compare it to a political rally or church rally. Ajang Jacob was rubbed with cam-wood, dressed and well decorated. He moved from one end of the village to another with a crowd of people following him. Anyi Moses was ashamed and never asked any further question by the council. The matter was at last solved. If the squirrel was not caught, the consequences would have been disastrous on the accused Ajang Jacob.⁷ The above peace-building mechanism has changed or gradually dying-off due to Christianity and modern laws especially as traditional councils now act as auxiliary to the government.

Ajaga Nji noted that among the people of Widikum such as in the Metta clan, it was common to find criminals in the shrines of Diviners or Fortunetellers. Frequent visitors to fortunetellers do so because it

⁶Interview with Aba Andrew of Along village aged 70 interview February 2, 2021.

⁷Interview with Aba Andrew of Ashong village, Eye –witness of this scene, February 2, 2021.

was held that, the witch doctors can manipulate Judgements in their favour. This practice and belief was gradually changing. Today, all civil cases in Tugi are tried at several levels. First at the level of the family and then at the level of the quarter if the plaintiff was not satisfied, the matter was taken to the traditional council. Individuals may take their cases directly to the village traditional council for hearing and adjudication.

Civil cases that were treated by Tugi traditional council included, farmer-grazier conflict, debts, land boundary conflict such as Ngyen-Mbo and Bali Nyonga, Tugi and Oshie.⁸ These were some of the most effective mechanism of the peace-building process among the Widikum in Momo Division. The Ngie, Ngwo, Meta and the Moghamo speaking people maintained that, inclusive dialogue and Reconciliation mechanism are parts of the peace-building process which served as an institution for maintaining law and order within the society. This peace building mechanism predominated the colonial period and is still functioning in some villages or areas. The Widikum speaking people such as menka place a high value on communal life. Maintaining positive relations within society is a collective task in which everyone was involved. On this cultural note a dispute between fellow members and or land boundary conflict was not merely perceived as a dispute between two or affairs of one's neighbours, but was regarded as an emerging conflict belonging to the whole community. On this basis therefore the indigenous people of Widikum saw that conflict can be prevented through the process of inclusive dialogue conflict based on the principle of consensus –building to regulate relationship between members of their community.

These aspects of inclusive dialogue and reconciliation between parties in conflict was exemplified in the leadership structures of the Widikum speaking communities designed to build consensus and sustainable peace among the people and between villages. There are councils of Elders or community leadership councils made up of both men and women. All members of the Widikum society whether big or small have a say in matters affecting the community.

With the passage of time, however colonialism and the onset of post-colonial government of Cameroon have undermined the adherence to this values system among most of the population. The peace-building initiative in the Widikum context involved a high degree of public participation in order to restore harmony and rebuild social trust, the general satisfaction among the public, in particular the disputants. The process therefore allows members of the public to share their views and to make their opinion known through a public assembly such as a clan council or village council, where the elders (king makers) chief and other are supervising the reconciliation process who have an advisory function with respect to the chiefs, listen to the views of the members of the society who have a right to put questions to the victims, perpetrators and witnesses as well as make suggestions to the council owing to the emphasis placed on inclusive dialogue, reconciliation and participation of all before the final decision.

⁸ Nji, *A History of Tugi P. 109*

The Anjing –Baraka land boundary conflict of 1982 at River Takele was resolved using inclusive dialogue and reconciliation in which the victims, perpetrators or disputants were examined and cross examined by the council through the following five stages.⁹ Baraka Villagers were encouraged to acknowledge responsibility or guilt for the wrongs done following the presentation of evidence by witnesses and the public and investigation by the clan council elders. The perpetrators were encouraged to repent and demonstrate genuine remorse. The Baraka were encouraged to ask for forgiveness from the Anjing people and Anjing people were also encouraged to show mercy and grant forgiveness to the perpetrators. The parties especially the perpetrators (Baraka) opinion were sorted if they were satisfied with the decision and were asked to pay some compensation to Anjing for destroying their crops as a symbolic gesture that seeks to reinforce the genuine remorse of the perpetrator. In the final Judgement, An act of reconciliation between the representatives of the victims and the representatives of the perpetrators was signed through a ceremony, were palm wine was poured in a traditional cup and both parties asked to give each other to drink to symbolize the psychological bitterness that had existed in the minds of the parties during the land conflicts to show that effort will be made to transcend this bitterness in order to restore harmony rebuild trust and an end to the conflict.

Today, there were ongoing efforts to revive this way of thinking as a means of promoting more sustainable peace among the villages of Widikum by using consensus. Inclusive dialogue and reconciliation to peace-building amidst the multifaceted conflicts in the area in recent years fanned by the individualistic values of self's interest of the circular world. Therefore, this indigenous peace building initiatives of Widikum go to support those scholars of the views that effective peace building in Africa and the world at large must consider, cultural values grass root people, meaningful inclusive dialogue, forgiveness and reconciliation of parties than a wholesale importation of Euro-centric culture of conflict and peace-building.¹⁰

To further promote inclusive dialogue and reconciliation among the Widikum, for instance in Acha- Tugi of Meta clan, Fon Mbakwa II has reserved a quarter for the Fulani and has appointed a quarter head of the Hausa and cattle Fulani to facilitate administration and dialogue with these group of immigrants. Sanyere was a quarter in Acha –Tugi allocated to the Hausa community by Fon Andreas Forwah Mbakwa II in 1951 and of recent ArdoNubu as quarter head. To further promote the principles of participation, reconciliation and inclusiveness of disputants in the traditional council, Ajaga Nji noted that, among the Tugi (Meta) the council members are further divided into “benches” so that 3-5 members of the council is responsible for cases brought before the council. In a sease, the structure of benches was similar to the present structure of the magistrate court in Mbengwi where there was a court I, court II and court III with different presiding Judges with equal force of law.¹¹

⁹Adu Gabriel Aged 70 years chairperson of Anjang –Menka Traditional council interview February 22, 2021.

¹⁰David J. Francis (dited) peace and conflict in Africa p. 70.

¹¹Nji.A *History of Tugi*, 98.

Formation of Local Indigenous Consultative Commissions and Mediators

In order to effectively managed conflicts and promote peace among the Widikum such as Ngie, Ngwo and Menka. There was the formation of local indigenous consultative commissions and mediators established to prevent and mediate over cases of conflicts such as land and chieftaincy. In this way, mediators or commission members usually included are always indigenous people seen as experts with a lot of the richcultural values and experience. In the case of Ngwo-Fulani farmer –Grazier conflict of 1970, a Ngwo –Fulani Farmers Grazier commission was created by the Fon of Ngwo to handle the problems that affected farmers and graziers. The commission was headed by a president, secretary and nine other elected members as it was called “The Eleven Man Consultative Committee”. The main function of this commission was to promote peaceful co-existence between Ngwo farmers and Fulani graziers to allocate land for either Grazing or farming to any person who applies for such land. This commission works through the consultation with the Ngwo traditional council and above all, the Fon, Colonel Hans Anagho II as Chairman. In a case were the farm was damaged by the cattle of either the Fulani or indigene, the consultative commission invite the farmer and the graziers to the farm where crops have been damaged. While there, evaluation was done and the grazier asked to compensate the farmer.

In December 2000, a farmer -Grazier conflict was registered between Akumu mirriam and Adu Banu all of Nkun quarter in Ngwo. The matter was brought before the Ngwo traditional council. The finding revealed that Adu Banu encroached on the piece of farm land which was not meant for Grazing. It was also found out that instead of settling the matter with Akumu Mirriam Banu instead went to the D.O (third) party without passing through the Ngwo traditional council. The traditional council together with the Land Consultative BoardCommission concluded that the farm land was not a grazing land and did not belong to Adu Banu. The perpetrator was to pay a fine of 5000frs, 7000frs as charges for crops damaged and Adu Banu was allocated another piece of land for grazing. The manner in which the farmer grazier conflict was solved prevented the spirit of revenge and called for reconciliation between both parties. Very little amount was paid as compensation and Adu Banu was allocated another piece of land by the consultative commission.¹²

Mediation

Mediation was a vital mechanism of conflict and peace-building among the local indigenous Widikum communities. Mediation means bringing on board an external mediator to manage and resolved conflict. In 1982, the Tanka –Echibit Npeng land boundary conflict resurfaced and attracted the invitation of external mediators from other neighbouring villages of the Widikum speaking people such a Larinji, Akanunku traditional rulers. In a round table meeting made up of representatives of both villages of the conflict and in the presence of the chiefs of Akanunku Anja Ake, Chief Sampson Timbo of Larinji, and Chief Etchu Daniel of Ambelle as mediators. After a series of consultations and deliberations to break the

¹²Interview with Ampy David secretary Ngwo Traditional council April 10 2021

stalemate of the land conflict, the external mediators concluded that, both parties should go for an oath as demanded by the custom and tradition. Joseph Kipathy was to swear for Tanka and Chief Tandu Amo for Echibit. In a general Assembly of Menka clan council, the terms of the oath were recited out as the symbol of truth and Justice. The terms of the oath were recited as follows;

That if the man survived for 12 months, it means his claim that the land belongs to Tanka or Echibit is true, but if any of his direct children die before the expiration of the 12 months, it means he made false claims.¹³

In 1982 the oath was administered and Joseph Kipathy of Tanka undertook the oath swearing that the land belongs to Tanka people. When it was the turn of Chief Tandu Amo of Echibit, he refused acknowledging that the land belongs to Tanka. But Chief Anja Ake of Akanunku village rejected and swore on behalf of Echibit Mpeng claiming that the land belongs to Echibit. In the final analysis the chief Judge of the traditional Institution of the three clans declared that the land belonged to Tanka village considering that the chief of Echibit refused to swear the oath acknowledging that the land belong to Tanka.

