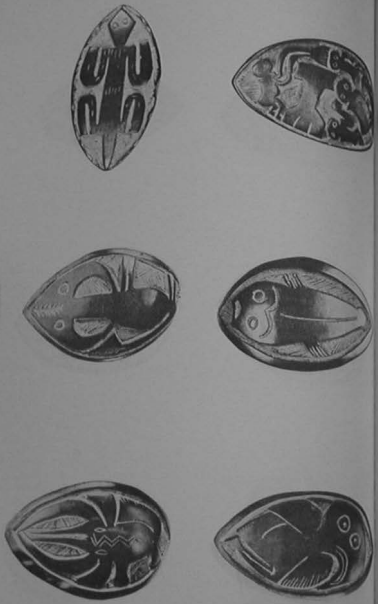

THE BRITISH AND THE NORTHERN KAMERUN PROBLEM 1919–1961.

BY

Bongfen Chem – Langhee

The Northern Kamerun Problem – the relations between or among the people who lived in Northern Kamerun* and their varying aspirations at any given point in time – began long before the Europeans came to the scene. Prior to the Fulani (Fulbe) intrusion of the early nineteenth century, Northern Kamerun comprised four main groups of people, the aborigines, the Korofa, the Batta and the Mandara. The last three of these respectively invaded and apparently conquered the groups each of them found in the region. There seems to have been no assimilation for each conqueror settled separately in one area of the region and, in line with most of the Africa at the time, demanded tribute and recognition of authority from the conquered. Before each conquest, the previously dominant group appeared to have been under one central authority. But, after each invasion, the conquered group disintegrated, this disintegration resulting in the multiplication of independent authorities within the same group. All this is what a British anthropologist, employed by the Colonial Office, seemed to suggest after a field investigation when she said:

> *Successive waves of Korofa, Batta, Mandara and Fulani invasions have had a disintegrating effect, which the broken nature of the country has further aggravated, so that it is not unusual to find groups of people living alongside each other, speaking the same language and sharing a common culture, yet fiercely individualistic and mutually distrustful.*[1]

The individualism and mutual distrust displayed by each element within the same ethnic group indicates the determination of the various groups in Northern Kamerun to retain or regain their independence. Yet, when faced with an external threat, they readily banded together to face it.[2]

Such a threat was soon presented by the Fulani. They began to enter the region as peaceful immigrants, paying taxes to those who owned the land on which they grazed their cattle. But, during the Jihads, many of the Fulani in the region embraced Islam and accepted the leadership of Modibbo Adama who now installed them as local authorities in any area of Northern Kamerun he conquered. Indeed, by 1843, all the Fulani enclaves in the region owed allegiance to Adama. Unfortunately, the new Fulani authorities began to enslave some of their previous masters, whom they found in the region, both for themselves and to pay the yearly tribute to Sokoto. Consequently, the other groupes began to view Islam as a threat to their cultural identity» and lives, a threat personified by

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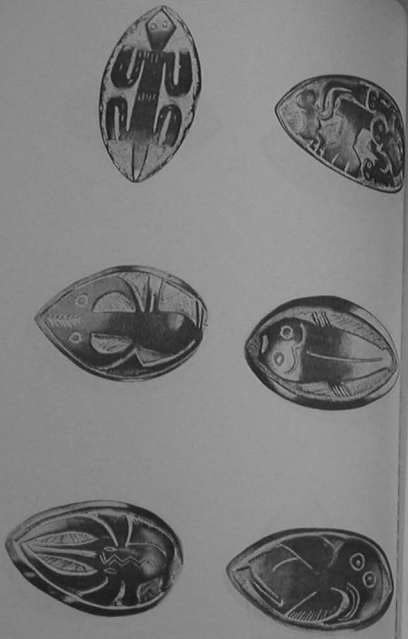
* In this article: Kamerun represents the total territory of the German colony known as Kamerun; Eastern Kamerun or Cameroon stands for the section of Kamerun under French trust administration, 1919–1960; Western Kamerun designates the section of Kamerun under British trust administration, 1919–1961; Northern Kamerun is the northern half of Western Kamerun; and, Southern Kamerun is the southern segment of Western Kamerun. During the British period, Northern and Southern Kamerun had little to do with each other politically, administratively and otherwise.



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the Fulani.[3] Nevertheless, while that was the general perception of the Fulani held by the Korofa, the Batta, the Mandara, and the aborigines, not all of them fell under the suzerainty of the Fulani. According to Kirk-Greene,

> *The effect of the Fulani penetration was to dismember (the indigenous) Kingdoms. With some the invaders made treaties, others were converted to Islam, while many withdrew to the sanctuary of the hills. In a few cases a Fulani governor of tact and character acquired some personal influence with his pagan subjects more especially if he had married the daughters of important local chiefs or had himself been born of such a union.*[4]

It seems, therefore, that the Fulani had both failed to establish their political overlordship in the region and to make Islam the religion of the area. Indeed, as late as the 1930s, there were more non-Muslims in Northern Kamerun than there were Muslims: out of an estimated population of 408,322, Muslims numbered approximately 198,996 and non-Muslims were said to be 209,326.[4] What seems to have existed in the region before the Germans came on the scene was a form of economic, rather than political or religious, compromise. Thus, «Pagan lands in the plains were held on... a compromise: the Fulani refrained from harrying the farmers on the understanding that the pagans allowed cattle to graze unmolested up to the foot of the hills and to the broader valleys during the dry season».[5]

Unfortunately, with grave consequences, this feature of Northern Kamerun Society, was lost to the new German conquerors. After subduing the region, they misperceived a «well-organized, unified and extensive» political system ruled over by the Fulbe princes in a «quasi – feudal machinery».[7] Here lay the basis of the German Adamawa Administrative Creed to administer Adamawa well, one must gain the loyalty of its traditional rulers, the Fulani princes; to gain the loyalty of the Fulani princes, one must recognize their authority and rule through them.[8] What this policy involved was simple. The supreme authorities in Northern Kamerun, aside from the Germans themselves, would be the Fulbe princes. The German residents or commissioners in the region were not supposed to interfere with the internal management (of the peoples, but were expected) to confine themselves to keeping the peace between (them) and maintaining German rule».[9]

It was, however, not easy for the Germans to keep peace between the Fulani on the one hand and the other groups on the other. Because the Fulani continued to raid for slaves and to attempt to impose Islam on the other groups, there was constant friction between the former and the latter. Faced with this problem, the Germans provided the Fulani prices with guns which they used to effectively enslave and suppress many of the apparent rebels.[10] With guns in their hands, the Fulani now regarded the other groups «as fitting objects of numerous slave raids». Indeed, even in 1914, the Fulani got guns from the Germans to fight the British but instead turned them against the other indigenous groups».[11] The German approach had thus aggravated rather than mitigated the Northern Kamerun Problem before the British took over the region.

