



Research article

# Bamileke Immigrants, Commercial Farming and Land Disputes in Kumba Division, British Southern Cameroons

by

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## Abstract

This article investigates the role played by French Cameroon immigrants in the indigenisation of commercial agriculture in the British Southern Cameroons and the consequent land conflicts that the commercialisation of farming by "settlers" provoked in this part of Cameroon. Based on archival and secondary sources, the study reveals that Bamileke immigrants from French Cameroons settled in Kumba Division, British Southern Cameroons because of the fertility of its volcanic soils and that they pioneered commercial farming thereby provoking envy from the indigenous land owners who became jealous of their yields. It concludes that land disputes hitherto unknown in Kumba became common as more and more enterprising Bamileke immigrants invested in and made profit from commercial and export-oriented farming. **Copyright © AJSSAL, all rights reserved.**

**Key Words:** Commercial farming, Land disputes, Southern Cameroons, Bamileke immigrants, Cash crops.

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## Introduction

When the Germans annexed Cameroon in July 1884, they went in for plantation agriculture and commercial farming with the objective of increasing the quantities and quality of tropical raw materials they obtained from Cameroon and experimenting new cash crops. The tropical raw materials they needed included palm oil and kernel, rubber,



timber, ivory, cotton, tobacco, cocoa and banana. These products could only be acquired in industrial quantities through plantations agriculture. The Germans therefore started plantation farming along the coast of Cameroon as early as 1885. The first plantation in Cameroon was a venture in partnership of the two rival German firms, the Woermann firm and Jantzen and Thormählen firm<sup>1</sup>

Plantation agriculture required the movement of labour from where it was located to the plantation zone. Nearly all the plantations set up by the Germans were, for geographical and economic reasons, located in the forest zone near the coast. The coast had fertile volcanic soils and ports like the Victoria and Tiko ports for the evacuation of the products to Germany. Based on some superficial observations, the Germans concluded that the forest people were not as sturdy, as industrious or good agriculturalists as their brothers living in the healthier highlands of the interior consequently they recruited labour for their plantations located along the coast, from the Western Grassland (Bamenda and Bamileke Highlands), Ewondo and Kribi zones. Besides, the people who lived in the relatively sparsely populated coastal area had, for many generations, been engaged as middlemen between the interior "bushmen" who gathered the raw materials and the European merchants operating on the coast. These coastal people therefore had a source of regular income from their monopoly position as middlemen and were not attracted to paid employment as labourers or porters on the plantations<sup>2</sup>. For these and other reasons, plantation labour came from the interior of German Kamerun.

In 1916, Germany was defeated and expelled from Cameroon by Anglo-French forces following the outbreak of the First World War in Europe. Anglo-French authorities decided to partition Cameroon in to two portions. The French were given four-fifths of the land and Britain the remaining one-fifth. The British further divided their tiny and disjointed strip into British Northern Cameroons and British Southern Cameroons. Despite the tiny nature of the British portion, about 90 percent of the German-owned plantations were found in British Southern Cameroons<sup>3</sup>.

The Anglo-French boundary in Cameroon separated the Bamileke from their kith and kin such as the Bangwa in Mamfe Division and the Tikar in Bamenda Division of the British Southern Cameroons<sup>4</sup>. It also separated the Bamileke from the plantations and fertile volcanic soils in the Victoria and Kumba Divisions along the coast of the British Southern Cameroons. The Bamileke who had migrated to this territory during the period of German Administration and those who migrated there much later after the partition became "strangers" in a

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<sup>1</sup> H.R.,Rudin, *The Germans in the Cameroons 1884-1914, A Case Study in Modern Imperialism*, New York, Greenwood Press,1968, p.249

<sup>2</sup> S. Ardener and A. Warmington, *Plantation and Village in the Cameroons*, London, Oxford University Press, 1960, p.45

<sup>3</sup> E.Aka, *British Southern Cameroons 1922-1961: A Study in Colonialism and Underdevelopment*, Platteville, NKemnji Global Tech, 2002, p.22

<sup>4</sup> The Bamileke are a very industrious people found in the Western Highlands or Grassland of Cameroon. They are known for their mobility and dynamism as they dominate economic activities in almost all the major towns of Cameroon. They have been at the center of many land or interethnic conflicts in the cities of Douala and Yaounde since independence because of their land grabbing culture.



territory that was hitherto considered their backyard. It was under these circumstances that the Bamileke became immigrants and "strangers" in the Kumba Division and the British administered Cameroon in general.

