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Native Authorities and Agricultural Diversification in Bamenda Province, British Southern Cameroons, After World War II

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Abstract
The quest for raw materials and provision of food needs of imperialists led to the diversification of agricultural productivity in Africa during the colonial period. In this connection, the British colonial authorities in the Bamenda Province of Southern Cameroons introduced and encouraged the cultivation of new crops and this scheme was facilitated by Native Authorities. They managed local affairs in their administrative units and the agricultural sector was under their supervision. In order to effectively facilitate production and meet up with the agricultural needs of the British colonial authorities, these institutions provided high yielding seedlings and agricultural experts to local communities. These experts were charged with the responsibilities of training local farmers on modern methods and techniques of cultivation. Demonstration farms which did not only serve as practical training centres but also experimentation grounds were also established by Native Authorities. It was in these establishments (farms) that newly introduced crops were tested before being offered to farmers for cultivation. This was only possible when they proved favourable to local geographies and soils of the envisaged areas of cultivation. With these, they successfully diversified agricultural productivity in the Province and by 1961; the inhabitants had embraced not only cash crops but also fruit and food crops' production wholeheartedly.

Keywords: Native Authorities, Agricultural Diversification, Bamenda Province, Southern Cameroons

1. Introduction
Agriculture remains one of the most important economic activities in Africa since independence as it employs the greatest number of people in the continent. The engagement of a considerable size of the population has made it possible for diversity in most of these economies and the genesis has often been ascribed to colonialism especially with regard to cash crop production. This was because colonial economies were structured or geared towards the provision of the economic needs or much needed raw materials to the colonial economies. Better still, agricultural production was done to benefit the colonial states (Duke 2010; Bamou and Williams 2007 and Shokpeka, and Nwaokocha 2009). This is because economic incentives, most specifically raw materials, was the principal reason for colonialism and in order to attain their objectives, the capitalist modes of production and systems that were functional in Europe and entrenched with the beginning of the industrial revolution were imported to Africa (Lugard1965; Chikendu 2004).
In this direction, efforts were made to diversify agriculture and agricultural policies were interwoven with the politics of colonialism as well as the changing economic conditions in the colonies (Bamou and Williams 2007). The British Governor of Nigeria in 1926 gives a vivid description of the situation when he held that;
Great Britain is a manufacturing country which depends upon other countries and largely upon tropical countries. It is important that the tropical countries within the British Empire should produce their products in ever increasing quantities of the highest quality. It is important that Nigeria should produce and not Nigeria (only) but other colonies, the maximum raw materials (Governor of Nigeria 1926, 44).
This is an indication that the British colonial agricultural policy was aimed at creating an

economy that was dominated by agriculture. Focus was therefore on the production and exportation of these agricultural products and the variety and volume of goods produced was to depend on the peasants. To achieve these, the British colonial authorities did not only institute plantations and encouraged mechanisation but also wanted a policy whereby African systems of production would be maintained without the former (Buchanan and Pugh 1958; Battern, 1959). This view was supported by Sir Hugh Clifford, British Consul in Southern Nigeria when he posited that, it was beneficial to the indigenes or peasants to actively participate in production rather than rely on plantation agriculture (Clifford1921).

This led to the adulteration of African systems of production and the introduction of new economic activities that were aimed at addressing the needs of the colonialists. Hence, indigenes had to focus on the production of primary resources (mostly cash crops) that were needed in the metropolis. This does not mean that they completely destroyed or erased the production of indigenous products but preferred a situation where indigenes were to do so, side by side, with the new ones. It should be noted that food and fruits crops that were introduced and cultivated by the indigenes was not only to provide the food needs of some colonial authorities but also to meet up with demands from some urban areas that existed in the colonies (Akpan 2012). In this direction, they provided high yielding seedlings that were to improve the quality of production to indigenes (Aghalino 2000). This was only possible (quality production) through the provision of trained personnel who had to teach peasants on the production techniques of new crops. It was their belief (colonial authorities) that this would be effective if and only if these officials offered practical lessons to the peasants on their farms. Besides, they also felt that creating demonstration farms where these peasants could be trained would facilitate the embracing of these new crops and transformation of agricultural productivity in their colonies (Clifford1921).

It should be recalled that the loss of British colonial Far East possessions after World War II and possible sources of raw materials from that direction ignited or increased British interest in its West African colonies that had been neglected before now and most especially Southern Cameroons. They thus had to seek for new sources of raw materials and were not to concentrate only in African traditional commodities but also in the new and abandoned ones (Etamo 2007). Besides, the fall in fall in imports from the Far East and the rise in prices after the War acted as a catalyst for the embrace of cash crop production, especially coffee, as was the case in Bamenda Province. The need for cash for the payment of taxes which was done in British currency greatly encouraged the indigenes to engage in the cultivation of products that would fetch them cash or shillings. Since men were mostly concerned with the payment of taxes, they concentrated on cash and fruit crop production. Meanwhile, women traditionally concentrated on food and fruit crop production. However, some men engaged not only in cash and fruit but also in food crop production.