The initial British approach to the problem was anchored in the reason for which the British acquired Western Kamerun, they did so in 1919 in order to extend the Nigerian boundary eastwards and, in the process correct the artificiality of the Nigerian-Kamerun boundary. In their eyes, Southern Kamerun was a natural part of the Eastern Region of Nigeria while Northern Kamerun was that of Northern Nigeria. Having seen things from this angle, they separated Northern from Southern Kamerun, fused the former with the Northern Region of Nigeria and made the latter an integral part of the Eastern Region of Nigeria. Northern Kamerun was further fragmented into three units which, though part of the nearest Northern Nigerian subunits had little to do with each other or with either Southern or Eastern Kamerun. This arrangement remained unchanged until 1960 when Northern Kamerun was administratively, not politically, separated from the Northern Region of Nigeria.[12]

This initial British approach had some consequences for the Northern Kamerun Problem. Since the British administred Northern Nigeria indirectly through the Fulani princes, the non-Fulani Northern Kamerunians had not only come closer to Islam, the threat to their cultural identity and lives, but had also been effectively put under the political authority of the Fulani. 'Ceteris paribus, the non-Muslims could not be expected to accept the given situation calmly. Moreover, this policy put the authority of the Northern Kamerun Fulani rulers under that of the Northern Nigerian Fulani rulers. Other things remaining equal, some of the former could not be expected to accept the 'fait accompli' without some struggle. Even the repartitioning of Western Kamerun, like the partitioning of Kamerun which had separated peoples of the same ethnic group in the northern portion of the territory, put people of the same ethnic group on both sides of the intra-Western Kamerun boundary. Those people affected by the artificial boundaries in Northern Kamerun could be expected to resist these arrangements. Furthermore, by making Northern Kamerun an integral part of the Northern Region of Nigeria, the British failed to take the special status of the region, as a trust territory, into consideration. The outcome of this failure was that the region was almost completely neglected politically, educationally, economically, socially and otherwise. The majority of the Northern Kamerunians, Fulani and non-Fulani, Muslim and non-Muslim, could be expected to hold this neglect against the British. On the other hand, those Northern Kamerunians who benefitted from the new arrangements, Fulani or non-Fulani, particularly the local authorities, could be expected to support the 'status quo'. Likewise, the British could be expected to resist any changes in the 'status quo' which they themselves had established.[13]

Indeed, the next phase in the British approach to the problem was intended to ensure the stability of their new arrangements. After realizing that there were other traditional rulers in the region aside from the Fulani rulers, and that these were the effective spokesmen of their subjects, the British attented to leave the affairs at the grassroots level in those leaders' hands while the Fulani rulers remained in charge of the affairs at higher levels. The attempt failed partly because the experiment was new to both the Fulani and the other newly discovered leaders, the a-Fon, partly because the Fulani found it difficult to avoid interfering, and what with the British unwillingness to bear the financial burden it involved.[14] After this failure, the British left things as they were but now channelled their energies in two directions. They first tried to protect the non-Fulani from Fulani oppression and other abuses by deposing those identified as tyrants. As a result of this action, the non-Fulbe population of

the region came to perceive «the British as their protectors from the Fulani»,[13] protectors they would like to stay in Northern Kamerun indefinitely. At the same time, this policy created enemies for the British in the persons of those deposed, and they could not be expected to remain calm until they had their revenge on the British. Second, the British undertook the training of some of the «Fon or Crowned Princes and their subjects in the art of Western administration in order to give the trainees an opportunity to participate in the administration of their region.»[14] By 1934, the training had yielded some dividends. Out of fourteen district heads of Adamawa, eleven were Muslims and three were non-Muslims. Even «some of the 105 village headmen in pagan areas were non-pagans».[15]

It is clear, therefore, that only a few non-Muslims in Northern Kamerun took part in the administration of their region. The British, because of all the unhappy elements already indicated, could expect agitation at one point in time.

Indeed, as far as the present writer is aware, the first recorded reaction against the 'status quo' in Northern Kamerun occurred in 1949, in connection with the Nigerian constitutional review which began in 1948. In response to the invitation from the Governor of Nigeria, Sir John MacPherson, to the various Regional Houses of Nigeria for suggestions regarding the anticipated Constitution, the Northern Regional House met at Kaduna in 1949 to consider the issue. During the discussions, all the delegates of Northern Nigeria proper insisted that Northern Kamerun should remain integrated with Northern Nigeria 'ad infinitum' and that trusteeship for that region should be terminated to that effect. On the other hand, the only two delegates from Northern Kamerun, the Emir of Dikwa and his secretary, themselves Fulani and Muslim, called not only for the separation of Northern Kamerun from Northern Nigeria but also for continued trusteeship administration.[16] While it is not readily known why the delegates from Northern Kamerun took this position, it is important to note that the British ignored their request.*

Nevertheless, later in the same year, these leaders indicated why they wanted to undo the British Northern Kamerun design. In November, 1949, the first United Nations Visiting Mission (Mission) came to Northern Kamerun. When the Mission arrived, the politically active Northern Kamerunians, led by the Emir of Dikwa, made two important requests of it. They asked the United Nations to separate the Kanuri and Shuwa Arabs of the northern areas of Eastern Kamerun, to unite these Arabs with those of Northern Kamerun and then put the newly enlarged region under British tutelage outside the Nigerian framework. Three main reasons were given for these requests: the inter-Kamerun boundary had split ethnic groups; the boundary regulations were the source of many economic and social hardships; and, ethnologically, they were closer to the Eastern Kamerun Fulani than to the Northern Nigeria Fulani.[17] For reasons already indicated, some Northern Kamerunians had thus once more registered their dissatisfaction with the British established 'status quo'.

* It was not until 1960 that Northern Kamerun was separated from Northern Nigeria administratively but not politically.

Yet, the British were unwilling to grant these requests. During the discussions of these issues in the Trusteeship Council (Council), the representative of the United Kingdom said:

> *The affinity between the people of the parts of the ancien Adamawa Emirate who are now under french administration (and have for more than forty years been removed from the Lamido's authority), and the people of the present Adamawa Emirate under British administration is now mainly of historic interest. In the circumstances the Administering Authority does not feel there are sufficient reasons for altering the existing arrangements.*[20]

With regard to the frontier problems, the British representative, supported by the French, argued that the boundary and the boundary regulations did not «in fact impose any real hardship on the frontier dwellers».[21] Essentially, the British had served notice to the United Nations, as they had done to the Northern Kamerunians, that they were not yet willing to contemplate any changes in their reoganization of Northern Kamerun.