Worth considering, chief Anja Ake of Akanunku village in Etow clan was accused of taking bribe, considering that Tanka and Echibit Mpeng are neighbouring villages and must maintain good relationship, the Echibit people were allowed to farm on this piece of land knowing that the land belong to Tanka and to respect the decision of all the chiefs, Abeng and other traditional institutions.

Formation of Cultural and Development Associations

The promotion of cultural and development association was another aspect of peace-building mechanism among the Wikikum in resolving conflicts among them. This saw the emergence of associations such as Ashong student and Ex-student Association (ASESA) 1970, Moghamo student association (MOSA), Menka Cultural and Development Association (MENCUDA), Etow Cultural Development Association (ECUDA) Meta Cultural and Development Association (MECUDA) and many others were formed primarily to promote cultural development, togetherness and building peace.

In 1970, Ashong student and Ex-student Association was formed with head office at Wumuganyi. Circumstances with regard to chieftaincy conflict influenced its formation. Following the death of Enongang I in 1968 and the subsequent recognition of Mbafor II, it was not common to see free interaction between the Enongang and the Mbafor. The parents who were involved tried to disseminate their thoughts and stances to their off-spring. Ashong youths thought that they could do better than their parents to promote unity and were not expected to fan the division of the village created ASESA. Its principles preached neutrality vis-a-vis the chieftaincy issue to its members. Within its fourteen years of existence 1970 -1994, it attempted to promote peace in Ashong by preaching neutrality of its members to the

¹³Interview with Simon Tanyi aged 80, Member of Abeng institution Tanka, 10 December 2021.

Cheftaincy conflict and promotion of unity, made sure that the head quarter of the association was hosted in a neutral ground at Wumuganyi. In an event where the presence of the chiefs was imperative, the organizers invited “two” or No chief. It was easy to see two seats prepared for two chiefs of the same village.

During human investment campaigns organised by the association it was unanimously agreed that no work was to be carried out in any of the palaces. Any important achievement of the association was dedicated to the two chiefs. In 1987, ASESА won the Moghamo students association (MOSA) football trophy and it was presented to the two chiefs of lower and upper Ashong before being kept by the Association president Mbah Hassan Ndiso as to get them reason forwards one united Ashong in the preservation of peace.

The emergence of Menka Cultural and Development Association and Meta Cultural and Development Association was created. Thesetwin associations were aimed at promoting peace, culture, development and unity of its people. In Menka, MENCUDA was headed by Ego Thaddeus of Wando and it secretary General was Aba Jean Claude of Etow clan. In 2014, the association organized a general meeting in Bamenda calling for both Wando and Etow people to unanimously choosed a neutral ground to host the headquarter of the would be Menka Sub Division but failed. The Association greatly contributed to the construction of the road linking kwafung –mpeng to Akanunku. This greatly went a long way to break the stalemate of the Etow –Wondo inter-clan disputes.

In Meta clan, MECUDA encouraged annual festivals such as the Yam festival in Tugi which rallied the sons and daughters together. This was usually organized between August and September but is now held in December every year. The yam Festival usually last for seven weeks. This goes a long way to promote peace in Tugi and the Widikum in general.

The land case inspection mechanism is a veritable aspect of peace building and conflict resolution among the Widikum indigenous community. This peace –building mechancism is usually used by quarter or village councils. This method was usually applied when it had to do with land boundary demarcation between two parties or more. As such, the quarter or village council then decided to visit the land in dispute. Before the inspection was done, the parties were charged to pay their land inspection fee. During the inspection the surrounding neighbours or those who shared common land boundary with the disputed parties were included in the commission of the land inspection. Thereafter the final decision is taken. This peace –building approach was the most common method used in the land dispute between Anjing and Baraka at river Takele and also used to bring peace between Anjing and Ngwo.¹⁴ Several peace building initiatives have been launched among the Widikum to preventsuccession disputes over chieftaincy and settlement of chieftaincy conflicts. A general forum for all the chiefs among the Widikum villages has been established called Momo Fons union with sub branches established aimed to promote culture and prevent chieftaincy problem. On 26th March 2001, the office of the piesident General of the Momo Fon’s

¹⁴Akon Traditional Institutions and conflict management page 83.

union wrote a counter letter to the Divisional officer for Widikum and the menka traditional rulers to strictly respect hereditary succession with regards to the chieftaincy dispute in Akanunku village reminding them to carefully look into the matter before the installation of Fon menti Ignatius as the legitimate succession to the theme.

The union also reminded them of their role not to derate any chieftaincy speaking people in Momo Division (see Appendix 5) other Sub-unions have been established such the Widikum Menka Fons union with Fon Menti Ignatious wando of Akanunku as the General President.¹⁵The activities rendered by the Momo Fons Union and the king Makers to strictly respect succession laws has gone a long way in preventing multiplicity of chieftaincy conflict in the area.

Land case Inspection Strategy

This peace-building strategy was used by the village or traditional council. This peace-building initiative was usually taken when it had to do with land boundary demarcation between two parties among and or between two villages. In such a case other nearby villages are invited to visit the disputed land as witnesses or mediators. Before the inspection was done, the parties in dispute were charged to pay their land inspection fee in cash or in kind. In such inspection exercise the surrounding neighbours or those who shared common land boundary with the disputed parties were included in the commission of the land informant or eye witnesses. Thereafter, the final decision was proclaimed. This strategy was used to promote peace in the land dispute between Anjing and Baraka villages and also between Anjing and Ngwo. This strategy of peace initiative has remained unchanged among the Widikum.

Oath Taking Strategy

This peace-building strategy was widely used among the Widikum speaking people of Ngie, Meta, Moghamo and Ngwo clans. This strategy was very effective in pre-colonial period and was fast dying today. This method was used when the parties in dispute and their witnesses gave false information about the issue at stake. They were called upon to undertake an oath swearing exercise as demanded by the custom and tradition after which the final judgment was given. This peace –building strategy was used to settle the land boundary dispute between Tanka and Echibit. Through oath, the Fon of Echibit Tandu Amo refused to swear or undertake the ordeal acknowledging that the land belong to Tanka village.¹⁶

The Kola-nut and Palm Wine Strategy.

This method of peace building strategy was still very effective and used among the communities of Ngie, Meta and Moghamo people of Widikum today. This strategy was adopted to dispute such as marital

¹⁵HRH Fon Menti Ignatuis of Akanunku president General Widikum Fon union interview February 20, 2021.

¹⁶Interview with Emmanuel Tiku of Tanka aged 80 years Tanka, December 2021.

conflicts and the practice of witchcraft. This method involved the used of three halves of kola nuts which was thrown down and some palm wine poured on it. If two of the three halves of the kola-nuts faced upwards, and the other halves downward then, it meant that the party concerned had spoken the truth and if it does not then the party told a lie. Through this indigenous method of peace-building, disputes were resolved as the custom and tradition demanded. It was believed that, through this strategy, the ancestors were the ones who had proclaimed judgment. Talla support this view of peace-building used in the Mbum community of the North West Region of Cameroon.¹⁷

Election Method or Strategy

This strategy of peace building was usually applied only to chieftaincy conflicts. By this method, only King makers were the electorates who were responsible for the enthronement and dethronement of a Fon in case the succession rights were not respected. As such, elections were conducted by within the king makers for new chief and the majority carried the day. This method was used in November, 1997 to resolve the chieftaincy dispute in Akanunku village between Lucas Akoko and Ignatius Menti in which Ignatius Menti was voted as Fon of Akanunku.¹⁸

PEACE-BUILDING EFFORTS BY COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION

Several attempts were employed by the Germans and British colonial governments among the Widikum in resolving cases relating to conflicts such a chieftaincy conflicts. Even though these efforts in maintaining peace was aimed essentially to provide a conducive environment to exploit the people for the metropolitan interest.

German Peace Building Mechanism

In the case of land boundary disputes between Bali-Nyonga and the Widikum village of Ngyen –Mbo and Ngyen –Muwa, the German demarcated boundaries by planting boundary pillars which favoured Bali. The Germans Favoured Bali because the Fon of Bali collaborated with the German colonial administration in achieving their colonial desires.¹⁹ In other to resolved matters relating to land dispute, she introduced the concept of Individual ownership of land by imposing Artificial boundaries and granting land certificates as individual claim to land.

To reinforce this, in 1896, she passed a series of land laws which declared all unoccupied land belonged to the colonial government. This therefore introduced the idea of land registration as opposed to the communal land ownership through purchase and lease.²⁰ The above measures of peace –building introduced by the Germans did not help to bring lasting peace among the village communities of the

¹⁷Talla. "Raffia Palm Wine and Land Dispute in the Mbum land of Cameroon"7.

¹⁸Interview with Paul Eric of Ekoh. Aged 65, Ekoh, June, 2021.

¹⁹Mbah "Disruptive colonial boundaries page 5.

²⁰ Harry Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons 1884-1914: A Case Study in Modern Imperialism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938.

Widikum Primarily because Germans attempts in resolving land conflict turned to favour friendly groups such as the Bali –Ngonga. This go further to justify why the Widikum villages of Guzang, Ngyen-muwa, and Ngyen –Mbo rejected the peace-deal of the Germans land demarcation. Because the approach adopted by the Germans tended to unjustly take land belonging to the Widikum villages and given to the Bali-Nyonga. This explain why from 1916 when Cameroon ceased to be under the Germans, the British adopted a more practical peace-building mechanisms to correct these errors.