It was because of the above reasons that the British colonial authorities and indigenes diversified agricultural activities in British Southern Cameroons in general and Bamenda Province in particular. In order to improve on the agricultural sector, related departments were created in all the divisions of the territory. They were to be aided in the process by native authorities (local governments). In this connection, local governments created agricultural and livestock committees as some of their commissions (National Archives Buea (NAB), Qc/a/1954/2, No. 585/vol.1, 1954). These agricultural and livestock bodies or departments were charged with the responsibilities of encouraging diversification and transforming agriculture within their respective areas of command (NAB, Gc/h/1955/1, LG 1845, 1955). This therefore means that they had to collaborate in making this scheme succeed. Hence, agricultural experts that were serving in the various divisions of Southern Cameroons were co-opted into these committees and synergised with local governments in this endeavours. As such, they were to help local authorities in implementing central government policies on agriculture and facilitate the envisaged change (NAB, Qc/a/1954/2, No. 585/vol.1, 1954). They had to coordinate the raising of seeds in native authority farms and were aided in the process by farm attendants employed by local governments (they worked in nurseries and aided in the distribution of seedlings to farmers).

Though such a synergy between local and central government played a pivotal role in enhancing agricultural productivity in the Southern Cameroons, the reunification of Cameroon in 1972 and the centralisation of power in Cameroon retarded the authority hitherto enjoyed by local authorities in general and the agricultural sector in particular. Since then, the divisional departments of agriculture which are responsible to the central authorities have continuously animated local agricultural development endeavours with little or no support from local government officials who understand better the needs of their people. It is because this policy after 1972 that paper revisits and traces the genesis and evolution of the role played by local governments in enhancing diversity in a bid to stimulate policy makers to learn from the past and institute meaningful reforms in relation to agriculture which is the main economic activity of the country. This is timely as much effort is being made by the government of Cameroon in decentralising power and empowering local governments in the management of local affairs. Tapping into such past experiences will make it possible for local governments in the country in general and the Province in particular to learn from the errors of the past and initiate reforms that will not only encourage and facilitate productivity but also empower the farmers economically. It is because of these reasons that the paper examines the efforts made by British colonial authorities in diversifying Agricultural production in the Bamenda Province between 1945 and 1961.

With regard to methodology, the study employed primary and secondary sources. Primary sources which were gotten from the Buea National Archives, involved archival materials which were mostly intelligence and assessment reports and minutes of administrative meetings in the territory. It was from these sources that empirical data concerning agricultural transformation in British Southern Cameroons was gotten. Meanwhile, secondary sources which were mostly books, published papers and articles in journals gave general information on the British economic policies with focus on agriculture in general and diversification in particular. Better still, these sources were very instrumental in the development of the frame on which the study was built on as well as information on the

study and explanations surrounding the *raison d'être* of agricultural transformation in colonial Africa. Hence, the qualitative method of analyses was used in presenting data. This was through the thematic presentation of analyses in a chronological manner.

Analytical Framework and Related Literature

As aforementioned, the colonial economy in West Africa was structured in such a way that it had to benefit the colonial or metropolitan powers with little focus on the indigenes' welfare with regard to production. Even where Africans were considered, this was to achieve the main goals of colonialism. Colonialism was therefore designed to benefit Europeans through the exploitation of Africans; physically, humanly, and their natural resources. This explains why coercively and persuasively, they encouraged the production of industrial raw materials in large quantity. As Ogbeche and Naankiel (2014) puts it;

the objective of the British is clearly understood as articulated in the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce Conference in 1917 that: all energies of the local people should be directed towards the production of raw materials, but they should be encouraged to produce greater variety and greater quantities of the produce of their respective society (80).

Though cash crops were favoured, African communities had to produce not only the needed industrial raw materials but also food crops. However, food crop production was discouraged in favour of cash crops. The need for cotton for the British textile industries, rubber for tires, palm oil and kernel for soap production and margarine, groundnuts for oil, hides and skins for leather products, timber for furniture, among other African products necessitated and guided the colonial economic policies and engagements in Africa in general and Southern Cameroons in particular (Shokpeka and Nwaokocha 2009; Ogbeche and Naankiel 2014).

Even though most European powers caused Africans to cultivate new crops, preferred by Europeans, policies for the achievement of this goal was different among these powers. For instance, the British were less exploitative when compared to the others. They were not in favour of the implantation of large European plantations and preferred peasant agriculture where there was to be minimal investments. This was in great contradictions to the Spanish, Portuguese, French and Belgians that were very effective in the exploitation of Africans economically. The British attitude was because of their long colonial experience and preferred the engagement of local farmers to settlers (Brett 1973). However, in settler colonies, large European plantations were favoured (Austin 2010). Even though African peasants were encouraged, they mostly produced low value agricultural products such as cocoa, cotton, groundnuts and oil palms. That notwithstanding, Africans were encouraged to engage in the production of commodities that were labour intensive and in high demand in Europe like the case of coffee in Africa (Frankema and Van Waijenburg 2012; Thompson and Woodruff 1954; Wolf 1974; Suret Canale 1971).

