

Agricultural Shows in Southern/West Cameroon: A Mechanism for Social Cohesion and Economic Development 1952-1973

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Abstract: *Agricultural shows in British Southern/West Cameroon constituted one of the policies that the different administrations that came to be over the territory used in encouraging agricultural productivity within the territory between 1952 and 1973. However, the policy was not only limited to stir production but was transformed to a tool that was aimed at achieving social cohesion and cultural revival to the people of British Southern/West Cameroon. Due to the multi-ethnic nature of its population, seeds of discords existed among the people which hindered interaction as it resulted to limited cooperation. This scenario was therefore detrimental to the much needed economic development that was the main pursue at the time. It is against this backdrop that this paper argues that the main factors that precipitated the adoption of agricultural shows as a policy was the quest to foster social cohesion among the multi-ethnic groups that made up British Southern/West Cameroon between 1952 and 1973 in pursue for economic development. The paper depended on both primary and secondary sources in arriving its findings as it revealed that through agric shows social cohesion and cultural revival in British Southern/West Cameroon became a dream come true between 1952 and 1973.*

Keywords: *Agricultural Shows, Social Cohesion, Economic Development*

1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture from time immemorial has stood out to be one of the sustainable strategies employed in Southern/West Cameroon before and after its independence. Agricultural endeavours remained a priority as it enjoyed the pride of place in the economic agenda. The main stimulus for the realisation of such pursue was envisaged to materialise through the introduction of agricultural shows by the British colonial administration which subsequently was adopted by the post-colonial administration over the territory. Recognising the multi-ethnic nature of its inhabitants which had seeds of discord sown amongst the inhabitants prevented cooperation. All these acted as a deterrent to the spirit of nationhood especially after 1961 which was most sorted for by the administration. It was therefore realised that no effective economic development could take place amidst such prevalence. This explain why agricultural shows came to be a policy as it was envisage to promote social cohesion/fusion among the inhabitants of Southern/West Cameroon between 1952 and 1973. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to demonstrate that agricultural shows was a tool that was employed to foster social cohesion among the multiplicity of its ethnic groups that made up the population and also to enable cultural transformation among the inhabitants for the purpose of developing the territory. The study spans from 1952 to 1973. This period has been chosen because it was when the first agricultural show was organized and hosted in Bamenda in 1952 under the British colonial administration. The terminal date 1973 was use because it was when the first agricultural show event came to be organized as a planned national event shortly after the reunification of West and East Cameroon hosted in Buea.

2. BACKGROUND

At the end of First World War, Germany which had Cameroon as a colony from 1884 was expelled from the territory by the joint Anglo-French forces. The consequence of this German expulsion was the partition of the territory into two unequal parts as a result of failure to establish a joint Anglo-French administration. France received four-fifth and Britain the remaining one-fifth. By the year

1918 when the war came to an end the international body known as the League of Nations recognized the partition and requested Britain and France to administer their respective portions as mandate territories of the League of Nations. The new international boundary or partition line came to be called the Oliphant-Picot line in honor of Lancelot Oliphant, a British diplomat and George Picot a French diplomat who in a meeting in London in February 1916, initiated the partition by drawing a line on the map of Cameroon from lake Chad to the Mongo River. The partition was finalized by the Milner Simon Agreement of July 10, 1919.

The Anglo-French boundary in Cameroon gained additional international status when Britain further partitioned British Cameroon into British Northern Cameroon and British Southern Cameroons and integrated the two portions into Northern Nigeria and southern Nigeria respectively. From 1922 therefore the Oliphant-Picot line became the boundary between British Nigeria and French Cameroon because British Southern Cameroons and British Northern Cameroon were integral parts of the British colony of Nigeria.¹

British Southern/West Cameroons came to be administered from Lagos from 1922 to 1946 and from Enugu, capital of Eastern Nigeria from 1946 to 1958 when the territory was granted some autonomy. During this period, the territory was treated as a Nigerian colony as most of its public services were manned largely by Nigerians who also dominated in all the sectors of the economy. Within this period the territory suffered serious neglect in terms of economic development and also numerous attempts made by Nigerian officials and the large number of Igbo immigrants in Southern/West Cameroons to annex or colonise the territory and exploit its resources.²

It is against this background that the nationalist in British Southern Cameroons led by John Ngu Foncha to advocate separation from Nigeria and eventual reunification with French Cameroon. Although, there were opposing forces led by E.M.L. Endeley who were for independence with Nigeria there were also others led by P.M. Kale who wanted a separate Cameroon without links to French Cameroon or Nigeria. It was due to this divide among nationalists of British Southern Cameroon that the United Nations decided to organise a plebiscite in 1961. The results of the election were in favour of reunification with French Cameroon or the Republic of Cameroon as the territory was known at independence from 1960. The reunified Cameroon was a federation styled the Federal Republic.³ Southern Cameroon became known as West Cameroon while the French part came to be known as East Cameroon. However, shortly after a federation was created between the two Cameroons talks started propping up due to dissatisfactions on the nature of the federation which eventually gave room for the pushing away of the federal structure.⁴ This eventually led to the desolution of the federal structure through a referendum in 1972 as this date saw the birth of a new Cameroon whereas from 1973 the name came to be the United Republic of Cameroon⁵. The area British Southern Cameroon is the portion in Cameroon which is today the North West and the South West Regions of Cameroon.