British Peace Building Mechanisms

From 1922, the British colonial administration took over control of Widikum after the partition deal between the British and the French colonial governments. The British colonial Government came to witness the multifaceted land and chieftaincy conflicts created by the Germans between village groups, in the Bamenda grassland and Widikum villages in particular. On this note, the British colonial government adopted a comprehensive practical peaceful approach in resolving the local conflict caused by the Germans.

In an attempt to resolve the disputes such as Bali- Guzang land boundary dispute created by the Germans, the British colonial administration decided to follow the footsteps of the Germans to demarcate boundaries so as to resolve the confusion created by the Germans. The conflict between Bali-Nyonga and the Widikum village over land boundary stemmed from the fact that in 1928, the British colonial administrator Smith decided to intervene to resolve the land boundary conflict.

Mbah noted that, in 1928, J.S Smith Assistant District officer for British decided to intervene to resolve a German created land boundary dispute between Widikum village of Guzang and Bali-Nyonga. The boundary demarcation exercise by Smith was not satisfactory to the Guzang community of Widikum who petitioned the administration for an adjustment, claiming that part of its land containing raffia groves, fruits trees ancient places of sacrifices /worship graves and traditional monuments had been left on the Bali-Nyonga side of the boundary and that Smith failed to respect the entire stretch of the territory preferring to stand on the road-side and point to where he thought the boundary was supposed to be. In a series of petitions the village of Guzang of Moghamo clan of the Widikum people requested British administrators to review Smith's decision of the land boundary demarcation.²¹

This complaint was looked upon and the boundary demarcation exercise re-done by the British resident officer who observed that Guzang had good reasons for making its claim. He remarked that the decision reached by Smith was in some respects flawed, and that in so far as the decision regarding the conflict was an administrative one, Guzang had the right to pursue legal action in a haste to demarcate that boundary Smith failed to diligently survey the disputed territory and carved out a boundary that was a significant step initiated by the British resident to peace-building between the warring parties on the disputed land.

²¹Mbah, "Disruptive Colonial Boundaries"

Despite the resident's observations, the smith boundary was maintained and has remained a sources of continuous conflict between both villages.²²

Inter-Tribal Boundary Settlement Ordinance 1933

In 1933, the British colonial government established a more practical and comprehensive mechanism or approach of peace building in Southern Cameroons. This new law gave an undue participation of the natives, customary law or participation with European laws. Thus introduced the concept of an alternative conflict resolution approach to peace-building. This went a long way to reduce the intensity of boundary conflicts among the Widikum villages and clans such as Moghamo, Ngie, Ngwo and Meta.

Before 1933, they realised that solution to the multiplicities of land boundary conflict such as farmer-grazier conflict between Ngwo Farmers and the Fulani cattle graziers, Anjing –Ngwo boundary and Ekoh –Ngwo boundary conflicts lay in boundary demarcations using European ideals of cairns and pillars planted on demarcated boundaries. By 1933, the futility of such a policy was realised and the entire system was over hauled.

In 1917, this innovation had long begun when G.S Podevin established an instructional court in Mamfe and later in Bamenda Division to which Widikum people of present day Momo Division was administered. The aim of such court was for the training of indigenous Chiefs. This new innovation was to allow the native authorities adequately handle disputes relating to land in the Native Authority Courts such as grades ABC and D before final resolutions.

Judging from this innovation that in 1933, the British introduced the inter-tribal boundaries settlement ordinance (ITBSO), which adopted alternative peace settlement by combining the Native Court (NC) and administrative procedure in the resolution of boundary disputes with conventional laws.²³

Under this new law, Native Courts examined disputes at low levels and were presided over by clan chiefs such as the Moghamo and Menka clan councils while other Native Authorities sat on the bench as Judges. The courts president was elected each session, although once elected he could hold office for as long as his conduct and management of affairs of the court were good. Native customary courts were given a hand in the resolution of land boundary disputes because British authorities presented, rightly that they knew more about the history and intricacies of disputes in their Native Authority (NA) areas. Thus avoided the situation of conflict resolution mechanism of "Top -Bottom" approach which will not yield the desired peace. The British adopted the bottom-up approach of boundary settlement. This explains why during the British colonial rule from 1922-1961, the intensity of land boundary conflicts reduced among the villages

²²NAB File N0. 9570 f/b (1), 1943 5-8

²³NAB File No C 64 9/f/a (1) 1933.

and clans of Widikum speaking peoples, and only increased during post-independence period. This was because the British adopted a more practical approach to peace-building.

In the case of the land boundary dispute between Andek and Tezie in Ngie²⁴ Clan of Widikum, the Chiefs presented their views in a native court and some degree of peace was observed between both villages. This report is contained in Ngie Native court case N0 8/5/59. In situations where one native court such as Ngie Native Court and Moghamo Native court had to adjudicate on a land dispute between two chiefdoms belonging to two Native Authority and administrative officer of British colonial government had to sit in as president of the court, and this was stipulated by native court ordinance order in council N0 19 of 1934.²⁵

The Inter-Tribal Boundary Settlement ordinance had an advantage in determining a boundary between two or more communities such as the dispute between Ekoh and Ngwo clan, with registration date 5 October 1938 in favour of Ekoh.²⁶ Today peace reign between both villages. (See Appendix 6). In the final decision the land boundary disputes was decided as follows: As large Raphia grove called Ekiti-Cha or Ekingu located south of Abamwa hill was given to Ngwo and the Raphia fove called Ekileku or Nimwasa, located to the land was given to Ekoh (Ekaw) and also the Raphia grove at the source of the Ajiguje stream to Ekoh.²⁷ This decision was taken in the presence of the village heads of Akanunku, Atong, Alumfa as witnesses.

The strength of inter-Tribal boundary settlement ordinance in peace-building and conflicts resolution was that, indigenous or local people's opinions matter, aimed to maintain sustainable peace, administrative officers were required by law to inquire into and settle disputes between chiefdoms in the region.²⁸ A resolution for a case could only be proclaimed after the completion of a thorough process of fact finding and collection of evidence from opposing groups. In the process; a number of things were taken into considerations by the fact finding commission officer before deciding the case. These included, History of the dispute, effective occupation, relative population numbers, relative amount of land held by claimant villages, relative distances from area of dispute, equity as well as accessibility to roads and markets.²⁹ Another significant strength of inter-Tribal boundary settlement ordinance to peace –building among the Widikum was that, in situations where native court judgement was unsatisfactory to one party such as the Tezie –Andek land boundary conflict and Bali-Nyonga –Ngyen-Mbo land conflict, that party had the right to request a review from a D.O, the President, or the Governor. Application for review had to be submitted not more than thirty days from the date of judgement. A D.O.s decision had a legal backing, but was not

²⁴NAB File N0 of /b/19/2/4, Title inter-community land dispute between the V.H. of Andek and the V.H of Tezie in the Bamenda Division.

²⁵NAB File N0 2341 9f/b (1), 193829.

²⁶NAB File N0. Of /b (1938) 2 Title Ekaw (Ekoh) – Ngwaw (Ngwo) village, land dispute.

²⁷NAB File N0. 2456, of /b (1938), 2 Tittle Ekaw-Ngwaw and dispute, page 120.

²⁸NAB File N0. Of / a (12) 1964:13.

²⁹Mbah "Disruptive Colonial Boundaries", 12.

supposed to be affirmed by the President unless there were specific reasons why such affirmations should be done. Mbah affirms that if he the resident does affirms, he loses the opportunity to vary the decision or order a further inquiry and it must be expected that a case will occur.³⁰

The inter-Tribal boundary settlement ordinance (ITBSO) also safeguarded against injustices. By this ordinance, administrative officers must state reasons for any Judgement or decision taken. If after conducting the inquiries and unable to reach a settlement, a magistrate's court assured jurisdictional authority over the dispute. This situation usually occurs if there exist claims and counter claims over titles to land or where there were controversies about the history of the land disputes.

Claims by villages over land title was not under the competency of the ITBSO, because the ordinance could not award title to land and therefore couldnot be used in awarding land to any village-group. Issues regarding land title and award had procedures which were cumbersome and had to pass through rigid legal scrutiny, because in most cases, title awards were irreversible. Individual rights of title to parcels of land on contested territory were not affected by the ITBSO decision.³¹

On the above analysis the British inter-Tribal boundary settlement ordinance enacted in 1933 aimed to remedy conflicts in British southern Cameroon ingeneral and the Widikum speaking people in present day Momo Division went a long way in maintaining sustainable peace in the area of study up to 1952 when it was replaced. The ITBSO succeeded to a great extent to remedy land conflict among the Widikum as it uses both indigenous and Euro-centric peace building measures. This gave room for greater indigenous participation to provide first class eye –witnesses before the final decision. After 1952 when it was replaced and from 1961 after independence, many land boundary conflicts resurface among the Widikum due to the weaknesses of the new peace –building mechanisms employ by the post independence Cameroon government. It should be recalled that, British efforts to peace-building among the Widikum such as Ngie was not limited to land. There were other areas of conflicts such as chieftaincy conflict and farmer –grazier conflict. British efforts with building peace during their colonial period in this areas of conflicts will be analysed below.

German Peace-building Mechanism to Chieftaincy Conflict

German approach toward chieftaincy conflict among the Widikum speaking people in particular and Cameroon in general was both cruel and soft. German policy toward chieftaincy institution has generally been described as harsh, brutal and repressive.³²In Ngie and Meta clans where the people rallied under their chief against the Germans, the German colonial government brutally suppressed the revolts. In places such as Ashong in Moghamo clan, the German however showed concern to the Fon of Ashong Neg Enoh collaborated with Zintgraff upon his arrival in Ashong January 12th 1889. The Fon sent kola nuts with

³⁰NAB File N0. 2124 of/b, 1939: 20 -22, 25-29.