### **Bamileke Immigrations to the Southern Cameroons**

After the First World War and the 1916 Anglo-French Partition of Cameroon, thousands of Bamileke people crossed the borders from French administered Cameroon to the British Southern Cameroons. These were both protest and economic migrants. The majority of both the economic and protest migrants had as destinations, in the Southern Cameroons, the Kumba and Victoria Divisions because of the fertility of the soils and the presence of plantations set up by the Germans. Several factors accounted for Bamileke migrations to the Southern Cameroons. These factors could be classified under push and pull factors.

The push factors consisted of all those French colonial policies that contradicted African customs and deprived the people of their economic and political liberties. One such practice was the use of warrant chiefs, the dethronement of chiefs opposed to French assimilation or the appointment of chiefs in areas with traditionally recognized and influential chiefs. This practice was opposed by the Bamileke, Bamum and others who possessed centralised political institutions. For example, in 1924, the French dethroned King Ibrahim Njoya of Bamum and this led to a rebellion in the Bamum Kingdom. Close to 2000 supporters of King Njoya under the leadership of Musa Njoya left French Cameroons for the British Southern Cameroons. The Bamileke Chiefdoms that suffered similar chieftaincy reorganization by the French lost population as many who could not withstand the injury to their cultural pride and the persecutions of their traditional rulers escaped to the Southern Cameroons.<sup>5</sup>

The French policy of Forced Labour or *corvée* and *prestation* provoked the largest waves of migrations to the Southern Cameroons. *Corvée* was the compulsory use of African labour in the plantations or for road and rail construction without pay while *Prestation* was compulsory ten days unpaid labour that each African had to offer the French. Many escaped this policy because workers died of hunger, diseases and hard work on the railways and plantations. For example, in 1924, the French administrator for the Dschang District, Ripert, reported a mass exodus of people from the borders to join their relations on the British side. He admitted that this was due to forced labour<sup>6</sup>. He had to reduce to almost zero the quota of workers to be supplied by villages on the border with the Southern Cameroons in order to stop the exodus.

Other policies were the *Laissez-passer*, Conscription into the army, De-Germanisation, *indigénat* and police repression that characterized the implementation of these policies. Workers were imposed a work permit and travel warrant as a condition to move from one district to another. Healthy men were forced into the colonial army and the French administrators were given the right to punish the unassimilated African without trial. De-

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<sup>5</sup> V.G.Fanso, "Trans-Frontier Relations and Resistance to Cameroon-Nigeria Colonial Boundaries 1916-1945", *Doctorat d'Etat* Thesis, University of Yaounde, 1982,p.271

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.207



Germanisation was the deportation of all pro-Germans and the ban on all German literature, language and culture. All those who resisted these policies were arrested, detained and tortured or exiled. Many Bamileke victims of these policies took refuge in the Southern Cameroons where such practices were uncommon.

From 1955, most of the immigrants were escaping from the French crake down on the rebellion believed to have been orchestrated by the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC) in French Cameroons<sup>7</sup>. The towns of Kumba, Victoria, Bamenda, Santa and Tombel received most of the UPC nationalists escaping from French persecutions. About 5000 of them settled in Kumba which was geographically closer to the nationalist's hideouts in French Cameroon<sup>8</sup>.

The last and the most important push factor was population pressure in the Bamileke *Départments*. The population densities in the Bamileke Chiefdoms were the highest in both the French and British Cameroons averaging 103 persons per square kilometer by 1960<sup>9</sup>. By 1946, the population density of some chiefdom in the Bamileke region had reached astonishing proportions. Three Chiefdoms in the Bafoussam Sub-Division had attained density figures of over 800 persons per square mile.<sup>10</sup> Apart from this population pressure, the traditional Bamileke system of land tenure provided for succession of land title to a single heir, usually the eldest son. As such the younger brothers or sons who were landless migrated in search of fertile land and other job opportunities in the Southern Cameroons.

The opportunities in the Southern Cameroons constituted the pull factors. The first opportunities were found in the trade sector. When the British and French partitioned Cameroon, they hurriedly imposed custom formalities on either side of the frontiers and ordered custom guards and preventive officers to patrol the borders regularly. This attitude dislocated indigenous long distance trade. As a result, many Bamileke traders crossed the borders and settled in the lucrative trade centers in the Southern Cameroons as petty traders. Others were involved in smuggling across the borders. Kumba was the destination of many of the Bamileke immigrants interested in trade.