Some scholars are of the opinion that the choice of these products and trend in Africa's economic development was beneficial to African economy in general and agricultural development in particular. Among other benefits, Fadeiye (2005) argues that the capital assistance and scientific knowledge African peasant farmers received from Europeans boosted agriculture and economic development in the continent. Meanwhile, others like Walter Rodney (2005), categorically believes that European interventions brought more woes to Africa's development. This view is also supported by Jack Woddis (1970) when he holds that their presence led to the exploitation of African national resources.

To achieve this, African economies became appendages to the European economies, reason why they had to produce crops that were needed in the metropolis and their European masters (Ake 2008; Adeyeri and Adejuwon 2012). This therefore means that colonial economies were determined by colonial policies and little or nothing was done at developing these economies to suit the needs of the colonial peoples (Fadeiye, 2005:144). The consideration that Africans or indigenous agriculture was a static equilibrium that was determined by the natural milieu necessitated the facilitation of agricultural development. In this direction, a new paradigm was initiated and economic reforms were introduced (Niemeijer 1996). It was in response to this that new crops as well as new methods and techniques of production were introduced into the continent leading to the diversification of African economies.

For these new developments to win grounds in British West Africa in general and Southern Cameroons in particular, the British Science policy laid the groundwork for diversification and the cherished improvement in agriculture. It led to the establishment of technical services that did not only lay down the formula and guide for capital investment in the colonies in general and agricultural sector in particular, but also made sure that experts or personnel that were to bring the expected change were flown to the continent. They thus ensured the acclimatisation of newly introduced crops and distribution of economic plants to local communities. The Technical Departments in the Colonial Office was aware of the great potential that Africa possessed in agricultural production especially in terms of variety, higher yields and faster growth. However, problems faced by this sector in the tropics (pests, soil exhaustion, and natural disasters) would not deter them. European experience and development in science had reduced the risk of investing in this sector in the continent (Wohys 1996).

Hence, it was the belief of British colonial authorities that ensuring the adoption of western methods and techniques of agriculture would transform the African economic forms of subsistence into surplus oriented and exportation economies. They also hoped that rudimentary and inefficient forms of agricultural production would be a thing of the past. Such moves would only be effective if commodities suitable to the natural milieu were encouraged. This was to be indicated or identified through research in such a way that crops could only be cultivated in suitable environments. Technical advice on methods of cultivation was therefore an important factor in the transformation process. As a result of this, scientific and technical departments, of which agriculture featured prominently, were instituted in each colony and specialists were appointed. They handled agricultural related problems usually referred to them by the district officers and those concerned with this sector. Hence local communities had to rely on these agricultural experts who were present in all administrative units and handled problems that cropped up in relation to cultivation and diversification (Ibid.).

Area of Study and Historical Background

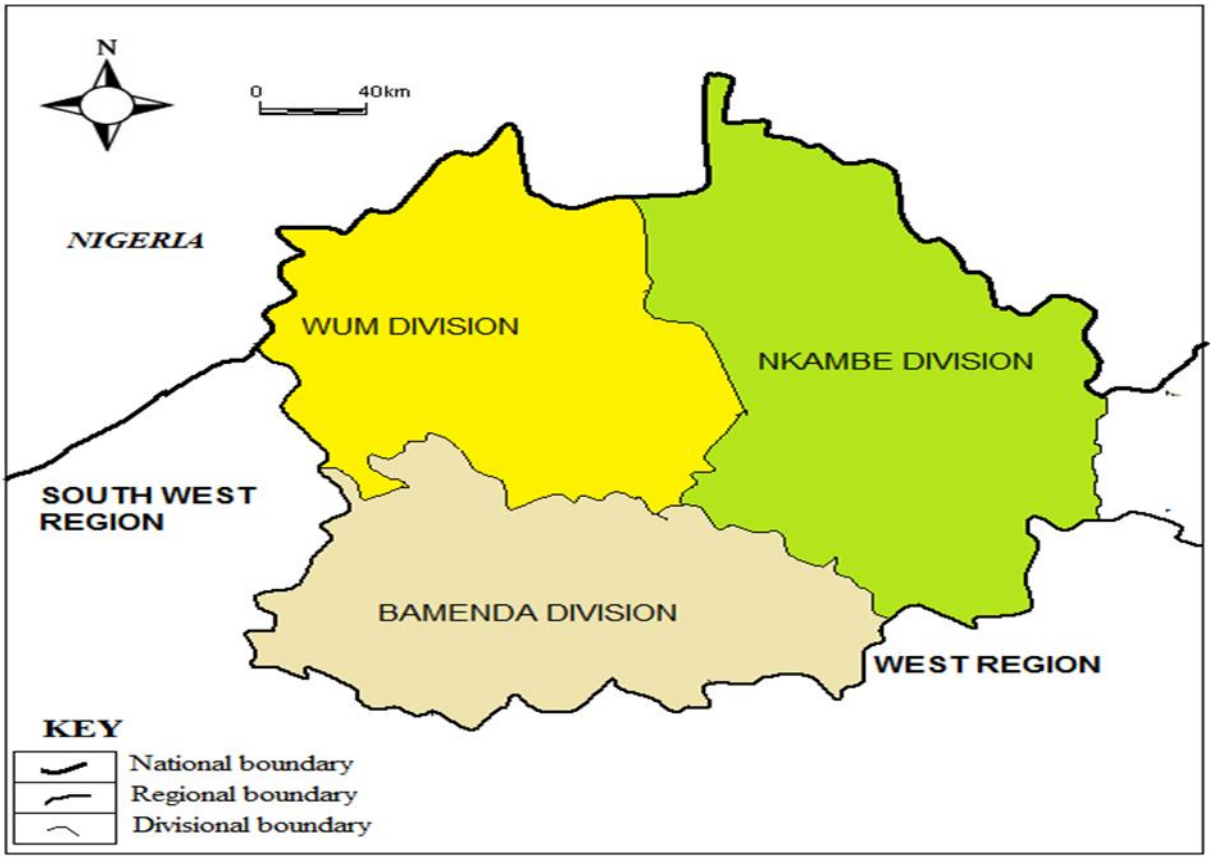
The area of study is the present North West Region of Cameroon. It was part of German Kamerun (1884-1916) and later became a League of Nations' mandate territory under the supervision of the British (1922-45). Between 1946 and 1961, it was a Trust territory of the United Nations still under the control of the British.[1] Administered as part of the Nigerian Protectorate, it became a division in Southern Cameroons after 1916 and was transformed into the Bamenda Province in 1949. It thus became one of the two Provinces of Southern Cameroons and consisted of the Nkambe, Bamenda and Wum Divisions (See Map). Upon independence and reunification of former French and British Cameroons, the area became a province in West Cameroon and was given the appellation, North West Province and in 2008, it was renamed the North West Region following the transformation of the ten provinces of Cameroon into regions by the 1996 Constitution of Cameroon.[2]