³¹Mbah "Disruptive colonial Boundaries" 12.

³²Rudin, *German in the Cameroons*"214.

escorts to bring him to his palace and gave him a house. The next day, many of the surrounding village chiefs came to Ashong to oblige NegEnoh to kill Zintgraff he down played them and instead enfered a “Pact” and exchanged gifts with zintgraff.³³Zingraff stayed in Ashong village of Widikum speaking people for four days, and people came from far and near to set eyes on the first “white man”³⁴

The frist approach adopted by the German toward peace-building among the Widikum was in the case of Ashong chieftaincy conflict between Akannanda and Tebi. Given that Akamanda was supported by the Germans, he succeeded the throne. Later, Akamanda fell outwith his Germans friend because he was accused by a German captain Menzel for murder. In 1912, Akamanda was brought to Bamenda were hee was executed 6 weeks later in the presence 21 Moghamo chiefs who were called to Bamenda to witness the death of Akamanda.³⁵ In this light the German approach in resolving the chieftaincy Conflict in Ashong was cruel and repressive.

To show concern to those traditional rulers and their institution who facilitated in German exploitation for instance, the German colonial Authorities often called on local officials to show respect for chieftaincy and warned administrators against whipping traditional rulers or weakening their authority over their people.³⁶Tohnji, supports this view by noting that according to the 1913 decree, no chief was to be removed from his throneand no new person was to be appointed chief except with the Governor’s authorization.³⁷

Under German rule traditional rulers among the widikum such as Fon Enoh Tenboec of Ashong, Fon Anja Ake of Akanunku were given new roles as intermediaries between their subjects and colonial administration. As auxiliaries of the colonial administration, the Fons of Ngie, Meta, Moghamo and Ngwo clans transmitted government orders to their people and ensured their execution, administered justice, maintained law and order, collect taxes and provide labour for German projects. As such they were given 5 to 10 percent of the taxes collected as compensation. This went a long way to maintain peace among the villages of Widikum in particular and German Kamerun in general.

Nfi and Adig commenting on German administrative organization of chieftaincy, they posit that the German amalgamated small chiefdoms with large chiefdoms to consitutite a single head. Under this arrangement, some chiefs and village heads were appointed as local authorities over their rivals. The result was the creation of the concept of paramountcy.³⁸ Chilver affirms with Nfi has he stated that the idea of paramountcy was first experiemented in the Bamenda grassfields, when over thirty (30) chiefdoms, mostly

³³Nkwi. *Traditional Diplomacy*, 101.

³⁴ O’neil. *History of Moghamo, 1865 -1940, Authority and change in a Cameroon Grassfiled*, 102.
NAB File N0. /B/1971/1j. the Ashong chieftaincy Dispite

³⁶. Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons*, 183.

³⁷Tohnji, Chiefs (Traditional Rulers in Anglophone Cameroon and Modern Governance”, 82.

³⁸Ibid

Widikum chiefdoms such as Ngyenmbo, Ngyenmuwa, Guzang were put under Fon Galega I. of Bali – Nyonga.³⁹

British Peace-building Mechanism to Chieftaincy Conflicts

The German exit from Kamerun and Widikum in particular opened the way for the division of the territory by France and Britain primarily caused by the failed condominium. France took 4/5 and British 1/5 which was a narrow and disjointed strip of territory stretching from the North to the South along the border with Nigeria. Under the mandate Agreement, both powers were given the right by Article 9 of the League to administer their respective territories to their adjacent colonies⁴⁰

They were also to promote good government and respect native customs and traditions. These were the bases of the peace-building mechanism, the British employed in her own zone. For administrative convenience, Britain further divided her zone of Cameroon into British Northern and Southern Cameroons. British Southern Cameroon was administered as Southern and later into Eastern Region of Nigeria respectively to which Widikum was attached directly from Mamfe Division and later to Bamenda Division.

From 1961 to 1962, the British implemented peace-building mechanism relating to chieftaincy institutions to resolve conflicts inherited from the Germans. Some of these peace –building efforts were legal laws of ordinances and some of which were direct intervention and mediation by the British colonial officers. The British peace-building effort in Southern Cameroon was influenced by the Lugardian policy of Indirect Rule. This Policy can be defined simply as the colonial policy which sought to rule the colonial peoples through their traditional rulers and institutions. In this context, this policy was going to blend indigenous peace-building with modern British peace-building mechanisms so as to prevent conflicts. According to Tohnji, to make the policy effective in peace –building among the Widikum and Southern Cameroon in general, the British began to decree ordinances that regulated relationship between native Authorities and the British colonial administration through alternative peace-building mechanism as analysed below.

Native Authority Ordinance 1916

The native Authority ordinance of 1916 was legalized in Nigeria and had direct implication on Southern Cameroon and Widikum in particular. According to the ordinance, a Native Authority was any Chief that controlled extensive geographical space, recognized and commanded respect from its subjects. In applying this ordinance in Southern Cameroon, the British first identified those chiefs that had been recognized and supported by the Germans. They also indebted those chiefs that had command over a wider area and ruled over a big population.

³⁹ Chilver “Paramountcy and Protection in the Cameroon” 485-489.

⁴⁰ Victor Julius Ngoh. *The Untold Story of Cameroon Reunification*.....

After, taking stock, a thorough and systematic study of the people and their traditional institutions such as chieftaincy they discovered, they existed chiefs who ruled over large areas and population such as Bali, Bafut, and they were chiefdoms who ruled over small areas and population. In this light native authority were categorized into first class, second class and third class.

Less organised centralised societies and ethnic groups such as Widikum which include Mohamo, Ngie, Meta, the Native Authority was categories into second and third category of chiefs. The native authority Area comprised of a Native Authority, Native Authority Court, and Native Authority Treasury. The duties of chiefs included to maintained law and order, collection of taxes, reinforcement of decisions and order from the British. Fon Mbafor I of Ashong in Moghamo, and Chief Anja Ake of Akanunku in Menka were some of the Native Authorities who collected taxes for the British and were given 10% as compensation. On December 8th1927, the British provided a grade “D” court for Menka where most of it members were chiefs.⁴¹

To further strengthen chieftaincy institution among the Widikum speaking people such as Meta, Moghamo, Ngie and Ngwo, and promote peace –building during the British mandate, British had a philosophy that it was easier to break or destroy a chief than to make one.⁴²In 1947 the Senior Divisional officer for Bamenda Division, FR Kay, warned his colleagues against tampering with the position of chiefs when he cautioned that, “A cheif can be broken in twenty minutes, but it takes twenty years to make one”.The above short and long term peace-building measures employed during British colonial rule among the Widikum in particular and Southern Cameroon in general provided the conditions for peace not protest which existed during the British rule.

The peace-building mechanism employed by the British in the area under study was in strict compliance with Article 5 of the Mandate Agreement which enjoined the British and French to promote the principles of good government and respect for the custom and tradition of the native.

POST-COLONIAL PEACE-BUILDING MECHANISM

Peace-Building Mechanism on Land Conflicts

Immediately Southern Cameroon gained independence on October 1, 1961 and reunified with the Republic of Cameroon to constitute the Federal Republic of Cameroon, with Ahidjo as president and Foncha as vice president. Being a young nation Ahidjo main Objective was sustainable peace in nation building. The Federal Republic constituted two states, West and East Cameroon. In the state of West Cameroon that lasted from 1961 to 1972, which the Widikum was directly attached to, the state government implemented laws relating to land Farmer garzier conflicts and chieftaincy to maintain peace.

⁴¹NAB File N0 of 9/1933/1, Native court Grade “D” Menka.

⁴²Ibid

Some of this laws were inherited from former colonial masters and modified that directly affected the Widikum speaking people in Momo Division.

Inter - Community Boundary Settlement Law 1962

To begin in 1962, the West Cameroon government establish the Inter-Community Boundaries settlement law (ICBSL) to resolve boundary disputes in Bamenda and the Widikum in particular. This laws came directly to replace the inter-tribal boundary settlement ordinance introduced by the British in 1933 and was discontinued in 1952 because of disagreement between administrators and lawyers over the interpretation. Under the provisions of the Inter-Community Boundary Settlement law, disputes were referred to a boundary tribunal composed of a chairman and four members who conducted inquiries by hearing evidence from members of villages contesting land.⁴³Just like the ITBSO, the ICBSL was effective and its judgements were rarely challenged. In 1962 an old aged inter-community land dispute broke between Andek and Tezie of Ngie clan of Widikum Ethnic group Momo Division. Both parties were represented by their chiefs. To experiment this new law, the inter-community boundary settlement law was fully applied by the west Cameroon government to the extent that, the land disputes was resolved between Tezie and Andek with each party not to cross River “*Uginyifem*”.⁴⁴This was a mark success registered by the law among the people of Ngie in Widikum (see Appendix XIV).In 1972, Mbah posits that, the inter-Community boundary settlement law in settling land disputes was replaced with a Land Consultative Boards under the United Republic of Cameroon.

To further promote peace, in 1974 the government came up with a comprehensive land law and revised in 1976 to deal with land conflict in Cameroon. According to the new law, ownership of land was to be backed by a land title. The laws made the state guardian of all lands in Cameroon. It went further to categories lands into private, individual land, national and public lands. The laws stipulated that land ownership must be backed by of a land certificate whose process was defined in Decree N^o 75/165 of 27 April 1976. The laws in principles gave the traditional ruler the right to manage communal land but made Divisional Officers, Senior Divisional Officers (S.D.O) and the Governors the supervisory authorities in their respective areas of control as far as land matters were concerned in collaboration with the land consultative board commission.