There were also job opportunities in the plantations. Before the Second World War, immigrants from French Cameroon dominated the plantation work force in Kumba and Victoria. Some of them who could speak German served the German Plantation owners as yard workers, clerks, cleaners, drivers and domestic servants. In

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<sup>7</sup> UPC was a radical nationalist political party formed in French Cameroon in 1948. The party wanted immediate Independence for French Cameroon and the immediate reunification of French and British Cameroons

<sup>8</sup> J.L.Nfi, "French Cameroonians in the Decolonisation Politics of the Southern Cameroons, 1945-1961", PhD Thesis, University of Yaounde 1, 2012, p.81

<sup>9</sup> W. Johnson, *The Cameroon Federation: Political Integration in a Fragmentary Society*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1977, p.12

<sup>10</sup> V.T.Le Vine, *The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1964, p.61



me parts of Kumba and Victoria divisions, such migrant labour outnumbered the indigenes due to the scanty population along the coast.<sup>11</sup>

The fertility of the coastal land in the Southern Cameroons constituted the most important pull factor. In the Kumba and Victoria Divisions of the Southern Cameroons, fertile land was plentiful and the population scanty when compared with the Bamileke region. Again the indigenous people were also welcoming. When the immigrant proved to be a good citizen and was amenable to local laws and customs, he was assigned virgin land or allowed to purchase land on exactly the same terms as applied to an indigene of the community who wished to supplement his hereditary holding<sup>12</sup>. The Bamileke settled in distinct quarters as each solitary newcomer sort protection from an established resident who lodged and fed him for one season in exchange for help on his farm. Bamileke dominated quarters in Kumba such as Three Corners, Fiango, Ekume-Bonji and Mabanda developed from such practices.

The importance of fertile land in the choice of the area of settlement could be measured from the number of Bamileke settlers and the number of land disputes between them and the indigenous land owners. By 1933, about 169 Bamileke immigrants already had large cocoa farms in Kumba Division. After the Second World War, the number of immigrant cash crop farmers increased. By 1953, the French Cameroon Welfare Union (FCWU) registered many cases of land disputes involving immigrants from French Cameroon. This was an indication that their involvement in commercial farming and the doubtful methods of land acquisition contributed to these disputes.

### **Reasons for Bamileke Investment in Commercial Agriculture**

The Southern Cameroon Census of 1933 indicated that Kumba Division had 4,641 stranger settlers and 2,853 plantation and concession labourers. The strangers were classified as Native (British Cameroonians from other Divisions and Nigeria) and Non-Natives (French Cameroonians and others) All the strangers formed 21 percent of the total male population of Kumba Division and 75 percent of them were Bamileke from French Cameroon. Amongst these Bamileke settlers, 165 had been granted plots in the division for farming. Most of the Bamileke farmers obtained permission from indigenes to farm land while some purchased their land from these indigenes. Many were “peaceful penetrationists” who occupied land without the consent of the land owners.<sup>13</sup> As their yield increased they gradually increased the surfaces under cultivation beyond the limits assigned to them. The Bamileke settlers ventured in large scale farming and land acquisition or land grabbing for the following reasons;

Unlike their ethnic base that was densely settled with inadequate farm land, the Bamileke immigrants were attracted by the vast, empty and virgin lands in the Kumba Division. Population was scanty and the indigenes who were not aggressive farmers did not have the experience of plantation farming. For many generations, the indigenes had been engaged as middlemen between the people in the interior and the European merchants operating on the

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<sup>11</sup> Nfi, "French Cameroonians", p.97

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.112.

<sup>13</sup> NAB,File Af/1946/6, Settlement of Strangers in Mamfe Division,p3



coast. These coastal people had a source of regular income from their monopoly position as middlemen in the trade between the "bushmen" in the interior and the European traders along the coast and were not attracted to paid employment as labourers on the plantation. Bamileke ex-plantation labourers therefore had more experience in commercial farming than the coastal Bafaw, Bakossi, Balong, Mbonge or Bakundu people who refused to work in the plantations. They were ready to combine their plantation work experience, the money saved from their low wages and the abundant land and labour to start a new type of farming along the coast.<sup>14</sup>

The more progressive local people, notably Chief Mukete, the Bafaw District Head, and Chief Ndiba also of Bafaw encouraged the Bamileke influx and their land grabbing culture in this part of Kumba. They settled them on virgin lands in their chiefdoms and protected them against extortionists land lords. Due to the fertility of the Kumba soils, the Bamileke coming from the grassland did not nurture an imminent desire to return to their areas of origin. They came from areas of relatively poor soils and thus were generally hard working. This quality gave them more yields, more wealth and a superior economic power. They therefore saw commercial farming as a source of wealth and power.