Nevertheless, that was not the end of the story. In June, 1952, the Southern and Northern Kamerun delegates met at Buéa, the headquarters of Southern Kamerun. There, among other things, they discussed Unification – the idea that Northern and Southern Kamerun be unified politically, administratively and otherwise to constitute a single and distinct political entity whether or not within the Nigerian framework. All the delegates from both regions supported the idea in principle in the presence of the British Commissioner for Cameroons.[22] In November, 1952, the second Mission came to Northern Kamerun and found political activity there negligible. Yet, the local branch of the Northern People's Congress (NPC)– the major Northern Nigeria political party with conservative inclinations, which drew its support mainly from the Fulani and Muslims – made several demands of the Mission. It demanded regional autonomy for Northern Kamerun. It also requested «local government reform in favour of a progressive Emirate system based on tradition and custom, and, eventual self-government with Dominion status for Nigeria». A communication from Northern Nigeria proper further asked for the unification of the Northern and Eastern Kamerun Fulani with those of Nigeria within the Nigerian framework. The Mission also heard complaints from some persons concerning trade barriers between Western and Eastern Kamerun.[23] Although no reasons were apparently given for these requests, one thing seems certain: by the end of 1952, the politically active Northern Kamerunians were in favour not only of Unification but also of separating Northern Kamerun from Northern Nigeria and continuing British trusteeship in the region.

But, that was their problem and not that of the British. When the Mission put these requests before the Council for discussion, the British began by painting a very bright future for the economic, social and educational development of Northern Kamerun, adding that its representatives seemed «perfectly capable» of protecting the region's interests in the Nigerian legislative organs.[24] This argument did not, however, satisfy some Members of the United Nations who charged that the existing arrangements flouted the aspirations of the Northern Kamerunians and were destroying the unity and identity of the region's inhabitants. The British special representative to the Council, Brigadier Gibbons, had this to say against those charges:

> *... it had been originally recognized in the Trusteeship Agreement that the two disjointed strips of country comprising the Territory (Western Kamerun) could be effectively administered only in association with the adjoining Protectorate [of Nigeria]; since then, each succeeding year has brought new proof of the abundant advantages, particularly in political education, derived by the Territory from the arrangement... To sever the Territory from Nigeria would be to retard for generations the progress of its people towards the goal set for them in the Charter.*[31]

In other words, the British would not contemplate any modifications in the 'status quo' and, should the United Nations separate Western Kamerun from Nigeria, they would be unable to discharge the trust obligations for the territory. With regard to the question of Unification, Gibbons stated that Western Kamerun was unlikely to become a separate entity whether or not within the Nigerian framework, and, with no hard content to the assertion, he declared that the Northern Kamerunians «clearly desired to remain integrated with Northern Nigeria.»[16]

That this very last assertion was largely unfounded was indicated by the events of the first half of 1953. During the April – May, 1953, constitutional crisis of Nigeria, Dr. Emmanuel Mbele Lifafe Endeley, leader of Southern Kamerun, and Mallam Abba Habid, leader of Northern Kamerun, declared that «they were moving towards a common front for the formation of a legislature for both southern and Northern Cameroons.»[17] In other words, the leaders of both regions were now planning to effect Unification. In any case, almost immediately after this declaration, Endeley and other Southern Kamerun leaders went to Kaduna to explain their position to the Sardauna of Sokoto, Ahmadu Bello, the highest local authority in Northern Nigeria in terms of modern politics. The journey turned out to be ill-advised. First, Bello would neither allow them to meet or talk with Abba Habib. Second, Bello himself declined to give them audience. Third, on their way back to Southern Kamerun in late May, 1953, the Land Rover in which they were travelling was hit with stones in nearly every Nigerian city and town through which they passed. As soon as Endeley and his group left Kaduna for Buea, Abba Habib was made Director of a bank in Nigeria and promised a ministerial post in the near future.[18] Thereafter, Habib was told the idea that, in the event of Unification, Endeley would assume the leadership of the new entity, an eventuality which he did not like. Consequently, when the Northern and Southern Kamerun delegates once more met in Buea in June, 1953, Habib severed his links with the idea of Unification.[19] After 1953, Habib could be counted upon to oppose the separation of Northern Kamerun from Northern Nigeria and the unification of Western Kamerun.

But, Habib was not Northern Kamerun. In the second half of 1953, some Northern Kamerunians, led by the Emir of Dikwa, under the banner of an obscure organization called the 'Kamerun Socialist Convention', demonstrated against the 'status quo' and demanded the separation of Northern Kamerun from Northern Nigeria. More significant, however, was the demand they made for Reunification – the idea that Northern, Southern and Eastern Kamerun be reunited to constitute a single, separate and distinct political entity. The response to the demonstration offered by some of the local authorities, including the British, was bitter. The Emir of Dikwa and the a-Fon involved in the agitation were deposed and their places taken by those people who were either known

to sympathize with the status quo' or promised to do so. The new rulers were given the power to suppress political opinion and, indeed, almost immediately, they began to use this power «to menace any attempts of articulating political opinion that was not in favour of the goals of the Administering Authority». Faced with this situation, some of the Crowned Princes chose the road to exile in the Southern Kamerun sanctuary.[20] This response was so effective that, after 1953, and until 1958, there was hardly any public opposition to the 'status quo' in Northern Kamerun. The British, as will be seen later, took advantage of the situation and embarked on a new policy – that of pretending that there was no opposition to the existing arrangements in Northern Kamerun.

The myth that there was no opposition to the British design in the region and the new British policy were fully given expression between 1953 and early 1958. During the August 1953 London Constitutional Conference of Nigeria, Habib declared that Northern Kamerun preferred to remain an integral part of Northern Nigeria.[21] At the same time, the British constituted a political body in the region, with constitutive power only, known as the «Consultative Committee for the Northern Cameroons» (Consultative Committee). This new body, by 1955, contained twelve members, some of whom were Nigerians, the Lamido of Adamawa for instance, and all of whom were supporters of the British design.[22] When the 1955 Mission consulted with the Consultative Committee, it reported that there was no demand for either Unification or Reunification in Northern Kamerun, adding that the masses were indifferent to the two ideas and that of integration with Nigeria, interpreting them merely as a drawing together of ethnic groups separated by incomprehensible European barriers.[23] Before the Council had time to discuss the 1954 – 1955 Northern Kamerun situation, the British, in spite of the traditions of the Council,* invited Habib to address that organ in 1956. In his address, Habib emphasized the following points. The British had made honest attempts to bring about Unification. But, because of the cultural, religious and linguistic differences between Northern and Southern Kamerun as well as the geographic difficulties, the Northern Kamerunians would not support the idea of Unification. On the other hand, due to the similarities between Northern Kamerun and Northern Nigeria, the Northern Kamerunians preferred to remain permanently an integral part of the Northern Region of Nigeria. Concluding, he praised the British efforts in developing Northern Kamerun in all ways adding that these developments were possible because of the region's association with Northern Nigeria.[24] During the Council's discussion, the Soviet representative charged that British policy violated the Charter and the Trusteeship Agreement and was systematically destroying the identity of the region and its inhabitants. In reply to this charge, the British special representative argued that the important thing «was to see that the future of the Territory was the kind of future which the people themselves wanted», and, for that reason, the United Kingdom could not assure the responsibility of artificially tearing the Northern Kamerunians from Northern Nigeria and forcing Unification on them. The regular representative argued that the Soviet representative had found difficulties in adducing facts to support his arguments and his statements seemed to «drift further and further from the realities of the situation in the Territory as it had progressed».[25] During the 1957 – 1958 London Constitutional Conference Nige-