Although Southern Cameroons was also affected by the efforts of the British in diversifying agriculture in, little has been documented in this regard in the Bamenda Province historically. Most of the historical literature on colonial agriculture in Southern Cameroons focuses on plantation agriculture and labour related issues with concentration on the Cameroons Province (Where plantations were established by the colonial authorities) with little recourse to the area under study. This may be misleading as students of history are tempted to believe that agricultural policies were only applicable to the Cameroons Province. It is because of the absence of adequate literature on the colonial influences on agricultural production in the Province that the paper revisits the activities of the British colonial authorities in this part of British Southern Cameroons after the Second World War. This will go a long way in contributing to the existing literature of colonial agriculture in Africa in general and Cameroon in particular.

[1] The outbreak of World War I saw the expelling of the Germans from German Kamerun by the British and the French. This led to the division of the territory by the victorious allies and this division was endorsed by the League of Nations in the Paris Peace Conference and these territories became Mandates. With the creation of the United Nations' Organisation in 1946, the activities of the Mandate Commission were taken over by the Trusteeship Council and these two territories became Trust Territories until independent.

[2] For a better understanding on the political evolution of Cameroon in general and the area of study in particular, visit the works of; T. E. Mbuagbaw, R. Brian and R. Palmer. *A History of the Cameroon*, New Edition. Essex, 1987: Longman; V. J. Ngoh (Ed.). *Cameroon from a Federation to a Unitary State, 1961-1972, A critical Study*, Limbe: Design House, 2004; V. J. Ngoh. *Constitutional Developments in Southern Cameroons.* Yaounde: CEPER, 1990; V. J. Ngoh. *History of Cameroon Since 1800*. Limbe: Pressbook, 1996; M. Njeuma. *Introduction to the History of Cameroon*. London: Macmillan Publishers, 1989, V. G. Fanso, *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges, Vol. 2. The Colonial and Post Colonial Periods. Limbe: Macmillan Publishers Limited*, 1989*;* N. N. Mbile, *Cameroon Political Story: Memories of An Authentic Eyewitness.* Limbe: Presbyterian Printing Press, 1995; Victor T. Le Vine, *The Cameroons: From Mandate to Independence.* California: Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964.

Map 1: Divisional Local Governments of Bamenda Province



Source: Adapted from the 1992 Administrative Map of Cameroon, INC Yaounde.

Prior to the period under study, the fertile volcanic soils of the area favoured the cultivation of a variety of crops. This made agriculture the greatest economic activity of the people. They employed or practiced subsistence farming and the little surpluses experienced were exchanged for basic necessities (NAB, AD/1927/4a, No. 277/27, 1927; NAB, Ad/1929/10, No. EP6808, 1929). Grains such as Beans, maize, guinea corn, and foods crops like cassava and cocoyam among others were the principal products of the area. Rhizoids and tubers, plantains and bananas were also cultivated. Tobacco, sweet potatoes, pepper, pumpkins as well as cotton that were used for the making of caps were also cultivated (NAB, AD/1927/4a, No. 277/27, 1927; NAB; Ad/1929/10, No. EP6808; Purseglove 1968).