3. REASONS FOR AGRICULTURAL SHOWS

The adoption of agricultural show policy in British Southern/West Cameroon was basically for the following reasons. Firstly an agricultural show was a British colonial policy that was replicated in her West African colonies. This was because colonial economies were structured or geared towards the provision of economic needs or much needed raw materials to the colonial economies. Better still,

¹J. L. Nfi, "The Reunification Debate in British Southern Cameroons: The Role of French Cameroon Immigrants", *Bamenda, Langaa RPCIG* (2014); Nigerians on Mission in the British Southern Cameroons, Berlin, *Galda Verlag*, 2015); V. G. Fanso, "Anglophone and Francophone Nationalisms in Cameroon", *The round table* 350 (1999), 281-296.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid, p. 28.; Bongfen Chem-Langhee, *The Paradox of Self-Determination in the Cameroon Under United Kingdom Administration, Search For Identity, Well-Being And Continuity*, 149-176

⁴ S. T. Ngenge, "The Institutional Roots of the Anglophone Problem", in Gros, Jean- Germain (ed), *Cameroon: Politics and Society in Critical Perspectives*, New York, University Press of America, (2003), 61-86.; V.J. Ngoh, *History of Cameroon since 1800*, Limbe, Presprint, (2002), (ed), *Cameroon: From a Federal to a Unitary State, 1961-1972*, Limbe, Design House, (2004).

⁵ V. J. Ngoh, *Southern Cameroon 1922-1961: A Constitutional History*, (England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2001), 122-131.; Ngoh, *The Untold Story of Cameroon Reunification*, 38-46.

agricultural production was done to benefit the colonial states.⁶ This is because economic incentives, most specifically raw materials, constitute the principal reason for colonialism and, in order to attain these objectives, the capitalist modes of production and systems that were functional in Europe and entrenched at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution were exported to Africa.⁷ 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.⁸ The British Governor of Nigeria in 1926 gave 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.

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 were 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.⁹

When the Second World War ended, the consequences that followed were such that it created an influence on British policies which were in time past reflected on her in Southern/West Cameroon. The war had far reaching consequences on the European politic and economy. Prior to the war, Europe was the centre of international affairs particularly as major political decisions that affected the rest of the world had to be taken there with the British championing this move. However, after the war things never remained the same for the British. This had some influence on the relationship between the British imperial powers over Southern/West Cameroon that was its colony. This can partially explain the impunity with which the British and the French did scrambled and partition Cameroon into their respective spheres of influence.¹⁰

As the war dragged to its end Britain faced humiliating defeats thus demystifying the superiority myth of the British as they moved from a position of strength to one of weakness. The dismemberment of British in to Capitalist and Communist spheres of influence did conclude the sorry state of Britain thereafter. Southern/West Cameroons' position had to be redefined particularly as it remained a major source of raw-material for British companies back home. With the loss of the rich Far East colonies, Southern/West Cameroon became of great strategic and economy importance to the British.¹¹

The production of raw materials such as vegetable oils and minerals had gone ahead in lips bounds yet Southern/West Cameroon producer's rewards were not commensurate or equivalent to the prices paid in Britain and elsewhere. This happened as a result of Britain in other to prevent rising prizes and thus control inflation bought produces from the growers at one prize and sold it in the world market at a higher prize. The different between the two prizes was retained in government funds which was never release by the British colonial administration over Southern/West Cameroon for the development of the territory. The British government after the war came to the realisation that if the territory must attain some level of economic development then policies that should be adopted must involve the people to actively participate in their own development. This saw the introduction of agricultural shows within the territory which intended to enable continuous productions of the different products needed at the world market in maintain the balance of trade.¹²

⁶ Duke, Joe. August, "The Impact of Colonialism on the Development of Management in Nigeria", *International Journal of Business and Management* Vol. 5, No. 8.(2010), 3.

⁷Lugard, Frederick, *The Duul Mandate in British Tropical Africa*. London: Frank Cass, (1965), 4.

⁸Earnest Bamou, and William, A. Masters. December Distortions to Agricultural Incentives in Cameroon, *Agricultural Distortion Working Paper*, 42. (2007).

⁹Buchanan, M. K. and Pugh, J. C., *Land and People in Nigeria*, London: University Press, (1958).9.

¹⁰ M Fafchamps, "Development and social capital", *Journal of Development Studies* 42(7): 1180–1198. (2006).