To implement the 1974 and 1976 land laws the officials’ incharged of land, intervened in the land dispute which occurred among the Widikum people in Momo Division to maintain peace. In 1968, a land dispute occurred between Batibo and Tiben that created a lot of human and material destruction. In order to maintain peace, the SDO officer of Momo with head quarter in Mbengwi sent in the forces of law and order to the Moghamo clan. The individuals accused were arrested and detained but later released. The

⁴³NAB File N0. Of /a (1) 1964.13

⁴⁴NAB File N0. Of /b/1962/4 west Cameroon: inter-community land Dispute between the V.H of Andek and the V.H of Tezie in the Bamenda Division.

matter remained unsolved. In 2010, the land dispute reoccured. The Divisional officer (D.O) of Batibo, Diongo intervened and peace was maintained.

In 1982, a land dispute occurred between Tanka and Echibit village of Batibo Sub Division. This year saw the intervention of the Sub Divisional officer for Batibo. Eighteen Gendarmes were sent to the site to maintain peace. Later a land consultative board commission was sent to the area by the D.O. After the findings, the commission decided that, the said land under dispute belonged to Tanka village.

Few years after the Echibit people continued with their clandestine activities on the piece of land. This action earned a complete ban of all forms of their activities on Tanka land by the Sub Divisional officer for Batibo Tontu Akundoh peter.⁴⁵

Another case of land dispute among the Widikum was the land dispute between Anjing and Ngwo village which saw the involvement of the government of Cameroon. The first role played by the representatives of the government in peace-building came through the Senior Divisional Officer for Momo and the Sub Divisional officers for Njikwa and Widikum was that they collectively sent a land consultative board to visit the disputed land, headed by the Divisional officer for Njikwa.

The findings of the land commission found out that river Tanjoh “remained the natural boundary between both villages. This report was drawn following documents from the German and British colonial reports in the delimitation of boundaries.⁴⁶

From the findings it was concluded that the disputed land belonged to Anjing. Consequently, his Royal Highness Dr. Colonel Hans Anna of Ngwo was declared guilty for crossing river Tanjoh “as the natural boundary between both villages”. As a follow up of peace-building, on 31 May 2010 a meeting was held in the Senior Divisional Officer Mbengwi, head quarter of Momo Division of the Widikum concerning the land under dispute involving two graziers Abdulai Jaji backed by the Fon of Ngwo and Buba Abdu backed by Fon Mbi Zacheus of Anjing. Other actors involved to promote peace in the area included the first and second assistance Senior Divisional officers for Momo, the Divisional Officers for Njikwa and Widikum-Menka Sub Divisions, MINEPIA Momo delegations from Ngwo and Anjing, and a representative from the Court of Appeal from Maroua. In the final analysis, the following decisions were taken: First that the two graziers should respect the boundaries and should respect the rules and regulation in force. Second, that the area under dispute belonged to Anjing under Widikum –Menka Sub Division. Third that anybody or Cameroonian is free to have a land Title any where whether in Njikwa or Widikum-Menka Sub Division.⁴⁷(See Appendix XV)

⁴⁵Sub Prefectoral order N0. 22/1986. of 3 September 1986.

⁴⁶Johannes “Ngwo and her Neighbours”.20

⁴⁷Interview of a meeting on the Grazing disputes between Abdukai of Njikwa and Buba of Widikum held on the S.D.O Office Mbengwi 31 May 2010.

The disputed land was declared to be in Widikum menka Sub Division. It therefore implied the land undr disputed belong to Anjing and not Ngwo. In spite of this decision, clashes still continued between both vilages that in 2011, a prefectoral order ban the Ngwo indigenous people from the land.

Finally, in 2012. The Mbengwi High Court also ruled infavour of Anjing considering that the land was found in Widikum Sub Division were Anjing village was found. In the judgement italso allowed any settler of Ngwo clan on the disputed land the right to stay without claim of ownership. This dicsion has so far went a long way to maintained peace between the two communities.

The Land Consultative Board

The Land Consultative Board establish in 1972 came to replace the inter-community boundary settlement law. The land consultative board was established at national, provisional, Divisonal and Sub Divisional levels to settle land disputes. The new law gave the DO.s and Divisional officers of Momo as head of the land consultative board supervisory authorities to settled land disputes. The work of the land consultative baord was effective in Batibo –Tiben and Tanka –Echibit land conflicts. This went a long way to maintain peace among the Widikum.

The Farmer-Grazier Law of 1962

To ensure good relationship between the farmers and the graziers among the Widikum in particular and west Cameroon in general, in 1962, a law was enacted by the legislature of west Cameroon and reinforced by the Senior Inspector relating to Farmer-grazier conflicts. The law clearly spelt out rules in the control of farming and grazing lands. With the collapse of the state of West Cameroon in 1972, new rules governing farming-grazing relations were enacted by decree N^o 78/2663 of 3 July 1978 which transferred the powers from the senior inspector to the Divisional officer acting as the chairman of the farmer-Grazier commission.⁴⁸ By this law the Divisional officer of Momo Division acted as chairman of the farmer-grazier conflicts in Ngwo Ngie and Meta clans of Widikum people in Momo Division. Even though the commission was not without it weaknesses. As member of the commission were often corrupt. This laws went a long way in the promotion of peace among the Widikum and Cameroon in general.

A practical example of farmer grazier conflict was the cases of Ngwo clan and Meta clan that began in 1970. So far, the role played by the Sub Divisional officers as chairman of the farmer graziers commission relating to the decree of July 1978 specifying that, the Sub Divisional officer as chairman of the commission, services of the agricultural Delegate, services of the department of livestock and animal industry, Fon as member. The Sub Divisional Delegate of Agriculture and Rural Development is able to evaluate crops damaged, given prices prescribed to him by his ministry to pay as compensation for crops destroyed. This commission have registered a lot of credit in Batibo –Sub Division (Moghamo clan), Njikwa Sub Division (Ngwo clan) and in Mbengwi –Sub Division (Meta clan) of Wdikum. In the case of

⁴⁸Yenkeng, "Land Tenue and Land Conflicts", 234.

Ngwo farmers –graziers conflicts, the commission has register the following peace-building approaches of technique to it credit such as education, impoundment of cattle, compensation, negotiations and court suits.

Regarding education, in a reference No E30/03/500 of 21st October, 2005 the commission under the chairman ofDise Alfred, Sub Division officer for Njikwa Sub Division summoned the population of Ngwo clan of Widikum and their Fulani cattle grazier to appear in his office for a meeting.⁴⁹ In the meeting, the DO, Educated both parties (farmers and graziers to co-exist no matter, whether one was a native and or a Fulani. Both farmers and grazier were educated to resolve their differnces amicably without resorting to violence. The Fulani graziers were asked to plant Guatemala, so that the cows could eat throughout the year and the plant very nourishing and helps in the multiplication of cattle. Both farmer and Fulani grazier were also advised to construct solid fences with wires so as to protect their crops from destruction by stray animals.⁵⁰

To further educate both farmers and graziers SDD of livestock, fisheries and animal industry in a reference letter N0. MINEPIA/SDDL/NJ/2, 20, further reminds that in line with the control of grazing land all over the national territory he educated the graziers on the laws governing state lands and the various procedures to follow in obtaining grazing land permits. Both farmers and graziers were made to understand that nobody owns land and that they should remain in the area allocated to them so as to avoid conflicts.⁵¹ The second peaceful approach adopted bythe Sub Divisional farmer –grazier commissions that make up the five Sub Division of Momo Division of the Widikum indigenous people was the impoundment of stray cattle and compensation for the crops destroyed. Through this technigue, Fulani cattle were usually kept in the Njikwa Sub Divisional council’s pound fence until the party solve their problem. While in the fence, each cow was2500frs as fines multiplied by the number of cows in the fence

As far as compensation was concern, the commission evaluated crops destroyed through inspection team tracing the circustances leading to destruction of crops. The farmers is compensated according to the prices fixed by the Agricultural Delegate who works in accordance with the laws set by his ministry. This peace-building mechanism has been very successful not in Ngwo clan of Njikwa Sub Division but also in Ngie, Batibo and Meta clans of Widikum. In Ngwo clan, a case in point was the compensation accorded to the women of Ngemenge quarter by Jaji macky of Mbe and Peter Acha of Soh who also received a compensation of 7,500frs for crops destroyed by the cattle of Alhaji Shurioma of Fah on 27th Janaury 2005.⁵²This commissions had been doing a great Job among the Ngie Widikum Menta and the Moghamo clan to reduce the recurrent farmer –grazier conflicts among these communities of the Widikum ethnic group.

⁴⁹File No E30/03/500 of 21/10/2005

⁵⁰Interview with Alfred Mfomes, D.O ,Njikwa , 20/08/06

⁵¹Ref. No MINEPIA/SAL/NJ/2. 20 OF 22/05/2006.

⁵² Hans. “Conflict and Conflict Management, the Case of Ngwo and Fulani”. 45.