Tree crops were also of prime importance to the indigenes as raffia palms, oil palms, and kola were found in some parts of the Province. Though tree crops were found in the province, most of the indigenes got it in the wild and little or nothing was done to domesticate or introduce it to areas where the ecology never favoured their growth. However, food crops production dominated in the province. Though the Germans introduced the production of Irish potatoes in the area, its cultivation was not embraced and by 1945, it was still unpopular (Etamo 2007). But major changes in its production came in after World War II when efforts were made by the British colonial authorities to diversify production through the introduction of new crops. Some varieties of vegetables were also visible in the province. Coffee production had been delved into by the people from 1923 but little was done by the British colonial authorities to encourage its production and by the outbreak of World War II, very few persons were involved in its production. It was only after the end of the war in 1945 that it became an economic interest to the people. The British colonial authorities had showed some interest in its production and greatly encouraged indigenes to engage in the cultivation of this crop through its agricultural policies (Ibid). From the above analyses, it is clear that the people engaged in tree crop production, vegetable cultivation, as well as cash and food crops production which dominated the agricultural sector in the province. The reliance on food crop production and the need for self-sufficiency necessitated the endeavours of the colonial authorities. The dominance of food crops also facilitated the need for diversification and the introduction of cash crops.

Catalyst for Diversification: New Crops and Demonstration Farms

Diversification was to take place in such a way that production would be increased and the income of indigenes enhanced. To achieve these, the indigenes had to turn away from their traditional methods of cultivation and embrace new approaches. New crops that were in high demand were introduced and these included cash crops like coffee, rice and oil palms. In order to ensure food sufficiency, food crops and fruits that never existed in the area were also introduced and included; Yams, mangoes, coconuts, pineapples and oranges. To make this venture effective, the Bamenda provincial conference that held on the 7 of October 1952, called on all native authorities in the province to institute demonstration farms in view of the introduction of new crops. These demonstration farms were to act like centres for testing the first set of seeds that were to be imported from Abakaliki in Nigeria. This was to give a boost to pass endeavours as in 1941. In this year, attempts were made in the institution of an experimental farm in

Bambui which was to serve as experimental grounds for coffee, potatoes, beans and livestock. Others were also opened in some native authority areas like the cases of Wum, Ndop and Banso.

However, the presence of only one agricultural expert did not produce the desired outcome. This was because there was only one agricultural officer for the Bamenda Province and it was difficult to propagate knowledge to farmers adequately and bring about the needed diversification. It was only after 1945 that real change started creeping into the Bamenda Province as efforts were made by the British colonial authorities to accelerate the economic development of Southern Cameroons (NAB, Jb/a/1952/4, No. 26331, 1952; Etamo 2007). The institution of these farms were aimed at experimenting the suitability of these seeds in the envisaged farms with regard to the climatic conditions and soils of the areas concerned before distributing them to farmers for sowing. They were also to serve as nurseries where seeds could be multiplied to respond to local demands as well as centres of demonstrations and training. To feed these farms or demonstration centres, seeds were imported from Abakaliki in Nigeria in 1953 and received on the Government Agricultural Provincial centre at Babeke on the Wum-Bamenda Road. It was here that these seeds were distributed to the native authorities which had to first experiment them in their demonstration farms before distributing them to farmers for cultivations (NAB, Jb/a/1952/4, No. 26331, 1952).

It was as a result of these objectives that most native authorities started establishing demonstration farms in the province after 1953. These farms were established in all the divisions of Bamenda Province which became demonstration centres and seedlings' distribution hubs. Crops were tested on these farms in order to find out their suitability to the climatic and soil conditions. If successful, they were distributed to farmers and when the reverse was true, the crops or project was abandoned (NAB, E/1950/1, 1955). This can be exemplified with the Wum Demonstration Farms where attempts to experiment yam cultivations proved futile. This resulted to the abandoning of envisaged yam seedlings distribution to Weh and Aghem farmers in 1954. Conversely, the Befang and Esimbi areas benefited from the same endeavour from the Befang Native Authority as the climatic conditions and soils of that area proved favourable to the cultivation of this crop (NAB, Qc/a/1954/2, No. 585/vol.1, 1954).

Capacity Building and Soil Conservation Rules: Measures for Diversification

In order to make sure that these endeavours coordinated by the native authorities reached their logical ends, practical training programs were offered to farmers in the Bamenda Province. This was not only limited to demonstration farms but also brought closer to the people. Farmers were not only encouraged to open up their own farms but training centres were established in villages or areas of cultivation to direct and help farmers in the production process. Coffee demonstration farms, for example, were opened and farmers were educated on the methods and techniques of coffee cultivation. Agriculture experts constantly assembled people for lectures outside these farms. This was visible in areas like Mbam, Belo, Weh, Esu, Befang, Njinikom, Kumbo, Jakiri, Ndop, Fonffuka, Fuanantui, Nkambe, Banso, Bafut, Bambui among other areas of production. In short, this process was carried out in all coffee producing villages in the Bamenda Province. The farmers were educated on the processes involved in catering for the plants; pruning, pulping, spraying and harvesting. The various machines used in catering for coffee were introduced into the Bamenda Province and farmers were taught on how to use them in carrying out the above exercises (NAB, Ci/1957/3, No. 195, 1957).