* Before this time, all the Administering Authorities had opposed the Soviet Union's suggestion that people from Trust Territories should address the Council.

ria, Habib congratulated Southern Kamerun for receiving a conditional promise of a regional status within the Nigerian framework but declared that Northern Kamerun would rather remain an integral part of the Northern Region of Nigeria.[36] The myth that there was no conflict of opinion in Northern Kamerun had thus been given the form of reality and the British had had ample opportunity to execute their new policy of pretending that what existed did not exist.

Nevertheless, in late 1958, in connection with the fourth and final Mission to the region, some Northern Kamerunians gave the lie to that myth. While the Mission was still in Southern Kamerun, Crowned Prince V.H. Bang and twenty other Mambilla a-Fon handed it a petition signed by all three of them, and claiming to speak for the Mambilla ethnic group. Thus, some of the village heads brought to the Mission a petition signed by himself and two others – he claimed to speak for twenty villages all told».[37] The petition requested the United Nations to separate the Mambilla area from Northern Kamerun and make it an integral part of Southern Kamerun.[38] The reasons for this request are best put in the words of the Mambilla people and those of the Mission.

> *The main reasons they gave were that they were not related to those who administered them and that all local powers were vested in the District Heads appointed from Yola (in Northern Nigeria proper), the last three of whom had ruled them badly. The present District Head, they said, was the worst: 'He does not move on foot, we are his horses. Always when he is going out on tour, he has to be carried by us. His weight is not that which even a horse could resist but still we are forced to carry him.'*[39]

When the Mission investigated the allegation that the District Head had turned the Mambilla people into horses on whose backs he rode, the local authorities in Northern Kamerun and Northern Nigeria confirmed it but offered an explanation: the District Head always paid for those services.[40] The Mambilla people had, therefore, clearly indicated that there was some opposition to the British established 'status quo' in Northern Kamerun.

But, they were not alone in doing so. In the Tigon – Ndoro – Kentu area, the Mission received a memorandum from a teacher* claiming that the majority of the people in that area wished to be integrated with Southern Kamerun because, ethnically and culturally, they belonged with the Southern Kamerunians dwelling on the intra – Western Kamerun frontier.[41] In the Adamawa Emirate, which housed about 400,000 of the estimated 800,000 Northern Kamerunians,[42] the challenge to the 'status quo' came mainly from the local branches of the Nigerian political parties. These parties included the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), the Action Group (AG), the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), and the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC). In brief, these local branches asked the Mission to separate Northern Kamerun from Northern Nigeria, to grant full regional status to Northern Kamerun and continued direct British trust administration. They gave several reasons for this position. The association of Northern Kamerun with Northern Nigeria had resulted in the abolition of many of their traditional institutions and those which still survived had been reduced to nonentities. Northern Kamerun had become a colony of Northern Nigeria administered by

* Next to the Crowned Princes, teachers were a very powerful force to reckon with in influencing opinion all over Kamerun.

Nigerians appointed by the Lamido of Adamawa. Indeed, it could best be regarded as «a Colony of Yola* or a place for adventure of the few ruling families from Yola». Due to this administrative monopoly of Northern Nigerians, the Northern Kamerunians were not being adequately trained for the administration of their own region. Fully aware that there was a conflict of opinion in the region regarding its disposition, they suggested that the United Nations should conduct a plebiscite as a means of resolving the conflict.[43]

Despite this opposition of the 'status quo', there were people in Northern Kamerun and Nigeria who wanted no changes in the existing arrangements. The Lamido of Adamawa, Mallam Aliyu Mustafa,† assured the Mission that his loyal Northern Kamerun subjects were living in peace with their Northern Nigerian brothers, were well represented in the Native Authority Council and could not, therefore, be expected to support any move that would sever their Northern Nigerian connection. Yet, they would welcome the idea of integrating them and their north Eastern Kamerun brothers into Nigeria. The Sardauna of Sokoto found it difficult to see how anyone who knew Northern Kamerun could «conceive of any political future – taking into account the factors of history, geography and economics – which would bring greater benefits to its inhabitants than that they should throw in their lot with an independent Nigeria and within the Northern Region». After acknowledging that opinion was divided on the issue in the region, he suggested a plebiscite whose only question should be: «Do you want union with the Northern Region of an independent Nigeria? Only in the event of a negative vote should the electorate be presented with a choice between Unification and Reunification. The five Northern Kamerunians who sat in the Nigerian legislatures agreed that there was opposition to the existing arrangements in the region but blamed that opposition on the German – appointed tyrants and their descendants whom the British had deposed because of their tyranny, oppression, as well as barbarism. As far as these representatives were concerned, Northern Kamerun could never be separated from Northern Nigeria. They also requested a referendum, plebiscite or any other means that could be used to resolve the conflict over the issue in the region. The local branch of the NPC passed a vote of confidence in the Adamawa Native Authority and the Government of Northern Nigeria and denied that any responsible person could ever support the idea of separating Northern Kamerun from Northern Nigeria. Such an ill-conceived idea, they went on, was being advocated by the UMBC, NEPU, AG and NCNC which were extraneous to the Northern Nigerian system and which drew their support mainly from «a few disgruntled... descendants of autocratic tyrant German – time chiefs who were stopped from unjust and cruel treatment of the people of this area.»[44] In the Tigon – Ndoro – Kentu area, the Mission also encountered Mallam Tanko Yusufu, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Trade and Industry in the Northern Regional Government and Member of the Consultative Committee, who claimed that all the chiefs, councillors and a large number of the people in the area on October 23, 1958, unanimously decided that «We will remain with the Northern Region; nothing will ever make us join the Southern Cameroons.» According to him, they had everything in common with the Northern Nigerians and little in common with the Southern Kamerunians.[45] It is clear, therefore, not only that there

* Yola was the headquarters of the Adamawa Emirate which included both Northern Kamerunians and Northern Nigerians and was located in Nigeria.

† He was a Nigerian living in Yola, Nigeria.

was a real conflict of opinion in Northern Kamerun regarding the disposition of the region but also that a large number of the Northern Kamerunians, particularly those who were out of authority, were very opposed to the British established 'status quo'.