Peace- Building Mechanism on Chieftaincy Conflicts

The post-colonial government of Cameroon since independence and reunification in 1961 has been promoting peace through institutions of chieftaincy in Cameroon. Among the widikum speaking communities in Momo Division. The successive regimes of Ahidjo and Biya have been promoting peace within the chieftaincy institutions. To begin in 1967, the West Cameroon government made public regularities and the procedure for recognising chiefs, and to minimise chieftaincy disputes, petitions and complaints against the official recognition of a chief. The law declared that, before a chief was henceforth recognized and enthroned, they must be a declaration from the recognised “king makers” of a village before forwarding the name of any chief for recognition. Such declarations should, for record purposes be in writing and signed by the “king makers” and such “king makers” must be recognised by the majority population of the village (see Appendix 7). This law henceforth, asserted that recognition will not be given to any chief whose name is submitted to the West Cameroon ministry in charge without any accompanying declaration from king makers.⁵³

As one of the peace-building process on chieftaincy institutions among the widikums. In 1968, there was a chieftaincy dispute in Ashong village between D.C Enongang II and MbaforII, the Hon. Prime minister S.T. Muna decided to intervene, when he referred the dispute to the chieftaincy Advisory Committee to enquire into the dispute and to report to the Government. The chieftaincy Advisory Committee report which contains the dialogue between the two contesting parties, set out the committee findings, peacefully resolved that David Mbafor II be recognized by the Government as the chief of Ashong, second, that the 50.000 francs deposit made by David Mbafor II be refunded by the Government and that deposit made by Enongang be forfeited by the government, third that the following contestants and their supporters should sign an undertaking cognizance to keep the peace of Ashong and to work in harmony with the traditional council of Ashong in which some of them are members for the development of Ashong village.

The commission of inquiry consisted of five men set out to investigate the dispute. The commission was termed lainjo commission, with V.T Lainjo as chairman and other members were traditional rulers such as Chief J. Nfor of Nkambe in Donga Mantung Division, Chief G.T.T Mbafor of Batibo, Chief T. Kima of Bakebein Manyu Division and chief Ndikum of Akum in Mezam Division. The hearing opened on 24 October 1970 before 12:00 noon in the former court hall currently used by the police at Batibo and lasted for 4days. Other representatives, present were the two contestants to the throne D.C Enongang and Mbafor, the seven king-makers of Ashong village present included Neako (chief king-maker), Elias Tebi, Jacob Njei, Michael Monuh, TamforToro Njong, Tayong Suta and Smith Enojeck. Also found were senior chief sons quater heads, compound heads, police men and court messengers.

Rose Fril Manyi posits that, when the inquiry of the Lainjo’s commission began, the chairman explained the role of the government in the selection of a chief and the functions of the committee in the following words that:

⁵³NAB File No. 16/1967/2

...Government does not make chiefs. The people make their own chief according to their native laws and custom and report to their Divisional Officer, if the Divisional Officer reports to the government that a chief has been installed to the native law and custom and there was no dispute, the government may decide to recognize and gazette the chief. If any dispute arises and the people cannot settle their dispute peacefully according to their tradition, and the Divisional Officer reports the dispute to the government, the government may in turn refer the dispute to the chieftaincy Advisory Committee whose duty is only to enquire into the dispute and to report to government for a decision on the matter.⁵⁴

In the final decision, the commission recognized Mbafor II as the rightful heir to the throne. Following their recommendation, the west Cameroon government decided in March 1971 that Mbafor should be recognized as the Fon of Ashong.⁵⁵ Enongang II and his allies were made to recognize Mbafor II as chief of Ashong. Mbafor II was made to recognize Enongang II as chairman of Ashong traditional council. The seven king-makers that had been divided were brought together for mutual understanding but the peace lasted in Ashong only from 1971 to 1974 spanning only 3 years.

In March 1974, the government decided to use punitive measures to force Enongang II to submit traditional symbols of power to Mbafor II. Enongang II was arrested and taken to the Bamenda Mobile intervention unit where he spent two weeks under severe torture. He was to be released on condition that he handed over the traditional symbol to Mbafor II. He vows never to do so before his release.⁵⁶

In June 1974, the governor of the North West Province at the time Guilium Nseke gave him an order to immediately return the symbols within 24 hours. This was obeyed but Enongang handed incomplete symbols to Mbafor II. This disrespect earns him an extension of his detention under inhuman treatment. He was later brought to Ashong in chains in an open-back Land Rover to his Kassang palace where a search was conducted and the remaining symbols of power collected. On 5th June 1974, a provincial order was released confirming Mbafor II as chief of Ashong. As a follow-up, the Senior Divisional Officer for Momo enacted a "prefectoral order in November 1975, reiterating the 1974 decision.

Due to continuous writing of petitions from both factions, in 1979, the S.D.O for Momo assigned the D.O of Batibo to investigate and submit a full report on the conflict. The D.O set up a fact finding mission which recommended that a compromise be reached permitting Enongang II to be recognized as a Sub Chief under Mbafor II.⁵⁷ In 1982, the new D.O for Batibo, Thomas Chama Eki recommended that the status of

⁵⁴Rose Fril –Manyi Anjoh." Power Politics in Moghamo Clan of Cameroon: an Analysis of the Succession Squabbles in the Royal Family in Ashong 1900 2013 "In *Global Journal of Resreach in social sciences*, vol. 4, No. 1, May 06, 2018.

⁵⁵Convespondence from the Gwofon Divisional officer to the people of Ashong, March 1971.

⁵⁶Batibo Sub. Divisional fact finding report on Ashong 1971-1995.

⁵⁷Sub –Divisional Order of October 1979 creating a fact finding Commission into the Squabbles among the Chief and Village of Ashong. Fact finding Repot of 15 December 1979.

a third class chiefdom by Decree 1977 under Enongang be created to appease Enongang and his faction. Enongang accepted the decision but Mbafor rejected it. In order to continue with the process of peace-building among the Widikum such as the case of Ashong chieftaincy conflicts, on the 20th March 1987, the government of Cameroon through D.O of Batibo Peter Tontu Akondoh formed a traditional council in Ashong. In reaction, the members of traditional council in upper Ashong refused to participate and in June 1988, they went ahead to write a letter to the DO requesting for upper Ashong traditional government. The DO warned them for such an action and called it being Subversive. The DO decided to forward it to the SDO for Momo. No concrete action was taken.

The failure of upper Ashong to form a traditional council pushed them to organize the Nere dance in the month of July 1988 to celebrate the death of Akamanda and Enongang I to challenge the Authority of Mbafor II forced the Fon to report the matter to the Batibo court of First instance following the failure of the D.O Peter Tontu to stop the celebration. The Enongang's were charged with "Assuming the Title of Fon of Ashong...taking part in unlawful assembly, and violating sub-divisional order." According to Rose Fril, the first hearing took place on June 20 1992 but it dragged on following a series of adjournments. Finally, the court decided that "...there is a better chieftaincy dispute in Ashong requiring the minister of Territorial Administration... to resolve peacefully. The court banned the dancing of "Nere dance" out in Ashong without approval of Fon Mbafor II and the administration. The defendants were discharged and acquitted.⁵⁸ Rose posit that, chief Mbafor II unsatisfied with the Judgement appealed to the Bamenda court of appeal in 1994 but before the Judgement was released Enongang II had fallen sick and later died on the 28th March 1994. He further stated that, Enongang II on his dying bed declared that his son Ruben Enoh Takwe as his successor. Ruben was nicknamed as Enongang III to continue the struggle.

On 25 August 1994, Bell Luc Rene, the Governor of the North West province called a meeting of all Ashong indigenes through their representative's in Bamenda to find solution to Ashong chieftaincy conflict. The outcome of the meeting was the creation of "The Ashong Central third class chiefdom" through a prefectural order signed by the SDO for Momo John Niba Nchotu on 6 September 1994. The chiefdom comprised upper Ashong, lower Ashong together with Njen, Kon and the Fulani. These third class chiefdoms were to pay allegiance to the second-class chief Mbafor II of Ashong.

In 2000, Mbafor II died and was succeeded by Mbafor III. Today, government efforts to resolve Ashong-Chieftaincy conflict is not a complete success. As upper Ashong is merely ruled by Enongang III recognized as third class and lower Ashong ruled by Mbafor III recognized as second-class chief. Based on the recommendation of the committee, Mbafor II was recognized and gazetted as 26th Fon of Ashong in 1972. In Ngie clan area of Ashong Widikum, Asilaki Njomaso was also gazetted as the 92nd Fon of Tinachong by the West Cameroon government.

Another peace –building mechanism put in place to maintain peace in Cameroon and Widikum in particular was the promulgation of the chieftaincy law of 1972. By this law chieftaincy heads were recognized as

⁵⁸Anjoh, "Power Politics in Moghamo" 190.

auxillary of the Government with specific duties such as the promotion of social harmony and peaceful co-existence of their chiefdoms. Article 2 of the decree classified chiefs into first class, second class and third class. In applying the law among the Widikum speaking people in Momo, to promote the pinciple of Nation building and peace building, the village heads of the Widikum felt under the second and third class category of chiefs. The Fon of Akanunku and Nyeng –Muwa wereclassified as third class chiefs and the Fon of Mbengwi and Ashong central as second-class chiefs.

In other to promote peace, the chiefs were given specific duties and responsibilities as defined by Articles 17- 21 of the decree.⁵⁹This included mobilization of the masses for socio-economic and cultural development collecting government taxes and levies or fees helping to maintain public order transmitting the directives of administrative authorities and ensuring their implementation, settling disputes and arbitrating in matters involving two subjects using native laws and customs. These chiefs were paid some remunerationsto their assigned duties and responsibilities. ⁶⁰To further promote peace in Cameroon and Widikum in particular the government of Cameroon enacted a law on 30 June 1979 relating to disputes arrising from the appointment of a Traditional ruler. ⁶¹This law went a long way to prevent chiefsancy conflicts among the Widikum. The 1977 chieftaincy decree which was aimed at adopting a uniform chieftaincy policy for the whole country, equally had some weaknesses in promoting peace.