¹¹ A. Greif, "Coercion and exchange, How did markets evolve?" in Greif, A, Kiesling, L and Nye, J (eds), *Essays in Economic History and Development*, *Stanford University*, (2012),

¹²Grosjean, P and C Senik, "Democracy, market liberalization and political and economic preferences", *Review of Economics and Statistics* 93(1), (2011), 365–381.

On the one hand the WWII enabled the British to embark upon big development schemes for the benefit of the people within Southern/West Cameroon. On the other hand, by limiting so drastically the prizes paid to the growers, it probably held back the growth of production as it certainly did the growth of privets savings and investment. The fact many could not be involved in agricultural productivity during the war made it possible that the standard of living of the people to drop as no time was spend in production thus a fall in their capital. The only way out of this was for the British to implement policies that could bring about increase which agricultural shows came to be the way out.¹³

WWII brought about the shortage of consumers goods. During the war, so much effort was directed by the British and later other government toward meeting up with the demands of the world economy which at the time was focus on the production of weapons thus neglected food production. When the war ended in 1945 most European government especially Britain took to reconstruction this had the impact of influencing the flow of consumer goods which were in very high demand in Africa.

The British paid more attention in the recruitment of soldiers from southern/West Cameroon that could fight on the war front along the allied forces, young and energetic young men that fought on their side of the allied were farmer that abandoned their farms for this purpose. This this explains why there was a reduction in the number of those that were involved in farming. The shortage of these goods and those in limited supply attracted very high cost which the British wanted to overcome the situation Southern/West Cameroon which was already facing this frustration. It was due to this effect of WWII that the British adopted and implemented agricultural shows within the territory starting from 1953 as a means to redress the situation.

While the war brought lowered the prestige of Britain, it created psychological boosters to Southern/West Cameroonians. The mental altitude of Britain and southern/west Cameroonians were greatly changed. Previously Britain had been able to dominate the people not only because of their advanced military and economic techniques, but also because they believed they were superior and had to overcome whatever was not of British origin shattered this myth. Several former colonial powers had been defeated and publicly humiliated. With this the British colonial administration became humble in the face of such reality and came to the point of on working with the people in fostering developmental project within the territory. Agricultural shows became that platform upon which both the colonial administrators and the indigenes could work as one person in fostering development.¹⁴

Due to the fact that the British forces and those recruited from Southern/West Cameroon shared a common dwelling during training made both parties to realise each other capabilities and weaknesses. Upon return the behaviour of both the British and the indigenes of Southern/West Cameroon never remain the same as prior to the war. This radically moderated the altitudes of the British as they started working hand in gloves with the population in attempt to Forster growth the best expression they could initiate was the implementation of agricultural show that proved the closeness of both the indigenes and the British administrator.

Things never remained the same under the British administration like they had been under the Germans as far as economic or agricultural policies were concerned. With the fall in demand for agricultural produce from the industrialised countries due to the closure and the conversion of others to the production of arms, in the early stages of the Second World War, before the war, German occupation usually saw the taken of 100,000 tons of cocoa and 2,000,000 tons of oil seed per annum from Cameroon. But in the later stages of the war, they could obtain only a very small proportion of this quantity.¹⁵This was because demand from abroad also fell further because Britain and France

¹³ P. Grosjean, "Conflict and Social and Political Preferences: Evidence from World War II and Civil Conflict in 35 European Countries", *Comparative Economic Studies* 56(3): (2014), 424–451.

¹⁴ A. P. Cassar, Grosjean, and S Whitt, "Legacies of violence: Trust and market development", *Journal of Economic Growth* 18(3), (2013a), 285–318.

¹⁵A. P. Cassar, Grosjean, and S. Whitt "Social preferences of ex-combatants: Survey and experimental evidence from post-war Tajikistan", in Wörneryd, K. (ed). *The Economics of Conflict*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (2013b).

adopted a policy of limiting imports by neutral countries to ensure that they were not re-exported to Germany. This situation did not change for a considerable period of time even after the war came to an end with the British control over southern/West Cameroons.

However, as time went on relationship between the Germans and the British began to improve and this was going to require more production of raw materials. For this to happen the British adopted the policy of agricultural show to motivate the people to produce more of the products needed back in Europe¹⁶The agricultural state as mention above within the territory was therefore exacerbated due to the British adoption of the policy of self-sufficiency for her colonies. Owing to the fact that this territory could not sustain their own development especially after the devastating effects of the first world war and WWII on the territory that saw the closure of some industries that could sustain the economy such as, the palm kernel industry in the Ossidenge (Mamfe) District was almost dead after the war owing to the destruction of factories particularly the North Kamerun Company's nut-cracking and oil-processing machinery.¹⁷ The volume of palm kernels exported from the district had plummeted from 400 tons in 1913–14 to barely 20 tons in 1916.¹⁸ The demand for produce from the industrialized countries shrank because of the closure of some industries and the conversion of others to the production of arms.¹⁹ All these resulted in economic setbacks since even agriculture that had thrived under the German administration suffered due to the British neglect of the territory.²⁰

It should be recalled that the loss of British Far East colonial possessions after World War II and possible sources of raw materials from that direction ignited or increased British interest in its West African colonies, especially the Southern Cameroons that had been neglected before now. 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.²¹ It was because of the above reasons that the British colonial authorities had to introduce agricultural shows activities in British Southern Cameroons in order to improve on the agricultural sector.