Nevertheless, the British refused to accept reality. Several months before the Mission set out for Northern Kamerun, the British furnished the Council with a document, subsequently transmitted to the Mission dated June 27, 1958, bearing, among other things, the following relevant information. The Council will,

> *in considering this question (future of Western Kamerun) have in mind the history and development of the Trust Territory as explained in the Annual Report of the Administering Authority and in its statements before the Council.* * *In particular, the council will recall that the Trust Territory falls naturally into two sections, the North and the South. The Northern section... has always been administered together with the adjacent Provinces of the Northern Region of Nigeria. Its inhabitants are closely connected ethnically with the people of that Region. The people of the Southern Cameroons... have no natural connection ethnic or otherwise, with those of the North. They were infact administered for many years as a part of the Eastern Region of Nigeria... During the decision of the 1957 Constitutional Conference... the representatives of the Northern Cameroons joined with the other delegates from the Northern Region of Nigeria in their statements at the Conference that they did not want immediate regional self-government for the Northern Region...*[46]

In view of what has been seen so far concerning the role of the British in the events, it can reasonably be suggested that the British designed this statement to reaffirm their position regarding the Northern Kamerun Problem, to register their continued opposition to any changes in the existing arrangements, to influence the decision of the Council and to bias the Mission's report in their favour.

Indeed, the descriptions, analyses, suggestions and recommendations of the Mission, which contradicted the very important evidence in the Mission report included mainly as annexes, were little more than a detailed elaboration of what could be found in this British document.[47] One example will suffice. Undeining every word of it, the Mission wrote:

> *The Mission has come to the conclusion, on the basis of the facts and opinions known to it – which include the consideration of historical and political development which it has set forth in the first part of this report – that there is no difference of opinion on the principal question of the future of the Northern Cameroons which would require or justify the holding of a formal consultation on the subject. It believes it to be manifestly the opinion of the northern population as a whole, as far as it can be expressed at present and in the foreseeable future, that they*

* These statements involved the following main ideas: Northern Kamerun was a natural part of Northern Nigeria and could not therefore be separated from it; the Northern Kamerunians were opposed to both separation from Nigeria and Unification; Western Kamerun could not form a viable economic and political entity; Northern and Southern Kamerunians were quite distinct from each other.

> *would become permanently a part of the Northern Region of the Federation of Nigeria when the latter attains independence. The Mission accordingly recommends that, if the General Assembly accepts such a union as the basis for the termination of the Trusteeship Agreement, no further consultation need be held.*[48]

It is important to note that the opposition to the Northern Nigerian connection as described above during the year 1958 is the product of the evidence found in the Mission's report from which the Mission's conclusion and recommendation has been extracted.

Whatever the case, when the Mission's report came up for discussion in the Council, the British representative, Sir Andrew Cohen, recited the sections of the report that supported the 'status quo'. He praised the experience of the Mission which helped it arrive at accurate conclusions, found the arguments presented by the Mission very convincing, endorsed the Mission's conclusion and recommendations and asked the Council to do likewise. In order to emphasize the British position, he added that she did not think that the Trusteeship Council would wish gratuitously to burden the people of the Northern Cameroons with the paraphernalia of a more formal consultation.[49] When the Soviet representative, A. Lobanov, doubted the Mission's conclusions and questioned its recommendations, Cohen became very hostile and, indeed, made it impossible for the Council to discuss the report with the result that it was immediately transmitted to the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly (Committee), the Committee which handled trusteeship affairs.[50]

But before the Committee had time to examine the Mission's report, the British invited one of the local authorities in Northern Kamerun, Mallam Abdulahi Dan Buram, the Minister for Northern Cameroons Affairs in the Northern Regional Government of Nigeria, to address that organ. In his address, Dan Buram made four essential points: whether or not Southern Kamerun remained an integral part of Nigeria, Northern Kamerun would have nothing to do with unification; likewise, Reunification was out of the question; all the Northern Kamerunians unanimously desired their permanent integration with the Northern Region of Nigeria; and, because of this unanimity, no further consultation was necessary. Like the British, he used the mythical affinity between the Northern Kamerunians and Nigerians and the differences between the Northern and Southern Kamerunians to support his position.[51] When questioned by the Iraqi representative about the Mambilla request, Dan Buram argued that the Northern Regional Government had no knowledge of it until the arrival of the Mission in Northern Kamerun. The two communications were made to the Mission when it visited Southern Kamerun by three Mambilla a-Fon living close to the Southern Kamerun border and they could not be held to speak for the Mambilla people as a whole.[52] In this way, the Northern Kamerunian local authorities, like the British, continued to pretend that there was no conflict of opinion or challenge to their policy in Northern Kamerun.

The same argument was carried on in the Committee by the British themselves. During the debate, Cohen recited the sections of the report that supported the British view, praised the Mission for its thorough investigations and accurate conclusions, endorsed everything the Mission had recommended. This was a repeat of what he did in the Council, and then invited the Committee to give full weight to the Mission's conclusions and recommendations. The

British were not too disappointed for they received the support of New Zealand, the Netherlands, Canada, the United States of America and Australia. But there was also a very strong opposition, led by the Soviet Union and supported by an overwhelming majority of the Members of the United Nations, who were themselves not Administering Authorities, to nearly every conclusion and recommendation of the Mission. When Cohen realized that, because of the position of the majority, a Northern Kamerun plebiscite was no longer avoidable, he stated that the United Kingdom «had never objected in principle to a holding of a plebiscite in Northern Cameroons, (and, indeed), it had expected the Visiting Mission to propose a plebiscite and had been surprised when it had not done so». Because there was a general consensus in favour of one, the United Kingdom «was anxious to meet the views of the majority where possible and it in the Northern Cameroons, provided that the proposed arrangements for the holding of such a plebiscite were suitable to the circumstances of the Northern Cameroons». One of these circumstances was provided by Dan Buram who spoke immediately after Cohen. He stated that, according to tradition, the women of the region would have to be excluded from the plebiscite. He also suggested that the plebiscite question should be, «Do you want union with the Northern Region of an independent Nigeria»? Only in the event of a negative vote, he concluded, should the electors be presented with a choice between Unification and Reunification. After much heated debate, the General Assembly agreed to exclude the women from the plebiscite and to ask the men the following questions: «(a) Do you wish the Northern Cameroons to be part of the Northern Region of Nigeria when the Federation of Nigeria becomes independent? Or (b) Are you in favour of deciding the future of the Northern Cameroons at a later date?» The British were charged with the conduct of the plebiscite under United Nations' supervision.[53]