After the Second World War and following the creation of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) and the construction of the Kumba-Mamfe road in 1947, there was an influx of Nigerians or precisely Igbo immigrants to the Southern Cameroons. The Nigerians came as plantation workers and this surplus labour made labour cheap in the plantations. Rather than sell their labour cheaply to the CDC, they started their own farms and plantations<sup>15</sup>. As the number of Igbo workers increased in the CDC from 1946, the Bamileke figures dropped. Fortunately for the Bamileke, the Igbo who considered themselves legitimate "strangers" as they were British protected persons did not engage themselves in large scale estate agriculture. They limited themselves to trade, transportation, administration and other secondary and tertiary economic activities. As such Bamileke farmers faced little or no competition from this equally industrious people.

Again many Balong, Bafaw and Bakossi indigenes considered the Bamileke as "brothers" and Nigerians as enemies despite the fact that the Anglo-French boundary attached them to Nigeria and placed the Bamileke in French Cameroon. The ethnic relations with the indigenes and the fact that some Bamileke farmers had lived in the division since the era of German administration greatly played in favour of Bamileke land grabbers. Lastly the attractive cocoa enterprises lured many Bamileke immigrants interested in quick profits to acquire land and venture in farming. The British promoted the cocoa enterprise by establishing cocoa research and experimentation farms in Barombi and by providing a regular market for the produce.

The Bamileke farmers ventured in the cultivation of Cocoa, Coffee, Banana, Palm trees and rubber whose products were exported. They also farmed mangoes, pineapples, plantains, and plums which were marketed in the

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<sup>14</sup> J.C.Ngwai, "Migrant Labour and Agricultural Development in Mbonge Land, 1885-2002", MA Thesis in History, University of Buea, 2015,p 31

<sup>15</sup> Nfi, "French Cameroonians", p.113



domestic daily or weekly markets. The price of Cocoa in particular rose very considerably in the 1946-1947 season and this attracted the profit seeking Bamileke immigrants to this sector. Again, the cocoa business was very lucrative after 1948 following the Cocoa blight disease in Ghana that greatly reduced Ghanaian yields. Cocoa and Coffee from Bamileke farmers in Nyassoso and Kumba central districts were also easily disposed off clandestinely through French Cameroon where the prices for these raw materials were high. In 1948, Gibbons, the British Commissioner for the Cameroons estimated that Kumba Division produced about 300 tons of Coffee a year which was worth 70,000 pounds but unfortunately, about half was smuggled to French Cameroon<sup>16</sup>. The ease with which these crops were sold to buyers in French Cameroon increased the number of immigrant farmers in the cultivation of these crops.

Rubber and palm oil were also highly demanded in Britain following the independence of British Asian territories such as Malaya, which were supplying these raw materials to British industries. With the independence of the Asian colonies, Britain promoted the cultivation of Rubber and Palm Oil in the Southern Cameroons by propagating high yields seeds because these raw materials were greatly needed by most industries after the Second World War<sup>17</sup>. Bamileke settlers in Kumba took advantage of this to invest in plantation farming especially as it was possible for them to cultivate both cash and food crops. It should be noted that insufficient pay and food shortage were among the factors that made immigrants to abandon plantation work<sup>18</sup>.

### **Bamileke Farmers and Land Disputes**

Before the arrival of the immigrants and their involvement in commercial farming, land disputes were virtually inexistent in Kumba Division. This was because ownership of land occupied or not was vested in the chief or the community. The Chief or the community redistributed this land to families and it was occupied and passed to their heirs according to traditional laws and customs. The introduction of plantation or cash crop economy and the settlement of "strangers" changed this tradition. From 1922, the British encouraged the stranger African to settle and to occupy land not only for subsistence use but also for the growing of plantation crops. It was this change of policy that attracted the Bamileke to establish commercial farming in Kumba Division. The indigenes of Kumba were not quick to embrace this type of agriculture. They were equally reluctant to permit strangers to plant cash crops on land assigned to them claiming that such offer could reinforce immigrant claim to land property and make recovery of the land difficult, unless the original holders were prepared to pay the value of the plantations. Land disputes resulted from such claims and the reluctance of the original owners to pay for crops on land they claimed. The land disputes were so common that the Bakossi Land Syndicate was organized to protect native land rights against Bamileke land grabbers.