Also with the resurgence of the Germans in the plantations in Cameroon, other European planters re-established a powerful planters' association that was a replica of the one during the period of German administration. Its principal objective was to protect the interests of European plantation owners against any government policies that were not compatible with those interests. The planters' association became a 'state within a state' because of its powerful influence in shaping government politics. The plantation owners were therefore able to fix the wages of Cameroonians employed at rates that brought high profits and without any concern for the interest of the Africans.²²

However, whatever was benefited by the inhabitants had implication on their economic lives as some used the income to open up individual farms that served the indigenes. The British therefore were the main losers in this deal with the German as many could look up to the Germans than to answer to the British.²³ According to Dekorne in Takor's re-appropriation work mention that:

Germany supplied the British Cameroons with far greater quantities of salt, apparel, implements and tools, iron and steel manufactures, rice [...], kerosene, fish, cotton piece-goods, bags and sacks, and cement the United Kingdom did. The only goods that the British Cameroons import in greater quantities from the United Kingdom than from Germany were cigars and cigarettes. This general trend held true throughout the 1930s and beyond.²⁴

¹⁶Ibid, 90.

¹⁷*Cameroon from a Federation to a Unitary State, 35-55.:Introduction to the History of Cameroon,47.*

¹⁸ Ibid,

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰*Cameroon History for Secondary Schools, 23.*

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid, 21.

²³George TanyiAyuk, 78 Years, Retired Field Assistant CDC, Ekona Town, 19th February 2022

²⁴Nixon KahjumTakor, "German Economic Re-Appropriation of The British Southern Cameroons Territory, 1924-46", *Council For The Development of Social Science Research in African & Association Of African Historians*, (2016).

Commenting on the above, although Southern Cameroons was a British colony, it was, for all practical purposes, an economic territory of Germany. This demonstrate that Germany exercise economic control over the economy of British Southern/West Cameroons but lack political control as this was in the hands of the British.²⁵

For Germany to have established such a great influence over the economy of Southern/West Cameroon could be justified by the fact that the perception on how the allied and Associate Powers forces regarded Germany when it gained access into the League of Nations in 1926. The indictment of Germany for the reprehensible aspects of its colonial administration were easily and quickly forgotten when Germany was admitted into the League of Nations in 1926. This saw the removal on all the restrictions that were placed on citizens shortly after the war.

According to Aka in Takor's re-appropriation work, the Allied powers were convinced that Germany had been discipline by its defeat in the war and therefore had no assurance it would modify it system of colonial administration in the best interest of the inhabitants of the respective colonies.²⁶

This could also be attributed to the British open door economic culture in Southern/West Cameroons which gave foreign firms the latitude to compete with British commercial firms.²⁷ It could also be argued on 'the British lack of interest on Southern/WestCameroon'. This lack of interest is evident in the unequal partition of the territory as far back as from 1916 and 1919. Britain took barely a fifth of the territory against the four-fifths acquired by France.²⁸ The British lack of disinterest on Cameroon could also be blamed partly on its shortage administrative personnel, could be extrapolated from the League's 1922 Report on British Cameroons.²⁹ The disinterest also rest on the fact that, British feared Germany was going to one day reclaim Cameroon and therefore saw the development of the territory a mare means to waste British tax payers money and talents.

Disguised under the policy of self-sufficiency, the British through the Germans, chose to carry out a continuation of German economic policies in Southern/West Cameroons, especially in the domain of agriculture which impacted and enhanced the development of the territory as indigenes who worked with the Germans gained skills that were applicable even after the Germans economic dominance came to an end. Regardless of the perspective adopted on British economic performance in the Cameroons during the Mandate period, it is evident that there was an economic asymmetry in favour of Germany. This situation was reversed by the new spate of developments related to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 which the publishing of a new colonial policies for her colonies.

Seeing that the German were not to be trusted, control over all formerly-owned German plantations came under the management of the British colonial administration. Besides the British policy of self-sufficiency which had to do with boosting economic development and improving on quantity and quality of production led to the adoption of agricultural shows within southern/west Cameroon from 1953.

Southern/West Cameroon had vast expanses of land, which was unexploited generally favourable climate, fertile soils, many plant varieties, industrious and hardworking labour that augured well for a rapid development of the country. Considering that Agriculture was the primary job provider that could employ about 80 percent of the population that depended on it, Agro-pastoral shows were deemed necessary to boost production. Again given its dominant role in socio-economic development, it was understandable that west Cameroon's access to food was to be found in its agricultural potential and adequate policy planning. This was although many youths still found it difficult to get employed. The launching of Agricultural shows came along with the institutionalisation of periodic agricultural festivals held regularly in major cities and towns of the

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid, 94.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ LON, Annual Report, 1938, 42-43.