Unfortunately, however, the conduct of the plebiscite was far from satisfactory.* The majority of the Northern Kamerun local authorities, Fulani and British in the main, unsuccesfully made all attempts, to procure a pro – 'status quo' vote. A few examples will suffice. During the campaign period, several leaders and strong supporters of the second proposition – future decision or continued trusteeship – were arrested and locked up in jails without charges or trials. For instance at Sugu, on July 26, 1959, about thirty-two of the leaders and supporters of the Northern Kamerun Democratic Party (NKDP), the only indigenous political party in the region, formed in the first half of 1959 to fight the plebiscite, and having Reunification as its ultimate aim, were arrested by Fulani authorities and imprisoned at Jada and Yola.[54] The British defended this action at the United Nations, by arguing that those arrested were attempting to obtain permits for public lectures by force and when they had not obtained the permits, they created a rowdy scene which endangered law and order.[55] In other words, they were merely criminals. There was a 'law' requiring persons wishing to campaign in open or public lectures to acquire permits before doing so. But, the majority of the local authorities consitently refused to issue those permits to the leaders who campaigned against the 'status quo.' As already seen, the Sugu incident of July 26, 1959, was a product of this behaviour which, essentially demoralised and frustrated the campaign efforts of the supporters of the second alternative. When the United Nations plebiscite Commissioner, Dr. Djalal Abdoh, approached the British Plebiscite

* For a more elaborate and detailed description and analysis of the conduct of the plebiscite, see Chem-Langhee, pp. 220–257.

Administrator, Sir John Dring, on the question of the consistent refusal of permits to the NKDP, Dring merely argued that there was «no constitutional authority for vesting the issue of permits in British officials».[56] Finally, although the list is by no means complete, the local British authorities condoned and abetted partiality of the local officials. The Governor-General of Nigeria had issued instructions to the effect that government officials charged with the conduct of the plebiscite should not only be impartial but should also make that impartiality unassailable. When Ahmadu Bello received the instruction's he interpreted them, on September 16, 1959, in such a way as to virtually nullify them by attempting to make an uncertain distinction between an official acting in his capacity as an elected representative of the people and as a government official. The outcome of this new interpretation was that nearly all the officials charged with the conduct of the plebiscite defied the neutrality appeal. When Dr. Abdoh confronted Dring with this problem, the latter informed the former that the Resident «had again warned Native Authority Officials (to be impartial) when carrying out their official duties, (but that those) officials could not be barred from taking part in political activities in their personal capacities».[57] It is difficult to see how an official taking part in active political campaign can be able to make a distinction between his official requisites and his personal political desires.

Whatever the case, despite the bottlenecks put on the path of those who campaigned in favour of a future decision, the electorate still voted with a solid majority in favour of the second proposition. The pro – Northern Nigerian votes were 42,788 (about 36%) while those for the future decision were 70,546 (approximately 64%).[58] Nevertheless, the contents of the votes in the November 1959 Northern Kamerun plebiscite had a peculiar meaning. The United Nations plebiscite team – the plescite Commissioner, his staff and observers – were agreed on this issue. As Dr. Abdoh put it himself:

> *It would appear that the majority of the voters made use of the apportunity offered by the plebiscite to register what was in effect a protest vote against the system of Northern Cameroons. The information that (we) gathered in the territory supports the view that the people desire the introduction of reforms in the system of local government – which to them is synonymous with government – and that one of the reasons why the majority voted in favour of the second alternative was to express the wish for a speedy introduction of those reforms.*[59]

This meaning of the votes for the second proposition of the plebiscite is not surprising. During the campaign period those who favoured the Northern Nigeria alternative and those who opted for a future decision all made government, or rather local administration, the central issue of the contest.[60] The majority of the Northern Kamerunians had experienced enough problems with the existing local administration to want more. The majority of the non-Fulani population had been given the opportunity to denounce the administration which not only brought them closer to Islam – the threat to their cultural identity – but also put them completely under Fulani domination – the threat to their lives and source of their oppression. By severing their links with Nigeria, they would be ruled directly by the British – their protectors against Fulani tyranny and oppression. Likewise, the Northern Kamerun Fulani rulers who did not take kindly to the subordination of their authority to that of the Northern Nigerian Fulani rulers were also given an apportunity to vote to be

master in their own houses. The German-time tyrants and their descendants had a chance to avenge themselves on the British for stripping them of their legal right. The very small Western-educated elite was given the opportunity to sever the Nigerian connection, embark on the development of their own region themselves, get rid of the Nigerian administrative monopoly of their jobs the offices and other jobs in the region. Only those who benefitted substantially from the existing arrangements or whose religious feelings outweighed any other consideration voted for the Northern Nigeria propositions. But how many of them were there? The number of votes for that alternative speaks for itself. The surprise then is not that the results of the 1959 plebiscite in Northern Kamerun were what they were. It is that the British apparently did not expect them.

The initial British reaction to the results of the plebiscite was marked by surprise, disbelief, the refusal to recognize them and the determination to have things their own way. When addressing the Committee on the issue, Cohen made the following points. The British were very surprised by the results of the vote for, although they had expected «quite a substantial vote for the second alternative», they did not expect a majority of votes in favour of that proposition. However, the results turned out to be what they were because the Northern Kamerunians secured an exceptional share of development finance for roads, schools and hospitals under the British trust administration and were, therefore, well disposed to the trusteeship system. By deferring their decision, they hoped to gain more of this development finance under continued trusteeship administration. Whatever the case, «Northern Cameroons is still to be wooed and much may be won during courtship that may not be offered after marriage». Indeed, the vote was a function of the dissatisfaction of the people «at not being able to play a larger part in the system of local administration... which to them is synonymous with Government». It was the local Native Administration, not the Northern Regional Government, that was unpopular. In fact, the vote in the plebiscite was emphatically not to be regarded as a vote against Nigeria».[61] The British, in these words, not only refused to recognize the results of the plebiscite they themselves had organized but also indicated that they were determined to continue with the integration of Northern Kamerun with Northern Nigeria. Perhaps what is more significant here was the indication that they would once more change their approach to the Northern Kamerun Problem. This time, they were ready to mislead the Northern Kamerunians. Northern Kamerun was still to be wooed – who was to do the wooing, when, how and for what reason? Much may be won during courtship that may not be offered after marriage – who was to win what? Who was to offer what during courtship that may not be delivered after marriage? and who was to marry who? What these questions point to is that the British were set for the manipulation of the Northern Kamerunians.