The introduction of new crops would have meant nothing if the soil was not preserved from degrading or eroding. To avoid such a scenario which would have made the endeavours of local governments or native authorities useless in the long run, laws had to be introduced. The government encouraged native authorities to institute regulations in that direction and anti-soil erosion laws were passed by these institutions (local governments). In order to make these laws effectively implemented, the government of Southern Cameroons called on the native authorities in the Bamenda province to train some of its members/staff at the Agwu Development centre in 1953. This was heeded to and those that were selected for the exercise were schooled on the methods and techniques used in fighting against soil erosion as demonstrations of anti – erosion techniques took centre stage. This was to make sure that when such laws were passed in all the administrative units of the Bamenda Province, intensive propaganda and education of the farmers must have taken place. This could only be possible if such experts were present. With the presence of these trainees and campaigns successfully carried out, the Soil Conservation Rules started seeing the light of day by 1956 and its enforcement began in 1957. These rules provided among other things that ridges had to be done vertically and not horizontally.

Agricultural Divergence

The creation of native authority demonstration and experimentation farms saw the successful introduction of new cash crops and agricultural productivity of the Bamenda Province diversified after 1954. For instance, in the Befang native authority farm, food crops such as rice, yams, and groundnut species (Valencia, natal common, spanish 205 and Philippine white) were experimented and excellent results recorded. Fruit crops were also delved into with keen interest and in this direction; oranges and coconuts seedlings became the focus (NAB, Ci/1957/3, No. 195, 1957). Cash crop seedlings were also raised in these farms by native authority staff and distributed to the people wherever it was proven beyond all reasonable doubt that they could do well. In this connection, oil palm seedlings were raised. Again this can be demonstrated with the example of the Befang and Kung nurseries that were raised by the Fungom and Befang Native Authorities. This was equally true for the Bameta area where the Bamenda Divisional Native Authority carried out great strides in that direction. This also extended to rice experimentation by the same divisional native authority in the Bafut area. Such ventures with regard to rice seedlings also saw the light of day in so far as the Ndop area was concerned. It should be recalled that these were introduced into the province during the colonial era (Lortsmart and Mbah, 2007) and were grown in Ndop, Menchum Valley and Bafut. After 1953, farmers received seedlings from native authority farms throughout the province for eventual cultivation.

With regards to coffee production, Walker (1990) postulates that that this was introduced into the province in the 1950s by the colonial authorities. However, before then,

it was grown in some parts of the province but production was insignificant. The culture of coffee production had been introduced into the province from Dschang and Foumban in French Cameroon. It therefore means that it did not take steam until after World War II. The late inculcation of the culture of coffee cultivation was because the British colonial authorities did not encourage its production due to the bulky nature of the goods and difficulties involved in its transportation to the ports of export. There was not any port of export in West Africa that was connected to the area and the minimal amounts produced were transported by head and disposed of two traders in Nkongsamba in French Cameroon. Furthermore, some producers carried their produce to Mamfe in the Cameroons Province and depose them off to traders who carried them to the Calabar port in Nigeria. It was from this port that these goods were exported to Britain. It should be noted that the only two ports that were found in Southern Cameroons was not fully operational nor exploited by the colonial authorities before 1945.

Added to the problem of transportation, the British colonial authorities feared that if the production of coffee was encouraged in the Bamenda Province, this would have negatively impacted on plantation labour in Southern Cameroons. The Bamenda Province provided a bulk of the labour force to the coastal areas where European owned plantations were found. This argument could be substantiated with the idea that coffee production is labour intensive and it would have been difficult to get the needed labour in the plantations if that which was found in the Bamenda Province were fully engaged in this activity in their areas of abode. It was only after the Second World War that the colonial government showed some interest in coffee production. Before 1945, some farmers had imported the seedlings from French Cameroon against the wishes and aspirations of the colonial authorities as indicated earlier. It therefore demonstrates that coffee was introduced into the area by private interests or better still traders and farmers who got entangled with French Cameroonians and learnt the art of cultivation from that territory. Table 1 below depicts the architects of coffee production in the province, areas were these were cultivated and their origins.

Table 1: Origins of Coffee Seedlings, Architects and Areas of Production in Bamenda Province before 1945.

Place of Origin	Area Introduced	Year Introduced	Pioneer(s)
Dschang	Bali	C- 1934	Chinda F. Soppo and Gwangwa David Tangwa
Dschang	Bambui	1935	Mathias Fubitich
Foumban	Ndop	19...	Amadu Monkong
Mbouda	Nkambe Area	1934	Fon of Luh
Dschang	Nso	1933	Fai Tikum Kui, Fai Banku and Andrew Tata
Foumban	Kom	1934	Bobe Michael Mbain Nafon, Bobe Kumananian and the Roman Catholic Mission Fathers
Mbouda	Pinyin	1934	Not Known
Mbouda	Moghamo Area	1945	Ba Formunyoh

Source: Emmanuel Kengo Etamo, Coffee Economy in the North West Province, Cameroon, 1923-1993, (Unpublished PhD Thesis in Economic History, University of Nigeria, .2007), p.68.