²⁹ Great Britain, Colonial Office Report 1922, 5.

country.³⁰ This was to see into it that the problem of rapid economic development of the territory was resolved. The Grand agricultural show that held in Buea South West Province 1967,³¹ the then Minister of agriculture Jean Keutcha said:

“... Such a manifestation brings together farmers, extension and research services, manufacturers; traders and thus play an important role of training and information of rural populations.³² They were therefore to act as impetus to stimulate, incite, inform and also as forums where farmers and youths in particular could learn and emulate from one another.³³

They were further created to speed up national agricultural production while encouraging all actors of the sector to work harder in order to ensure food self-sufficiency.³⁴ In order to materialize government’s encouragement, competitors (planters or growers, fishermen and stock breeders) of the country who presented the best products and farmers were awarded prizes.³⁵

The adoption of Agricultural shows were to impulse west Cameroonians in general and the youths in particular, to be conscientious of the problems plaguing the rural world.³⁶ They were also to orchestrate serene confrontations between agriculturalists, graziers, foresters, artisans, business people and industrialists, thereby, constituting an irreversible meeting point of diffusion and information where each of them could enrich their knowledge, compare experiences and appreciate the technical progress so far realised in their various domains of activity.³⁷ Agro-pastoral shows were to transform villages from places where the inhabitants would not remain essentially agricultural living on one and the same activity, but were intended in transforming the rural centres to places where farmers, were going to be added an important tertiary activity such as trades, and also engage the people into other services, a secondary population of small local industries and even a resident population which consumed on the spot.³⁸

Shows were aimed at Creating awareness on the various support programmes in the agro-pastoral sector which most of those undertaking agricultural activities were ignorant of such programmes.³⁹ During the shows such programmes were organised and farmers made to be aware of when and where they could benefit from it.⁴⁰

Promoting the marketing of agricultural produce was one of the key reasons why shows were organised in British Southern/West Cameroon.⁴¹ It was noticed that most of what the population produce was hardly consumed because of limited avenues that farmers had to sale their produce.⁴² Thus it was envisaged that with the organisation of events as this that often saw a massive turn out of the population farmers and artist could easily have a ready markets as their items were show case to the general public for consumption.⁴³ This reason explain why some farmers though not invited to ta part in the shows still came with their produce as almost all what that were broad on such ground hardly were taken back with the producers.⁴⁴

Not only were agricultural show intended for the farmers to have a ready market for their produce but also to Visualize to the public, the agro-pastoral production of the territory British southern/West Cameroon so as to inform those interested in engaging into agriculture to understand those produce

³⁰Ibid, 33.

³¹ Ibid, 27

³² The Farmers Voice, “Agro-Pastoral Show: Ebolowa says, “Yes we can”, (2010), p.1.

³³ “Changing Fortunes ”,20-33.

³⁴Ibid, 22.

³⁵ Ibid, 24

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷“Understanding Agro-pastoral”, 774.

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ NAB, Ci(1956)1, No.106, Annual Report (Report of 1952), Enclosed, 12-43.

⁴⁰Ibid, 43

⁴¹Ibid, 12.

⁴²Ibid, 15.

⁴³Ibid, 25.

⁴⁴ Native authorities...”

they needed to be given more attention.⁴⁵ Therefore shows were seen as an aspect of creating awareness or passing out information to reorient interested persons.⁴⁶ It was also aimed at enabling the exchange of ideas, experiences, innovations, knowledge between actors in the agro-pastoral domain and also to enable actors in the sector to identify and create links with valuable partners of their production, processing and marketing activities.⁴⁷ All these were carefully implanted within the policy of self-reliant development and plan liberalism of President Ahmadou Ahidjo.

4. AGRICULTURAL SHOWS AND THE PROMOTION OF SOCIAL COHESION

British Southern/West Cameroon was made up of heterogeneous societies and people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds lumped up into political units. With this, groups that were in majority dominated those in the minority factions. This administrative set up ignored the right and privileges of the minority as their fate depended on the whims and caprices of the dominant political groups. This then laid the foundation for agitation and political disintegration among the people of the territory. Minority groups like the mbororos became culturally assimilated or dominated as the British administrative policy was based on the cultural values of the colonial people and that of dominant groups often took precedence. Though it was clear that the customs and traditions of the colonial peoples differ, as indicated in intelligence and assessment reports, and that it would be difficult to rule the people under the same customary authority, the British colonial authorities ignored these differences and went ahead to institute the British policy of indirect rule which resulted to the dilemma of disunity among conglomerated groups in British Southern/West Cameroon.⁴⁸