The manipulative process began at the United Nations and involved the date of the next plebiscite, the second plebiscite's questions and the voters' qualifications. With regard to these questions, Cohen immediately offered the following suggestions. The second plebiscite should take place at the same time with that of the first Southern Kamerun plebiscite, that is, between November 1960 and March 1961. The question to be put in the plebiscite should be identical with those of Southern Kamerun, namely, «Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Federation of Nigeria? Or, Do you wish to achieve independence by joining the independent Republic of the Cameroons»? The votes in the Northern Kamerun plebiscite should be

considered separately from those of Southern Kamerun and the decisions of the two regions must be considered separately. The voters in the Northern Kamerun plebiscite should include genuine residents of the Trust Territory, even those who might have been excluded from the Federal register on grounds of nationality». The Northern Kamerunians should not be excluded from the Nigerian Federal elections of December 12, 1959, to the House of Representatives at Lagos. And the Nigerian Federal Government had to be consulted before any decision was taken regarding the voters' qualifications.*[62]

Cohen's suggestions were very manipulative. The timing of the plebiscite put the Northern Kamerunians under the onus of four elections within a period of sixteen months involving different issues, namely: the 1959 plebiscite – dealing with a choice between Northern Nigeria and separation from Northern Nigeria with continued trusteeship administration; the Federal elections of December 1959 – involving the selection of persons to represent the region in the Nigerian central legislature; the mid – 1960 elections – dealing with the selection of persons to sit in the newly created Northern Kamerun administrative units (to be discussed presently); and the February 1961 plebiscite – offering the populace a choice between Nigerian and Cameroonian citizenship. Even in fairly politically well-advance countries, a situation like this could be expected to create great confusion in the minds of the electorate and, as will be seen later, this is exactly what happened in Northern Kamerun where the organizers were also bent on taking advantage of the situation. The choice of the questions excluded continued trusteeship, whose popularity was no longer in question. Moreover, the voters' qualifications made the decision no longer the problem of the Northern Kamerunians 'per se' but that also of Nigeria and, indeed, the Commonwealth; genuine residents of Northern Kamerun included Nigerians and officials from some parts of the Commonwealth while the Nigerian Government was to be consulted before any decision was taken on the voters' qualifications. What is perhaps more surprising is that, with only insignificant modifications, and except for the fact the United Nations gave the votes to the females of the region in the second plebiscite, the United Nations accepted all the suggestions Cohen had offered including the timing of the plebiscite and the idea that the Northern Kamerunians participate in the Federal elections.[63]

It is, therefore, no surprise that the leaders of the NKDP reacted negatively to the United Nations' decision. On December 7, 1959, Mallam Ibrahim Abba, Founder and President of the NKDP, and Mallam Iyan, Secretary – General of the same party, dispatched a telegram bearing the following messages. The Northern Kamerunians, who had just voted in the last plebiscite to sever their Nigerian connection, should not be allowed to participate in the forthcoming Federal elections of Nigeria. Instead, a separate administration should be created for Northern Kamerun and administrative reforms begun immediately. They considered as «completely unacceptable British intention that (their) plebiscite take place at the same time as that of Southern Cameroons which (was) much more politically developed». More time was needed before the next plebiscite could take place in order to give them the opportunity to study the problems at stake and then educate the electorate on what was involved. Since the British had an obligation to develop Northern Kamerun and its people to the level of its neighbours, the British should also be given adequate time to do so.[64] The same day, these same leaders followed up this Telegramme with a written

* (62) Ibid. PP. 7–10

petition which repeated and elaborated on what was contained in the telegram but added two new elements. They demanded that, as of October 1, 1960, the date Nigeria was to regain her independence, the Governor – General of Nigeria should have nothing to do with Western Kamerun. Instead, Northern and Southern Kamerun should be unified in all aspects as a first step to the ultimate Reunification of Kamerun, which would come only after Western Kamerun should have become an independent state.[65] What these leaders were essentially requesting was the complete severance of all links with Nigeria immediately, continued trusteeship administration for an indefinite period, Unification after October 1, 1960, and Reunification after Western Kamerun as a unit had regained its independence.

Yet, the British administrative reforms of early 1960 ignored most of these elements. The administration of Northern Kamerun was separated from that of Northern Nigeria and the region was carved into four administrative Divisions. But politically, the region as a whole was one of the Provinces of Northern Nigeria with headquarters at Mubi. Each Division had its own Native Authority and several administrative Districts under each Native Authority. The Native Authority and District Councils were supervised by Britishers in the main. The previous Councils whose members were elected indirectly were abolished and those who sat in the new District Councils were democratically and directly elected by the electorate. Former District Heads found to be unacceptable to the people were either withdrawn or replaced by temporary appointments, and, in the latter case, the District Councils were given an opportunity to confirm or reject the appointed District Head. The members of the Native Authority Council were elected from among the District Councillors and the Chairman of the Native Authority was approved by the District Council. The majority of the District Councillors were elected directly by the people of the area. Many Crowned Princes were nominated to the district Councils and the ex-officio members of any District Council were appointed in consultation with the elected members of that particular District Council. Similarly, the ex-officio members of the Native Authority were appointed in consultation with the various District Councils of that particular Native Authority. The hand-picked a-Fon of 1953 were dismissed, some of whom found themselves in prisons, and the legitimate ones resumed their functions. The Native Authorities levied taxes for local services, appointed local government staff, looked after local education and health services, maintained law and order, provided for agricultural and veterinary services, and established numerous committees to help them in their daily functions. The District Councils levied rates for certain public services, engaged, controlled and disciplined their staffs and made recommendations to the Native Authorities regarding adult education reading rooms, communal forests, nurseries, roads and sanitary services. The newly created Mambilla Council had more powers than the others; «besides having an important advisory function to the Gashaka-Mambilla Native Authority, (it) levies tax for local services». The a-Fon, the lowest ranking officials in the new administration, collected taxes, assisted in the maintenance of law and order, and reported deaths, births, and marriages.[66] The wooing process had come to an end and not only were these reforms well-received but the majority of the Northern Kamerunians came to misperceive them as separation from Nigeria and continued direct British trusteeship administration for an indefinite period.[67]

Their leaders, who were aware of this misperception, once again dispatched petitions to the United Nations over the issue. In a petition written before

May, 1960, the NKDP leaders reported the confusion in the region to the United Nations, pleaded with that organization for the postponement of the plebiscite would be interpreted as an attempt by the United Nations to force the populace into voting for Nigeria under false impressions and fear.[68] At the same time, Philip Maken, one of those elected in the December 1959 local elections to represent Northern Kamerun in the House of Representatives at Lagos, also wrote a petition to the United Nations making the following points. He reported the misconception the electorate had and indicated that the Northern Nigeria Government was responsible for that situation because it was busily «twisting» the questions of the second plebiscite and making a mockery of the first plebiscite.* He called on the United Nations to postpone the plebiscite and found it difficult to understand how that organization could ignore the wishes of the NKDP which was the only indigenous political party at that particular time in the region. He further demanded an immediate regional government for Northern Kamerun, continued direct British trust administration for a period of five to ten years to be followed by Unification. Without dwelling on Reunification, he concluded by stressing the need to postpone the plebiscite which he described as his main concern as well as that of his colleagues.[69]