First the decree did not take into consideration the specific cultural and ethnic realities of each region, as it created numerous chieftanicy conflicts with regard to its applications such as Akanunku and Ashong chieftaincy disputes. Another was the direct intervention in chieftaincy conflict: the post independent Cameroon government in the promotion of peace among the widikum throught it direct intervention in chieftaincy conflicts aimed to maintained peace, is the case of Akanunku village.

In 1992, a chieftaincy dispute developed in Akanunku village of Menka clan. This conflict created a lot of insecurity and slowed down the development of the village and the rest of neighbouring Widikum villages. In reaction, the Divisional Officer of Widikum-Menka Sub Division and the Senior Divisional Officer of Momo Division greatly played key role in building peace to resolve the chieftaincy conflict. Yosibom Kong John, Divisional officer for Widikum, sent a consultative commission to Akanunku-villge. After their findings, the commission recommended for an election to be conducted among the king-makers and quarter heads to select the new village head. In November 1, 1997, the election took place and Menti Ignatius was voted as the new village head of Akanunku and confirmed by the Senior Divisional Officer of Momo.

⁵⁹Tohnji, “Chiefts in Anglophone Cameroon” 239.

⁶⁰Decree N0. 77/245 of 15 July 1972, Organizing Chieftaincy in Cameroon

⁶¹Law N0.m79/17 of 39July 1975 relating to disputes arsing from the appoint.....

Table 1: The statistics of the election results of the Akanunku Chieftaincy disputes of 1997

Electorates	Total No of Members	No of Voters for Menti-Ignatius	No of voters for Akoko Lucas
King maker	3	2 votes	1 vote
Quarter heads	3	3 votes	No vote

Source: Adopted from the chieftaincy consultation report of Akanunku by the Divisional officer of Widikum November I, 1997.

On 27 April 2001, the Senior Divisional Officer for Momo wrote a letter to the Divisional Officer for Widikum-Menka giving him the go ahead for the installation of Menti Ignatius as Fon of Akanunku. Finally, the Senior Divisional Officer for Momo wrote a letter putting an end to Akanunku chieftaincy dispute and recommended that Fon Menti Ignatius remained the Fon of Akanunku. This brought about peace and tranquility in Akanunku. In the case of the chieftaincy dispute in Baraka and Ashong village of Moghamo, the government have equally played key role in peace-building.

In another related case of government efforts in peace-building among the Widikum people was the chieftaincy dispute between Tugi village and Njaah of Meta clan. The secessionist attempts of Martin Asanga to separate Njaah quarter of Tugi village and to be recognized as a village in which he was to be the village head of Njaah divided the village into fractions. The matter was declared a chieftaincy dispute. thus, government efforts to bring peace was inevitable. The role will be analysed below. On 5 December, 1994, the Fon of Tugi, HRH Mbakwa III petitioned to the senior Divisional Officer for Momo about the unscrupulous behaviour of Martin Asanga who in the meantime, had forged documents from the National Archives in Buea in connection with the chieftaincy dispute in Tugi, in an effort to support his illegitimate claim as chief of Njaah. As a step to build peace, the matter was taken to the High Court of Mbengwi Momo. on 7th may, 1996 under charge No MBHC/190C/95-96 before his lordship Justice Tebo N.J., Judge and Mr CN Anyeneme, registrar of the court. After several hearings, judgement was passed on 19th September, 1996 in which Mr Asanga Martin was convicted and sentence to 5 years with hard labour.⁶²

In a prefectoral order of the chieftaincy dispute pitting Njaah Tugi quarter against Tugi village, the S.D.O for Momo issue a prefectoral order in favour of the sovereignty of Tugi as one and indivisible polity. The first prefectoral order was issued on the 26th July, 1995 and another in 2004.⁶³ In relating peace-building efforts, the S.D.O of Momo and his collaborators, forced the perpetrators of the chieftaincy conflict to sign an undertaking to abide by the law and decision taken above and to respect the sovereignty and the institutions of the Tugi village. Two of these undertakings are worth mentioning: letter of 12th April, 1999

⁶²File No. MBHC/190C/95 96 OF 7 May 1996, Mbengwi High Court.

⁶³First prefectoral order no. e 30/c.6/vol. 2/922/l/ps of July 1995 and second prefectoral order no E30/c6/820/Lsp of 27 July 2004.

signed by Messers Josph Mugri, Emmanuel Tengoh, Zacheus Bahfor, Martin Baya, Thomas Ngwa and John Ngah to “acknowledge the fact that Fon Mbakwa is the paramount Fon of the Njaah and TugiCommunities.”⁶⁴The second undertaking of the letter of October 4, 2000 by Martin Asanga to the Sub Divisional office Mbengwi declaring that his claim to the “Title as the chief of Njaah has been with drawn for personal reasons”

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS’ MECHANISM TO PEACE BUILDING

The conflicts among the Widikum has witnessed the intervention of NGOs renowned for their involvement in peace building. The conflicts attracted the attention of both local, National and international NGOs for their involvement in peace-building among the Widikum communities they includes; African Community Development and Environmental Protection (ACDEP), Society for Initiatives in Rural Development and Environment Protection (S.R.D.E.P), the Swiss Association for Development and Cooperation (HELVETAs), Plan International Cameroon Support Service to Grassroots Development initiatives (SAILD). The activities of these NGOs is noticeable in various areas to promote peace among the Widikum.

For local NGOs such as the African Community Development and Environmental protection (ACSEP), offer-training programme for group members and provide capacity building for women’s self development. This local NGOs has also offer training of elected representatives at local, Sub Divisional and Divisional levels. The NGO has also provided agricultural inputs such as corn mills, cassava Graters, and palm oil processing machines to the Widikum indigenous people of Ngie, Meta and Widikum Menka. Local NGOs such as SIRDEP, ACDEP constructed Wumneburg Bridge in Momo Division, visibility studies carried out on 20 projects such as pipe brone water, education of indegenous Widikum rural population to live in harmony with Cattle-Fulani graziers.⁶⁵Thereby reducing future farmer –grazier’s conflicts. International NGOs have equally played an important role in peace-building among the Widikum in Momo Division.

The SWISS Association for Development and Cooperation have assisted in the provision of pipe brone water construction of farm to market raods such as the Ekoh –Menka, Ngwo –Menka, Widikum Befang –Menka and Oshie Konda. This international NGOs such as Plan International have partnered with Widikum –Boffee, Ngie and Batibo councils to promote development and employment opportunities to the youths. They offer training programme and capacity building training in areas relating to conflict resolution and meaningful dialogue. The activities of these NGOs have gone along way to prevent future conflict such as famer grazier confclits in the short and long run.

⁶⁴Letter of undertaking 12 April 1999 and letter of undertaking October 4, 2000 to the D.O Mbengwi contain in the Rebutal letter by Tugi cultural and Development Association on page 162 in a history of Tugi by Ajaah Nji.

⁶⁵Pius T. Tanya and Charles Fonchigong “NGO–State Interaction and Political Of Development in Cameroon in the Context of Liberalization” February 2009 (Accessed 08/03/2021)

In Ngwo clan, the education and training given by NGOs have given rise to the creation of Ngwo farmer-fulani local committee to manage farmer-grazier conflicts among the two parties. Another peace-building mechanism employed by NGOs to resolve conflicts such as land and farmer-grazier conflicts among the Widikum was the creation of vigilante groups and local peace committees whose role consisted of monitoring security and crime in the various areas of conflict, raising awareness of security threats, facilitating inter-communal dialogue alerting the various bodies' responsible for security about imminent risk and lobbying for reconstruction initiatives. Some of these peace committees and vigilante groups made up of mostly the youths such as the case of Batibo-Tiben vigilante committee and the Ngwo –Fulani peace committees were in regular contact with security forces, and some times, they tried to formulate community security plans and to convince the conflicting parties to accept dialogue as the only means for lasting peace. The works of these NGOs in peace-building among the Widikum have been marred by some challenges. First, the NGOs have been criticized for their inability to coordinate their efforts with governmental institutions. In many cases, these NGOs are the preferred outlet for donor funds and support, and they end up “competing” with the government of Cameroon. Such competition has exacerbated the peace-building process.

The gap between NGOs and governmental institutions need to be bridged in order to promote sustainable peace among the Widikum speaking people in Momo Division such as Ngie Meta Ngwo and the Menka communities.

FAITH BASED AND CIVIL SOCIETY’S MECHANISM TO PEACE-BUILDING

One of such prominent groups that played key roles in efforts to resolve the conflicts among the Widikum in Momo Division was the church. Church leaders from the Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and the Baptist church were involved in peace-building efforts at all levels as they used their influence to stop and prevent violence by communities and armed groups.

The first of such role was that of church leaders who organized ecumenical prayers, sermons, and joint celebrations of Christian, and muslim festivals as symbols of imperative peace and peaceful co-existence. Some of the church like the Catholic Church have dispatched leaders who have directly mediated in some of the conflicts. Scholars such as Lang Michael a Religion historian argued on the importance of alternative dispute resolution, show the important role played by the Catholic Church in the management of conflicts and peace-building in the North West Region.

The Catholic Church in December 2002 created an institution of peace-building known as the Justice and peace commission in the Archdiocese of Bamenda with branches in Njindom (Meta clan) in Momo Division and other Divisions of the North West Region. Its main objectives were to protect the rights of the vulnerable groups during conflicts, Empower the poor, intervene and mediate in conflicts, organized training and educative programme aimed at monitoring and preventing conflict.