It was because of this scenario that the British colonial administration, pursue measures through which this gap could be bridged and agricultural shows became the best option. As it was previewed to foster interaction and integration of all the different groups that made up the territory, disintegration of any kind among the people was not an idea at the time when socio-economic development was the main goal for the territory. The British colonial administration together with the local Native Authorities (NAs) and their councils worked in synergy for agricultural shows to become a reality as it was aimed at stamping out differences that existed among indigenes.⁴⁹ Some of such factions that were of the minority groups and faced discrimination when it came to nation building were the Fulani who were mostly in to cattlerearing. Seeing that they had been recurrent tensions created between cattle rearers and other farmers on arable land within the territory, there was a need for the colonial administration to developed policies that could bridge this gap and agricultural shows became the tool for such pursued.

During the events, it was common to see people from diverse ethnic and production background interacting with one another. Cattles and livestock farmers, those into cash and food crops as well as indigenes that were into other sectors of production like art and culture interacted for the common good of projecting the heritage of the territory to the external world. This in turn let to the exchange of ideas in the different domains of production as the resultant effect was mass production which of Course was qualitative in nature. Through agricultural shows the indigenes of British Southern/West Cameroon came to understand that there could be unity in diversity. This then gave the leverage to be able to copy, learn and implement values from other cultures. Agricultural shows therefore promoted the socio-economic life of the people through interaction.

When the territory gained its independence in 1961, the pursued of agricultural shows as far as the issue of integration was concerned did not remain exactly the same as most interest was shifted by the post-colonial government of British Southern/West Cameroon to foster Unity in diversity between the people of British Southern/West Cameroon and those of East Cameroon that had been separated for a period of more than forty years as they now had different cultures, economies, life style and having in mind that the number of ethnic groups to be managed at this point in time had increased. There was therefore a need to continue with the implementation of agricultural shows policy which worked

⁴⁵Ibid, 14.

⁴⁶NAB, Qc/a(1954)2, No. 585/vol.1, 1954, 16.

⁴⁷ NAB, Gc/h(1955)1, LG 1845, 1955, 12.

⁴⁹Ibid.

miracles in fostering social cohesion after 1961. The event created avenues where the differences that had constrained relationship among the indigenes could be checked so as to pursue the task of economic development as a people belonging to one nation. After 1961 cohesion among the people became one of the major priorities of the state due to the multiplicity of ethnic groups that made up the territory. Nyamnjoh posited in this regard that:

What will keep British Southern/West Cameroonians together despite wide spread instability in Africa despite the turbulence of the sub-regional environment in which it finds itself; and despite its own internal contradictions?" His answers included what disaffected; its propensity to vacillate on most issues of collective interest, and an infinite ability to develop survival strategies.⁵⁰

While the above statement finds credence within British Southern/West Cameroon especially within the context of integration that was a surge among the population of this territory taking into cognition its historical underpinning, research in history of agriculture demonstrates that in majority of cases, frantic efforts to maintain national unity could be attributed to concrete agricultural policies and the strategies employed by states in the governance of diversities from colonial times to the period after colonialism. People possessing distinctive languages, religions and cultures living as homogenous groups within well-defined geographical, linguistic and cultural precincts were directed into larger poly-ethnic, cultural and linguistic administrative units. The territory was at different points in history characterised by various waves of Bantu ethnic group's migration that occupied the coastal and forest zones, Chamba groups locally referred to as Semi-Bantu arrived in the 17th and 18th centuries.⁵¹

The migratory and settlement patterns in the territory were associated with parallel differences in political and social organisation. While some parts were made up of monarchical and theocratic authoritative highly centralized states, others exhibited republican characteristics of consensual government through smaller village councils of elders.⁵² The majority of those in the Bamendagrass field were a mixture of both Muslims, Christians with those of indigenous religion and those in the forest zone were predominantly Christians. These people still adherent to a majority of their belief system and seeing this sharp differences that constituted the people of British Southern/West Cameroon there was a need for a concerted effort to formulate policies if implemented, could enable integration among the people. This was therefore a pivotal factor that enabled agricultural shows as a running policy.

Besides the above, the territory's colonial heritage that stemmed from the German protectorate (1884-1916) followed by separate British and French mandates and trusteeships (1916-1960-1)⁵³ and to their subsequent reunification in 1961 to make it a unique case in Africa. This was bound to complicate the life of any government that had to administer the territory. This made the territory to be once described by the pioneer president of East Cameroon Amadou Ahidjo as "an original puzzle of living diversities [which]...often left contradictory imprints on the ways in which Cameroonians thought and acted."⁵⁴

An appreciation on the territory's diversity became very essential in understanding the state of emphasis on "a harmonious living together" as current rhetoric puts it. Ethnic, colonial and regional cultures have often emphasized social and political cleavages that seemed to serve as oppositions between one group and another and breed resistance to incorporation into larger political entities. This has been the most popular justification for the majority of the crisis of conviviality⁵⁵ and upheavals in the territory which in extreme cases threatened national unity. The need to mitigate such crisis and in turn meet the aspirations of the different administrations over British Southern/West Cameroon