The local branches of the UMBC, AG, NEPU and NCNC, although they were soon to campaign in favour of Nigeria, also joined in the protest and made the following interesting statements on July 13, 1960. The future of their dear fatherland, the Northern Kamerun, was uncertain and there was great anxiety in the region. The «British and the Nigerians had already prepared a great trap** for the people of Northern Cameroons». If the second plebiscite would have any meaning, the present British Resident, and the British and Nigerian administrative officers in the region must be withdrawn without delay and replaced by new ones from Britain or elsewhere. These officers were already campaigning in favour of the Nigeria proposition. The fact that the region had been made a Province of Northern Nigeria was unacceptable because they had rejected Northern Nigeria in the last plebiscite. Northern Kamerunians were Kamerunians, not Nigerians. They had no place in Nigeria and wished to maintain their national identity. They ended by demanding Unification on the grounds that there was only «one British Cameroons».[70] The United Nations failed to respond to any of these requests and these leaders were forced into campaigning.

The environment in which the second plebiscite was conducted was not better than that of the first. Indeed, it was worse: the new local authorities, jealous of their new freedom and reformed administration, and the now more numerous British officials, were determined to keep what they had worked for the last forty years. They made it impossible for the opponents of the Nigeria alternative to campaign effectively. The irregularities involved in the first plebiscite were not only repeated but also intensified: new and more severe laws aimed at the proponents of the Cameroon proposition were promulgated or, if they previously existed, were activated and applied effectively; the number of arrests increased and became more frequent, all of them directed against

* It should be carefully noted that, as one of the elected representatives, Maken was part of that Northern Nigerian Government. The suggestion is that he was better placed to know the activities of that government, activities he was now reporting.

** The great trap referred to here was nothing other than the reformed local administration and the way it was being presented to the electorate.

the opponents of the Nigeria alternative; Nigerians flocked into the region not only to campaign but also to vote, while obstacles were placed on the path of the Eastern Kamerunians wishing to do the same thing. Indeed, the campaign of those who favoured the Nigerian proposition was organized and directed by the Minister of Local Government in the Northern Regional Government. The Northern Regional Government also sent a special team of Government led by a British expatriate, to the region; new laws made it almost impossible for the Cameroon Government to send effective material aid to the propagandists of the Cameroon alternative. Not surprising, after all these irregularities had occurred, Sir John Dring unsuccessfully attempted to involve the Plebiscite Commissioner, Dr. Abdoh, in a cover-up. What was even worse is that those who campaigned in favour of Nigeria interpreted the Cameroon proposition as France and the Nigerian alternative as the reformed local administration.[73] The significance of these irregularities is that they made it impossible for the majority of the electors to know what exactly the contents of each plebiscite question involved. Thus they went to the polls worse informed than they were in the first plebiscite.

The outcome of this situation was the uncertian meaning surrounding the meaning of the votes in the second Northern Kamerun plebiscite. During the campaign period, the supporters of Cameroon citizenship offered the electorate a federal constitution involving either three independent states – Northern, Southern, Eastern Kamerun states – or two independent states – Western or Eastern Kamerun states. The main advantages they showed would accrue from this situation were the rapid development of Northern Kamerun in all matters and the preservation of national identity. No doubt, they represented Nigeria as the source of Fulani domination and oppression. But, the electorate did not see the Nigerian proposition as a return to Nigeria out of which they had come in the 1959 plebiscite. On the other hand, the advocates of Nigeria citizenship presented Cameroon as France which had exploded atomic bombs in the Sahara to kill the electorate. Or, alternately, as a country which never kept its promises. To their advantage, they presented Nigeria as the reformed local administration.[74] As all the local branches of the Nigerian political parties, which came together during the campaign period, formed a consortium during this period and campaigned in favour of Nigeria, put it themselves, when it was accurately rumoured that the Cameroon Republic was attempting to have the United Nations nullify the results of the plebiscite, «We have elected our Native Authorities and want to keep them. We do not want the Cameroon Republics».[74] The Native Authority located in the headquarters of the new Northern Kamerun Province of Northern Nigeria went further and stressed the democratic element in the reformed administration: «MUBI NATIVE AUTHORITY, DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED GOVERNMENT, OBJECTS ATTACK ON ITS SERVANTS IN CAMEROUN BOOK.* REJECTS CAMEROUN CLAIM TO THIS TERRITORY».[74] In the second Northern Kamerun plebiscite, therefore, the majority of the electorate, in substance, and not in theory, voted for the reformed local administration of mid-1960.

* The white paper in which the Cameroon Government outlined the irregularities involved in the plebiscite and then requested the United Nations to declare the results null and void.

That this situation was the case is not surprising; the reformed administration gave something to each of the sections of the society. The disgruntled Fulani rulers, whose authority had been subjected to that of the Northern educated minority, were now masters in their own houses. The Western-Fulani rulers were now masters in their own houses. The Northern minority was now in firm control of the administrative offices and other posts in the region. The Northern Kamerunians as a whole democratically made decisions regarding the affairs of their region, took an active part in its administration and received the opportunity to rapidly develop the region in their own way. The «Fon now sat in the new Councils as equals of the Fulani rulers. Moreover, tradition was now once more being respected; witness the resumption of duties by the Crowned Princes who were deposed following the events of 1953. Having perceived the new arrangements as separation from Nigeria or rather Northern Nigeria, the non-Fulani Northern Kamerunians came to believe that they had severed their links with the source of the threat to their lives and cultural identity. Finally, although the list is by no means complete, the reformed administration increased the number of Britishers in the region and, 'ipso facto', increased the protection for the non-Fulani population against Fulani oppression. By voting for the reformed local administration in the second plebiscite, the majority of the Northern Kamerunians essentially voted for continued British trusteeship administration. That is what was promised during courtship but was never delivered after marriage. That is why «the proposed withdrawal of the British from the area with the end of the plebiscite was matter of gravest concern to many pagans».[75]

There was, therefore, a consitency in the behaviour of the Northern Kamerunians during the two plebiscites; in November, 1959, they voted for continued, direct British trusteeship administration and in February, 1961, they voted for the same thing. But, it was a consistency made possible by the British manipulation of the situation. The very high rate of illiteracy in the region, 97 per cent,[76] with its correspondingly very low level of Western political education* contributed greatly to the success of the manipulative process.

* The leaders of the local branches of the Nigerian political parties showed clearly that, as far as they were concerned, the plebiscite involved the Native Authorities and the Cameroon Republic – see statement for footnote 73. At the same time, the Councillors of the Mubi Native Authority, who must be considered among the highest Western-educated, called the Native Authority «Governments – see statement for footnote 74. These indicate the level of political education in the region.

NOTES

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