Though private initiatives were responsible for the introduction of coffee into the Bamenda Province the increased interest and the search for raw materials after the loss of the Far Eastern British territories and increased prices as discussed earlier reinvigorated British quest for coffee production and the diversification of the economy of Southern Cameroons after 1945. It was as a result of this that they instituted coffee demonstration farms or nurseries in the province. A good example is the Coffee Estate that was established in Santa in 1952. With a land surface of about 6000 acres, it did not only serve as a coffee and processing plant but as a hurling centre for coffee farmers (Etamo 2007). It also became a demonstration farm for farmers, supplied seedlings to them and greatly contributed to the growth of the coffee industry in the Bamenda Province. In 1955 and 1956 coffee demonstration farms were opened up in Wum and Belo by the Aghem and Kom Native Authorities respectively. Some were also established in Weh and Njinikom in 1959. Added to these, coffee nurseries were also found in Befang and Bum Native Authority areas. Such endeavours were not limited to these areas as most Native Authorities in the Bamenda Province took keen interest in the development of nurseries and the introduction of coffee production in their areas of jurisdiction. Seedlings from these farms were distributed to farmers freely from the initial stage. This was to encourage their involvement in coffee production and through this venture, diversification was facilitated.

The urge for diversification was not limited to coffee as yams, oranges, rice, and oil palm seedlings were also demonstrated and distributed to farmers. For instance, in 1954, the Befang farm offered its first experimented seedlings (yams, oranges, rice, and oil palm) to farmers and institutions such as schools that were found within the Befang Native Authority. Table 2 is a lists villages and number of recipients which first benefited from the project in 1954. As demonstrated in the table, majority of the people went for yam and oil seedlings while insignificant numbers favoured oranges and rice seedlings. However, diversity was embraced when compared to the pre 1954 situation in the Befang Native Authority. Apart from Befang Native Authority, other native authorities also benefited from the same exercise a few months later as the Aghem and Fungom inhabitants received seedlings from the Fungom and Wum Native authority nurseries or farms. Just like the case of the Befang Native Authority area, majority of the people preferred oil palm seedlings. They were encouraged in this choice by agricultural experts who after experimenting them in native authority farms in the area indicated that it was advisable for farmers to cultivate them. By July 1954, many had benefitted. The recipients as per villages and number of seeds received have been represented on table 3.

Table 2: Farm Seedlings Distributed to farmers in the Befang Native Authority According to Villages, February 1954.

SN	Name of recipient	No. of Recipients				Nature of Seeds and Number received			
		Yams	Orange	Oil Palm	Rice	Yams	Orange	Oil Palm	Rice
1	Mbelifang	8	0	14	2	357	0	968	Not Recorded
2	Okoromanjang	6	0	10	3	175	0	380	Not Recorded
3	Babadji	0	1	11	6	0	7	820	Not Recorded
4	Batomo	2	0	5	4	20	0	255	Not Recorded

Source: NAB, Qc/a/1954/2, No. 585/vol.1, Wum Divisional Native Authority: Wum Agricultural Development Program, 1954, pp. 63 – 64.

Three thousand seedlings were distributed and thirty farmers benefited from the largess of the native authority. It should be noted that some farmers and institutions not resident and found in the Fungom and Aghem Authority respectively also benefited in the July distribution and these included; chief of Befang (450 seedlings), Nicholas Munoji (270 seedlings), Douala Bong (173 seedlings) Befang Native Authority School (117) and J. M. Boja (140 seedlings) from Befang and Modele in the Befang Native Authority respectively. Hence by 1954, most native authorities in the Bamenda Province were diversifying their economies as the cultivation of oil palms was encouraged by the Government through the native authorities; an activity that was well embraced by the people with enthusiasm. This was equally true for coffee cultivation as many embraced it. This move was also catalysed by government's engagement in the Bamenda Province as many nurseries were found in all the divisions of the Province in general and the native authorities in particular. This can be substantiated with statistics from the Wum, Befang and Kom Native Authorities whereby by 1956, ten thousand seedlings had been distributed to farmers from the Wum coffee nursery. In 1957, two thousand two hundred and thirty one coffee seedlings were handed over to farmers from the Befang nursery. Meanwhile in the Kom Native Authority area, similar gestures were made and six thousand seedlings distributed to farmers in that locality (NAB, Ci/1957/1a, No. 195, 1957). This feat was repeated again in 1958 and eighteen thousand coffee seedlings were raised by local authority staff and offered to farmers (NAB, Ci/1957/3, No. 195, 1957).

Where native authorities' nurseries could not meet up with the demands from farmers, these were procured from the agricultural department. In some instances, the agricultural departments cultivated these crops in the native authority farms. This was intended in helping the native authorities in raising more seedlings in order to meet up with the needs of their people. For instance in 1957, demand in Wum had increased considerably and the native authority farm could not meet up with requests from the people. To solve the problem, seedlings were bought from the agricultural department, multiplied and eighteen thousands of them were distributed to farmers (NAB, E/1950/1, 1955). Though initially given out for free, these institutions started charging some fee for oil palm and coffee seedlings because they believed that the idea had been inculcated into the minds of the people. For instance by 1956, some of the native authorities started charging a penny for coffee seedling. However, to encourage effective diversification and production, the rate was reduced to half a penny when it was discovered that this hindered some farmers from having access to them (NAB, Ja/g/1956/2, 1956).