Upon creation in 2002, the JPC investigated to know the kind and type of conflict in the North West Region in order to understand how it could intervene in their management. This enabled the commission to found that among the number of conflicts in the region, land conflicts were at the center of these conflicts such as the BaliNyonga Ngeng-Mbo, Batibo –Tiben was exacerbated by the hierarchical classification of Fons by the Cameroon Government.

Lang further added that with credible information about the conflicts, the Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Church (JPC) established an alternative Dispute Resolution unit in almost all the head quarter of the seven Divisions of the North West Region such as Njindom in Momo Division of the Widikum through which conflicts were managed. The alternative Dispute Resolution approach permitted the JPC to mediate in inter-village conflicts. Quite often, a third party engaged by the commission helped disputants through their negotiations in a non-hindering fashion.⁶⁶

Typical cases of its involvement in conflict management among the Widikum was the land dispute between Bali Nyonga and Ngyen-mbo, Bali –Nyonga and Bawock conflict in 2007. In order to build peace among the Widikum in particular and North West Region in general the JPC education programme have been designed to served as a curriculum for all catholic primary and secondary schools among the Widikum and North West Region in general. The curriculum provides, Life skills related to peace-education and conflict minimization and prevention to teach youths and the community.⁶⁷

Lang further opined that, the manual addressed themes like condition for peace, approaches to resolving conflicts, mediation in schools, human rights and responsibilities, justice, peace and violence. Also, teachers for both primary and secondary schools have been trained on the technique of teaching for a culture of peace, communication skills and questioning skills.⁶⁸

The Widikum speaking communities such as the moghamo, Meta, Ngie and Menka have benefited directly and indirectly from JPC of the Catholic church in the promotion of peace through training and education programme for peace and other forms of peaceful co-existence.

Since 1990'S many civil societies have emerged in Cameroon to remedy the socio-economic and political conditions of Cameroonians such as Bar Association, Religion groups, MBOSCUDA for the Mbororo and cultural Associations.

Nkwi noted that, civil society had greatly contributed in societal transformation and nation building in Cameroon.⁶⁹ It was within this context that, a wide range of civil society, peace initiatives emerged among the Widikum and North West Region in general to deal with conflicts. These local civil society groups

⁶⁶Lang Michael Mpughe “Inter-Ethnic Conflict Management and Prevention in Cameroon North West: Assessing The Role of the Justice and Peace Commission Of The Catholic Archdioces Of Bamenda of a 5th May 2019,

⁶⁷Ibid 9.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Nkwi Walter Gam. “The Dilemma of Civil Society in Cameroon since 1991” (accessed May 2021).

helped in the creation of local peace committees among the Wdikum and in raising awareness on the need for peace. These civil society groups have also been involved in mediating directly between communities in conflicts such as Ashong chieftaincy conflict, Ngwo farmer and Fulani conflict, Batibo –Tiben and other farmer-grazier conflict among the Wdikum in Momo Division and North West Region in general. A good example of a civil society that has promoted peace among the Wdikum communities' challenged with conflict was the Mbororo civil society called MBOSCUDA. The role of this civil society was as follows.

A MBOSCUDA team of experts visited Ashong village in Batibo Sub Division, in which they educated the people on alternative conflict management. They equally educated the people on cases of destruction of crop by cattle, the team emphasized that negotiations should be carried out with the cattle owners and not with the Herdsmen. In the past farmers could not make the difference between the cattle owners and the herdsman.

Other peace building activities of MBOSCUDA to remedy farmer grazier conflicts among the Wdikum includes; farmers-graziers conflicts commission-formed between cattle rearers and indigenous farmers. A good example was the Ngwo Farmer-Fulani commission formed to promote peace between the farmers and the graziers. These civil society groups and peace commission were more effective in their initiatives to promote peace as they were regarded by the public as being legitimate and thus accepted by the people. Cultural associations such as Meta Cultural and Development Association (MECUDA), have gone along way to promote peaceful habitation between the Mbororos and the indigenous people.

CONCLUSION

From the above, it can be seen that the experience of peace –building mechanism among the Wdikum ethnic group in Momo Division since 1870-2014 has involved many players such as the traditional indigenous mechanism, German and British peace initiative, Government of Cameroon since independence, Non-governmental Organizations, Civil society and religious Actors whose aim was geared towards scaling the multiplicity of conflicts in the area which turn to hinder the peace and smooth development of the area. Judging from the various peace-building efforts employed by various actors to scale down these conflicts in this part of Africa, it was evident that, relative and sustainable peace was much more effective when the actors involved in the peace –making process took into consideration indigenous peace-building approaches, cognizant of knowledge of the custom and tradition of the people.

During the British Colonial rule, conflicts such as land boundary and chieftaincy conflicts were scaled down because their peace-building initiatives incorporated or recognised the Wdikum indigenous peace Actors such as Native Authorities. Justice was dispensed based on native customs and traditions. After independent and reunification of British and French Cameroons in 1961, things never remained the same. The trend of conflicts increased among the Wdikum primarily because, the actors involved in peace making among the Wdikum never incorporated the indigenous –peace actors into their peace-building process. Rather, was the wholesome importation of conventional peace –building process to impose on

the indigenous people? For instance, in 1974 and 1977, the Government of Cameroon introduced land and chieftaincy laws aimed to redress the numerous land and chieftaincy conflicts in Cameroon, Widikum and the North West province in particular. This never yielded the desire peace. The weaknesses of the 1974 land and 1977 chieftaincy laws with regards peace-building was that it promoted individual ownership of land, and the 1977 law made Native Authority (Traditional rulers) as auxiliary of the government. This implies promotion of western hegemony. Recognized chiefs by this law were gazetted. This was a complete deviation of indigenous peace initiatives were chiefs were answerable to the people than to the government. Failure to recognize indigenous peace-building mechanism in the process of nation building led to the 1968 chieftaincy conflict in Ashong between Mbafor II and Enongang II, and the Batibo-Tiben land boundary conflict that lasted up till 2010.

Judging from the above experiences within the contemporary period, it has been realised that for sustainable peace to be achieved, the actors involved in conflict management and peace-building must adopt alternative ways of conflict prevention to include the indigenous peace Actors. It is within this premise that led to the emergence of Non-governmental organizations, civil society, Justice and peace commission of the Archdiocese of Bamenda to help promote peace among the Widikum, North West Region, and Cameroon in general. In the nutshell, the AU, UNO and other international organizations, need to emulate and incorporate the wisdom of indigenous peace building institutions in their programmes so as to effectively achieve the goal of a durable sustainable peace in Africa and Widikum in particular. Therefore, those who manage conflicts among the Widikum indigenous people in Momo Division, North West Region of Cameroon, need to immerse themselves in the socio-cultural context of the problems they are solving. They need to incorporate the Wisdom of elders and chiefs in the African communities into their conflicts management and peace-building initiatives. This chapter clearly identifies a number of peace –building mechanism used among the Widikum which some best practices of peace initiatives can be drawn. What this chapter is calling for is neither a whole sale importation of the indigenous peace-building initiative in conflict management nor a total repudiation of the western models and values by the government of Cameroon but rather a revitalization and subsequent inclusion of the African traditional conflict resolution mechanism in the management of the “modern conflicts” among the Widikum, Cameroon and on African continent as a whole. The present situation of AU, UNO, and government of Cameroon of marginalizing the traditional approaches to managing the multifaceted land, Chieftaincy and Farmer graziers’ conflicts noted in Africa, North West Region of Cameroon and Widikum in particular is comparable to attempting to fly an Aeroplane with one wing. This study is therefore not surprised to conclude that most of the peace initiatives carried to manage the conflicts among the Widikum and African without inclusion of indigenous peace initiatives as alternative peace-building measures have fail to hold any water.

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Name	Age	Occupation	Place of Interview	Date
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Adu Gabriel	70	Chairperson Anjing Traditional Council	Anjing-Menka	22/02/2021
Akwa James	65	Native	Batibo	20/3/2020
Anyi George	55	President of Baraka Cultural and Development Association	Baraka Village	20/06/2020
Anyi George	55	Baraka cultural and development Association	Baraka village	20/02/2021
Atekwana Mansfield	75	Secretary Ngwo – Traditional Council	Ngwo Clan	28/3/2021
Azia Paul	65	Member of Abeng institution	Ekoh village	10/01/2021
Daniel Nfua Tafah	78	Farmer and Councillor	Akanunku Village –Menka Clan.	8/9/2021
David Jacob	55	Native	Ashong	16/02/2021
Enoh Atuh	82	Native	Ashong	10/01/2021
Enongang Ruben Teweck	57	Successor to Enongang II	Ashong	20/2/2021
Fon Menti Ignatius	65	Fon and member of Abeng society	Akamuunka village	22/10/2021
Forkwa Emmanuel Tebi	61	Sub Chief	Kurubei village of Batibo	30/08/2020
H.R.H Fon Menti Ignatius	75	Fon	Akanunku Village	10/11/2020
Marcus Enow	89	Quarter Head	Akanunku	10/02/2018
Marcus tah	89	Farmer	Ashong	18/2/2021
Ndasi Christpher chofor	61	Chariman of Ngyenmbo Traditional Caounl	Ngyenmbo	10/05/2021
Nfuah Daniel Tafa	75	King maker of Akoum society	Akamuunka village	10/06/2020
Njei Stanley	75	Secretary Batibo Fondom	Batibo	07/11/2020
Ntah Godlove	50	Member of Abeng Institution	Anjing- Menka	20/08/2020

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