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<sup>16</sup> NAB, File vb/b1951, KUNC, P.12

<sup>17</sup> The Barombi Experimentation Farms set up by the British in Kumba Division, produced a wide variety of seeds and seedlings which were distributed to local farmers who were interested in cash crop cultivation.

<sup>18</sup> Ngwai, "Migrant Labour and Agricultural Development", p.35



According to Bamileke farmers represented by the FCWU, the problem was elsewhere. They complained in 1953 that they were subjected to merciless and unremitting fleecing by the landlords in Kumba aided and abetted by the chiefs and peoples because of the results of their farming. In a memorandum to the Divisional Officer for Kumba, the president of FCWU presented it in these words:

...Our compatriots in the British Cameroons were casting covetous eyes on the excellent results achieved by French Cameroonians from their farming operations and that they were making strenuous efforts to reap the fruits of these men's labour. There are numerous instances where certain envious and improvident individuals sought and are still seeking to bring about, by subtle means, the eviction of Industrious persons of French Cameroon origin who have developed excellent farms in their areas<sup>19</sup>

The Bamileke farmers believed that the numerous attempts to deprive them of land in Kumba was essentially due to the interesting results from their farms. In other words, the indigenes were envious of their harvest and wealth derived from the sales of their farm produces.

Envy certainly came from the younger elements of the Bafaw and Balong villages who were poorer and who were hoping to extract increased rents from strangers in order to enable them to continue their life of useless indolence. Also land was haphazardly apportioned to the strangers with no regulations or control mechanisms. It was in an attempt to regulate the acquisition of land by strangers that the DO for Kumba Division and the Agriculture Officer Mr. V.K. Johnson proposed in 1946 that there should be no alienation of land to strangers and that these Bamileke farmers be encouraged to marry local women and acquire land as naturalized members of the community. The strangers were also given different residential quarters but this did not end the conflict. A certain Balong Youths Council led by Mr. Mbongo drew up a series of harsh restrictions on stranger settlements, demanding that rents for all land and house sites be paid to the council<sup>20</sup>. This was done without the consent of Chief Mukete and other responsible members of the Bafaw, Barombi, Balong and Ekumbe-Bonji Native Authority. This manifesto produced immediate and vehement protest from the Bamileke of Kumba Fiango, Three Corners, Mabanda and Ekumbe-Bonji. The land disputes between the prosperous Bamileke farmers and the indigenous land owners intensified in the 1950s and 1960s as a result of the Banana boom and increasing demand for cocoa in the world market. Some of the cases that protracted and attracted attention in the Kumba Native Court included the following.

Johannes Mbianda of "Strangers" Settlement, Kumba obtained the lease of a farm from one Zacchaeus Ebako of Kumba for 18 years with effect from October 16, 1950, in consideration of the payment of the sum of 350 pound sterling. This rent was discharged in one single payment. The agreement provided that the land should remain in Mbianda's possession without any interference by the lessor for 18 years, at the end of which period the lessor

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<sup>19</sup> NAB, File si(1953)3, FCWU, P.1

<sup>20</sup> NAB, File Af(1946)6, Settlement of Strangers, p.3



should reimburse the 350 pound sterling and then re-enter his farm.<sup>21</sup> Zacchaeus Ebako in 1953 took a civil summons in the Kumba Native Court claiming immediate restitution of the farming because of the high yield achieved by Mbianda. This was a common tactics used by the Kumba Land Lords protected by the Native Court to deprive Bamileke farmers of their rich farms.

There was also the case of Aloys Nyamsi who bought land from Martin Epie Etow (a Bafaw) on November 7, 1953 and was later summoned by the Kumba Native Court for trespass and illegal exploitation of the land. When the court authorities visited the farm in question, they destroyed 8 orange trees, 80 palm trees, 100 cocoa trees, 40 raffia palm trees, 11 coffee trees, 20 plantain stems, 40 banana stems, 100 mangoes trees , 9 pine apples, 12 rubber trees and 2 plum trees, which the Kumba police valued at 1.592 pound sterling.<sup>22</sup> The destruction of Nyamsi's crops and economic trees was the result of envy and jealousy from the indigenes who could not afford to stay and watch the Bamileke ripe the fruits of their land.