⁵¹Neba, *Modern geography of the Republic of Cameroon*, 7.; V.J. Ngoh, *History of Cameroon since 1800*, 17-28.; V.J. Ngoh, *Cameroon: From Federal to a Unitary State*, 22.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ahidjo, A. *The political philosophy of Amadou Ahidjo*. Political bureau of the Cameroon National Union. Paris: Paul Bory Publishers, (1968).

became a paramount or an essential feature of the problematic of nation building process and rational policy in Cameroon. As Ahidjo, emphasised in 1962,

Every nation is composed of a mosaic of families, tendencies and interests. But a nation is not great, nor even viable, until these various elements complement each other and combine together in a constructive manner....[In view of this]we are determined to purge our nation of every consideration, every factor likely, directly or indirectly, to cement and foster differences. National Unity means that in the work-yard of national construction, there is neither Anglophone nor francophone. We are one and all, simply Cameroonians.⁵⁶

From 1961, as a political ideology in Cameroon, national integration was expected to go beyond an “awareness of a common identity amongst Cameroonians to an actual manifestation of a national community life that is conscious of, respects and preserves the supreme-ness of the state. It also requires that each citizen should respect and give a chance to other Cameroonians, region, ethnic group or colonial identity notwithstanding, as their right of being Cameroonians, uphold the general interest and strive for the common good. This was to an extent achieved all thanks to the implementation of agricultural shows programmes that helped foster the long search for unity and bred a sense of oneness among the people as most of them during the event failed to take cognisance of whatever their backgrounds were but came together in the spirit of nationhood to display their products with gladness.

During agricultural shows it was difficult for many to pay attention as to where one came from but subjected their identities and valued consensus and this was made possible by the organisers of such event.⁵⁷ Shows only encouraged social stride among the people as was evident in shows organised at the sub-divisional, Divisional and those at the regional level or national level. Participants in these shows, paid less attention to their ethnicity. The event became an arena for reconciliation for some of the tension that had even existed between farmers as grazers over time. Those that participated in the show often came for one thing to socialise and show case their products and to win the prize award that were offered. In a nutshell, agro pastoral shows helped in reducing the animosity that often arose from among persons that came from different ethnic backgrounds and only fostered the spirit of nation hood among the people of British Southern/West Cameroon.⁵⁸ It was very difficult to see or hear people acclaimed to their ethnic origin rather, all were encouraged to see themselves as brothers and sisters or as the people of British southern/west Cameroon.

5. AGRICULTURAL SHOWS AND CULTURAL REVIVALS

During the organization agricultural shows, Local council oftener encouraged their inhabitants to show-case their culture as it was a crowd pulling event. Local government sponsored their people to take part on such occasion as they provided them with transport, food and prizes to the best traditional dance groups.⁵⁹ This was sponsored from local government budget councilors became the catalysts of change as they encouraged their people to actively participate in these events and also coordinated their activities. It was pride for any group of people of the territory to identify with communities that did well and were successful in such occasions. Agricultural shows that often received it sponsor from local council turned into a cultural festival. This began in 1954 with the inception of provincial shows and by 1959. It became an affair for divisional local government. In these divisional shows the best groups were selected to showcase their cultural dance at the provincial level. Dance groups from all over the various divisions trooped to their divisional headquarters and the best performing groups

⁵⁶Ahidjo, A. 1962a, Speech delivered by AmadouAhidjo, at the Congress of the Union *Camerounaise*,Ebolowa, 4-8 July 1962. National Archives-Yaounde.; Ahidjo, A 1962b. Address by AmadouAhidjo, President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon to the Legislative Assembly. Yaoundé 6th May 1962. National Archives Yaounde.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸FedrickNdelly Same, 67 Years, Farmer and one time participant and a winner of agricultural show organized at the regional level in Buea and also a business operator, Buea, 30/12/2020; IscandarouMbipehNdiwane, 70 Years, Farmer, Mankon, 21/12/2020.

⁵⁹ProtusMbueum Tem, “Local Government in the Preservation and Elevation of the Cultural Heritage of Abglophone Cameroon, 1954-1969”, *African Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 10. No 3, (2019), 3.

were selected to represent the divisions and animate in such events.⁶⁰ This therefore meant that each division had to organize a mini show and winners participated at the provincial show. For example in preparation for the Bamenda provincial show of 1964, the kom-Bum local councils provided three dance groups to the wum mini show which preceded that of Bamenda. This was also true of Njikwa, Oshie and Konda people who had to make up three different dance groups as was the case in other divisions within British southern/west Cameroon.