Table 3: No. of Oil Palm Seedlings Received in the Fungom and Aghem Native Authorities, According to Villages, July 1953.

SN	Village of Origin	Number of Recipients	Number of Seedlings
1	Bangwe	19	1501
2	Aghem	8	209
3	Weh	3	115
4	Esu	1	25

Source: NAB, Qc/a/1954/2, No. 585/vol.1, Wum Divisional Native Authority: Wum Agricultural Development Program, 1954, pp. 63 – 64.

Coconut seedlings too were also nursed by local government staff and distributed to farmers in the Bamenda Province and the Befang farm stands out supreme in this exercise. Before 1956, seedlings were distributed for free but after this year two shillings were charged per seedling (NAB, E/1950/1, 1955). Even though these charges were instituted after 1956, it did not deter the people from getting them. Agricultural experts made sure that these were made available and farmers encouraged in cultivating them. Since the farmers saw the financial gains involved in cultivating this crop, they were encouraged to increase production and readily accepted to pay for them. They and other interested persons in the Bamenda Province acquired these seedlings from the Befang farm. Though farmers could produce their own seedlings, they believed strongly in the quality of seeds that came from native authority farms making them veritable and undisputable sources of seedlings to farmers in the Bamenda Province.

Increase concern was also paid to yam cultivation. As mentioned earlier, native authorities' staff also raised yam seedlings in their farms and distributed them to farmers. Table 4 below indicates the number of seedlings raised by divisional native authorities of the Bamenda Province.

Table 4: Number of Yam Seedlings Distributed to Farmers by Native Authorities in the Bamenda Province, 1957 – 1960.

Division	1957 - 1958	1958 - 1959	1959 - 1960
Wum	560	400	448
Bamenda	566	715	795
Nkambe	185	190	404

Source: NAB, Qc/a/1954/2, No. 585/vol.1, Wum Divisional Native Authority: Wum Agricultural Development Program, 1954, 111.

Before 1957, the Native authorities raised more seeds than the figures above. This can be proven by the example of the Wum Befang and Esimbi, Bum, Fungom and Kom native authorities where, 53365, 5675, 300, 1081 and 1470 yam seedlings were distributed to farmers respectively in 1954.

It should be noted that, the reduction in number of seedlings produced was based on the fact that many had embraced its production and were producing their own and there was little rush or demand from native authority farms. Fruit crops were also introduced and encouraged by native authorities in the Bamenda Province. Pineapples cultivation was also experimented in some native authority areas and farmers were encouraged to engage in its cultivation. The case of the Council Farms of Fonffukka and Befang are good examples as seedlings from these farms were successfully distributed to farmers by native authority staff and its cultivation instituted. Mangoes were not left out as local governments nursed, grown and distributed seedlings to farmers. This was equally true for oranges and sugar cane too was also experimented. For instance, this was done in Weh and the venture proved fruitful and seedlings from this farm were sold out to farmers by native authority staff (NAB, Ja/g/1968/5, CI 553, 1968; NAB, Ja/g/1966/8, 1966).

Conclusion

The colonisation of Africa saw the introduction of new crops that were of interest to the colonial authorities and this endeavour laid the foundations of agricultural diversification in some parts of the continent. Through this process, African systems of production and preferences were adulterated. However, the production of indigenous products was not completely erased but had to be cultivated side by side with the newly introduced crops which were preferred by Europeans. In this direction, high yielding seedlings were provided to the people for cultivation and multiplication. Trained personnel were also recruited to teach the peasants new methods and techniques used in the cultivating these crops. These personnel offered practical lessons to peasants in their farms and also demonstration farms that were set up to that effect and managed by native authorities. Crops introduced by the authorities were experimented on these farms and when they proved suitable to the climatic and soil conditions of the local government area, they were distributed to farmers for cultivation.

To effectively diversify agricultural productivity in the province, agricultural departments were created and experts made available to all divisions. Such specialists were also present in demonstration farms and charged with the responsibilities of encouraging diversification. Thanks to their efforts, coffee, rice, oil palm, yam, mangoes, coconuts, groundnuts and oranges' cultivation was embraced by the people of the Bamenda Province. The free distribution of seedlings initially became the greatest catalyst for this change and when the authorities succeeded in implanting the culture of the cultivation of these crops in their area, minimal fees were charged and this did not deter the demand and interest reticent or inhibited in the people. Success could only be achieved through the organisation of practical training programs that were aimed at building the capacities of farmers and these were organised throughout the Bamenda Province between 1953 and 1961. To make sure that these crops provided high yields, rules were passed to ensure and encourage healthy soils management. This explains why anti soil erosion laws were passed by native authorities with the backings of the central government. These were visible by 1957 in the Bamenda Province and to make this effectively implemented, training was offered to farmers on the methods and techniques that had to be used in fighting against soil erosion. With these activities of local governments, agricultural productivity was successfully diversified in the Bamenda Province.

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