Michael Leyou of Mukonje was another victim of the Kumba Native Court. He obtained his land with the approval of the village and community of Mukonje. Apart from the price he paid to the land owner, Akama. Leyou paid the sum of 16 pounds to Chief Ebabja of Mukonje. In June 1953, Chief Ebanja took advantage of the death of Akama to ask an ex-police sergeant, Boniface Fotabe to occupy part of the farm. Michael Leyou was helpless and lost much of his farm land. Gabriel Kongshua of Three Corners Kumba had a similar experience when the Kumba Native Authorities ordered him to surrender close to 200 square feet of his farm land. These farm land disputes were many in the 1950s and 1960s because land was increasing becoming a source of income and wealth to those who ventured in commercial farming.

Another popular case was case number 87/53 of the Kumba Native Court. In this case, Lekeyo Epie of Kumba Town complained of trespass and occupation of his land by Michael Ngassa, a Bamileke immigrant resident at Fiango, Kumba. The court decided that as a stranger from French Cameroon, Ngassa "has no right enough to clear any forest for farming without permission from the Native Authority of the area"<sup>23</sup> . When Ngassa appealed to the DO for Kumba against the judgment of the Native and Appeal Courts indicating that "having owned a large flourish farm and estate among these tribes, they always envy and wish me all evil as in the years past waged a frivolous case against me in paying a fat sum of money to the Kumba NA urging for my repatriation"<sup>24</sup>. The DO requested the Cocoa Survey Officer in Kumba to inspect the said disputed plot. In his report the Cocoa Survey Officer indicated that the cocoa trees were planted by Ngassa and the DO nullified the judgment of the lower and appeal courts and granted the land to Ngassa.

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<sup>21</sup> NAB, File si(1953)3, FCWU, P3

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p.2.

<sup>23</sup> NAB, file no.Nd/ci1955/2, Lekeyo Epie of Kumba Town Versus Michael Ngassa of Fiango, p.6

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p.8



Animosity shown to Bamileke strangers by the local inhabitants was not limited to evictions from farm lands. The Bamileke were also evicted from houses they constructed on indigenous land without the consent of the indigenes. This was the case with Joseph Mbianda who was evicted from his house in 1954 after 12 years in this house. G A Ngoh who complained against Mbianda for illegally building on his land refused to give Mbianda a house elsewhere or to compensate him for the house. He requested Mbianda to take off his house from his land.<sup>25</sup> The Native Court and the Appeal Court decided in favour of G A Ngoh and Mbianda was evicted from the house without compensation. The DO asked Mbianda to quit only after compensation. Ngoh appealed to the Resident Officer who accepted the appeal and Mbianda lost his house. The prosperous Bamileke were therefore involved in many land disputes in Kumba Division because they settled and farmed on land without the tacit consent of the indigenous people who were envious of the proceeds of their commercial farming.

## Conclusion

Plantation agriculture was introduced in Cameroon by the Germans in 1884. It remained a monopoly of the colonial "masters" who coerced the Africans and deprived them of their vast lands needed by this type of agriculture. In the 1940s, the Bamileke immigrants along the coast, mostly ex-plantation workers, decided to venture in this lucrative sector of the colonial economy. They gradually pulled out of the CDC following the arrival of cheap Igbo labour and used all available means to acquire land. Many of them were peaceful "penetrationists" who got land without the consent of the land owners. Many signed contracts with the indigenes before exploiting their land. The rush for land and commercial cropping was dictated by the profit motive and the compromising attitude of the coastal chiefs who readily surrendered land to these strangers. The Bamileke settlers took advantage of this and were therefore forerunners of commercial agriculture in Kumba and it was their land-grabbing culture and successful farming that gave birth to land conflicts in Kumba Division. The post-colonial land conflicts in Kumba could therefore be traced from the indigenization of commercial farming by the Bamileke in the 1940s and 1950s and the interesting results which made the locals to realize the new economic value of land.

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<sup>25</sup> NAB, file no. Nd/c1954/3, G A Ngoh Versus Johannes Mbianda, p.3.



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