In preparation for such shows, the local councils did all to prepare the people properly in a bid to make the division proud. They created committees to oversee events as they unfolded in local government areas. Councilors were appointed by the local councils to oversee such preparations. Such preparations were done in all the council area of British Southern/West Cameroon and those that prepared well became sources of inspiration to those that lagged behind.⁶¹ This therefore, triggered some local councils to initiate training programs geared at preparing the people for any surprise by putting in style, reorganizing dances and putting in modernity to the fore front such that steps or moves had to be done uniformly with dexterity and efficiency. They however, did not wait only for such occasions to show up but were constantly working on the revitalization of their cultures through dance and music. Most often excellent performances from some groups or local governments during these shows ignited others to prepare well for subsequent events.

For instance the performance of Bali and Nso groups that were a crowd puller in the 1964 agricultural show in Bamenda spurred others to prepare well for future events as some local groups had to provoke their people with well-trained personnel or coaches. This had a direct bearing on the performances of groups from their local council areas as their presentations were thrilling. This was the case of the people of Wum, Kom, Mamfe and Kumba local council areas. The physically educated experts in their local areas were employed to bring in the much needed change and prepared their people for future competition. Among other assignment they were called upon to train dance groups and standardize their dance styles. They were to make sure that these dance groups would compete with their counterparts in the territory. This had a positive impact on their performance, especially the *Njang* dance group which was one of the popular dance groups that pull the crowd in many shows in British Southern Cameroons.⁶²

Based on the precedence it cannot be denied that agricultural show established a foundation for the perfecting of cultural dances and music through competitions among the people which saw the awards of prizes for those that emerged best from the Sub-Divisional Divisional and at the Provincial levels. It is also so to say that most of those that came to be part of these shows were not only inhabitants of British Southern/West Cameroon but the shows attracted individuals from other areas as some came to learn from what was done and how it was organized so as to implement in their respective areas of origin.

Though such events were aimed at spurring production, it became an affair for cultural exhibition as dance groups and other cultural activities stole the show. It is because of the diversification of the original goals of agricultural shows that experts were drawn from all areas of the economy with the agricultural department playing an insignificant role.⁶³ The sponsoring of events and major decisions did not even come from the agricultural sector hence suspicion loomed on the real motives of the shows. This became a major problem preoccupying the agricultural sector as the chief agricultural officer in the territory was fast to encourage the taking over of the entire activities by NAs who were the principal sponsors of indigenous agricultural activities in their communities.⁶⁴

6. TOURISTIC POTENTIAL

With the massive turn out often experienced during the agricultural shows, some local councils and the state took advantage in building guesthouses and hotels that hosted some of the dignitaries that came in to see what was done in the territory. With this, it became clear that agricultural shows

⁶⁰Ibid.; NAB, Qc/a (1952)2, No. NR 217/Vol. II. Agric. Shows, Southern Cameroon.

⁶¹“Local Government in the Preservation...”, 3.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ “Local Government in...”

⁶⁴ Francis Azang Mboh, 51 Years, Trader, Nkewn, 25/09/2021; Charles Tifor Katu, 43 Years, Farmer/Carpenter, Bambui, 19/09/2021; Mbanong Fedelis Andre, 60 Year, Farmer, Bafut, 21/07/2021.

imparted on the touristic potential of the territory as money was spent by visitors and observers that came to be part of the event. This institution acted as economic booster foreign money came in through guess and others that came to be part of the show within the economies that were hosting the program. This therefore acted as a push factor toward the socio-economic development of the territory.

Worth nothing was the agricultural shows organized in 1965, local government encouraged cultural diversities and heritage in the different jurisdiction and the territory in general. This was a great boost to the tourism sector as both foreign and local tourists were attracted to the event. This helped in the preservation of the cultural heritage of the territory and also brought some innovations. Above all it became a medium of selling and projecting the territory's culture to the outside world. The 1966 agricultural show saw local governments putting in much in that direction. Villages had to be grouped into zones and competitions became a common phenomenon as traditional dances had to compete. The best performing groups moved to the district, and to the divisional and national levels respectively. The impact of Agricultural shows in the economy of British Southern/West Cameroon has remained indelible and continues to be an indispensable policy for development pursuits for the nation Cameroon today.

7. CONCLUSION

The institution of agricultural shows in Cameroon from 1953 was certainly the most significant agricultural policy that came to be within the territory. Through this program socialization was encouraged and the differences that had existed among the multiple ethnic groups greatly minimized. It was also due to the establishment of agricultural shows that some level of development came to be realized. For instance shows broad about improvement on the different cultures and music as people were permitted to copy from the best groups. Shows Avenue became touristic centers and attracted huge income from those that came to be part of the events. Such incomes were used in carrying out developmental projects which included the building of guesthouses, hotels, rehabilitation of roads, escalation of show site which later became avenue for sporting activities even after the shows had taking place. These became sources of revenue for the local governments that were used in fostering development in other areas. Shows equally enabled the indigenes improved upon their cultural heritage and show cases such culture to the outside world.

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