

Bamileke Businessmen in the Realm of Political Transition in Bamileke Region of Cameroon, 1990-2000

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Abstract:-In the Bamileke County of Cameroon the businessmen prior to the 1990s were not interested in party politics. After independence they were not interested in politics and concentrated in building wealth. The creation of a monolithic system on 1st September 1966, made it that they were simple militants of the political system and went about doing their businesses successfully. The re-emergence of multi-party democracy in 1990 changed the perception of the businessmen toward political participation. To protect their businesses most of them became militants of Cameroon Democratic Movement (CPDM) in their various home towns in order to preserve their businesses while other defected from CPDM to join the opposition or created their own political parties. Following this change, the Bamileke businessmen actively participated in the 1996 council election, 1992 and 1992 legislative elections. During this political exercised they exhibited their financial capabilities of distributing electoral gifts and propagating their political platforms. This paper attempts to explain why the businessmen became involved in politics and participated in elections. It also expounds on the effects of transition from monolithic to multi-party system in the Bamileke region in the 1990s.

Key Words: Bamileke region, Businessmen, politics, elections, multiparty system, Ghosttowns

I. INTRODUCTION

Business and political economy are two features that actually characterised the realm of political transition in Cameroon in general and in the Bamileke area in particular since 1990. The political mutation that gave rise to a form of political economy was vested on the use of economic resources in politics by businessmen. This resulted specifically from the political and economic crisis experienced in the 1980s that affected drastically the economic situation of the country and led to critical political changes. In fact, the mutations which echoed the transition from a monolithic to a pluralist political system were developed in phases till the adoption of Law No.90/56 of 19 December 1990 Relating to Political Parties.¹ As pointed out by most scholars apart from the democratic ideas these mutations transformed radically the various way of state performance in the areas of; transparency, accountability and respect for Human Rights. Business persons got involved in order to protect their economic activities, to have prestige, to gain supporters for

the party in power, CPDM or for the newly created parties and to obtain representative positions.² In this perspective, business and politics became inseparable. Hence, how the political transition occurred in the Bamileke area? What were the professional and political identifications of the Bamileke Businessmen that stepped in politics during this period? How and why businessmen participated in local electoral competitions? Finally what was the impact of this participation on the reconfiguration of the Bamileke society? These are some issues raised in the course of this paper.

II. SOCIO-PROFESSIONAL AND PARTISAN IDENTIFICATION OF BAMILEKE BUSINESSMEN OF THE 1990S

In this region three categories of Bamileke political entrepreneurs that were prominent in the business milieu by 1990s can be identified following these concepts. Firstly the reputational approach conceptualised by Hunter³ advocates the fact that power is not “clandestine” because those who suffer from it in a precise society are capable to identify its holders. Secondly, the decisional approach developed by Dahl helps to ascertain individuals who participate in decision making namely public issues like public education, development and political appointments in a community.⁴ Thirdly, the positional approach also helps to determine the Bamileke entrepreneurs. The basic assumption of this approach is that “those holding positions of authority actually make key decisions while those who do not occupy such positions do not make significant decisions.” Followers of this approach took into consideration the top economic position, the top civic and political statuses.⁵

On this account it is important to assert that most of the Bamileke businessmen accumulated their economic resources through services such as hotels, hostel, schools, mechanical automobile, transport and health care delivery services. They were also heavily involved in agriculture, animal farming or livestock, industries such as breweries, lotteries, tapestry, bakery, commercialisation of mineral water, wine, building materials, fish, cash crops and food crops industries. Their zeal in these thriving economic sectors allowed them to earn financial and personal resources

that abetted them to build an influential sphere. Hence, they became a sort of mobilising means holder who members sought to identify themselves.

Apart from the Bamileke in government, several Bamileke entrepreneurs embarked on electoral competitions thanks to the reintroduction of pluralism in the country. Some prominent one included: Jean Tchouta Moussa Mbatkam (Minister of Territorial Planning from April 26, 1991 to November 27, 1992 and Director General of ONPC until March 1997); Kontchou Komegni (Minister of Information and Culture (7 September 1990-9 April 1992, Minister of State in charge of Communication (27 November 1992-7 December 1997) and Minister of State in charge of External Relations (7 December 1997-April 27, 2001)); Marcel Niat Njifenji (Minister of Plan and Territorial Administration from 7 September 1990 to 26 April 1991, while remaining Director General of SONEL. He was Deputy Prime Minister for Mines, Water, and Energy from 9 April 1992 to 27 November 1992); Madeleine Tchuinté (pharmacist, Minister of Scientific Research and Innovation since December 8, 2004). There were also Victor Fotso (founder of the Fotso Group composed of FERMENCAM, FABASSEM, FISHCO, GFA, PHYTOCAM, PILCAM, SAFCA, PROLEG, UNALOR et SOPICAM and CBC); Joseph Kadji de Fotso (founder of the Kadji Group); André Sohaing (Founder of the Sohaing Group and the Akwa Palace Hotel in Douala); Sylvestre Ngouchinghe (founder of CONGELCAM); Célestine Ketcha Courtès (Queen Fish Cameroon S.A); Jacob Fossi (Director of Safric Cameroun S.A), Bernard Fokou (founder of the FOKOU group); Michel Mbogne (Bansoa Airlines); Joseph Confiance Fongang among others. This is a short list of those who succeeded to get representative seats in the Bamileke municipalities under the CPDM.

Elsewhere, some businesspeople from the Bamileke region were also in opposition political parties. They found themselves in the different parties created after 1990. In this perspective, people like Ngayap Pierre Flambeau (chemist, proprietor of several chemistries in Cameroon, founder of the *Convention Libérale* political party which joined the National Union for Democracy and Progress of Bello Boubou Maïgari (NUDP) in 2002); Puepi Bernard (representative of SDF in Bayangam, he was first of all member of the *Union des Forces Démocratiques du Cameroun* (UFDC) of Hameni Bieleu from 1991 to 1996. After the 1996 municipal elections, he crossed the carpet from the UFDC to Social Democratic Front (SDF)),⁶ Dieudonné Tchoumba (President of *Panthère Sportive de Bangangté* from 1999 to 2000, school proprietor and representative of SDF in the Ndé Division) among others. Because of the multi-party political revolution self-made Bamileke businessmen emerged and attracted local populations around them and their party formation. These self-made men were people who excelled through personal efforts through their financial resources. They created enterprises that attracted public attention around their fortunes and ideas.⁷ Many Bamileke political entrepreneurs were

considered by what Daloz calls “*bigman*.”⁸ The bigman has a dominant and unquestioned status and he challenges any challenger by using his high capacities of redistribution. Therefore, among the above mentioned businessmen, the motives of getting into politics were quite different as each depended on the prevailing circumstance.

III. THE 1990S POLITICAL CHANGES IN THE BAMILEKE REGION

The Bamileke region had to follow the wind of change that cut across the political landscape in Cameroon. The advent of calls for multipartism became complex in Cameroon as CPDM stewards vehemently marched in the ten regions in opposition of the reintroduction of multi-party democracy.⁹ This period was actually characterised by a radicalised mutation led by a revolutionist awareness for the societal life in Cameroon. The 1990 decade actually ended up with the reopening of a multipart system in Cameroon. Although this happened after the radicalisation of the society, the Bamileke area experienced it as a major concern. In spite of its traumatic entry into the context of pluralism, the region was considered as one of the most radical in terms of the opposition activism. Indeed, almost 80% of the population in the Bamileke region was favourable to opposition parties. The political transition in the Bamileke region was characterised by ghost town operations as part of popular modes of political expression;¹⁰ the creation of local political parties followed by defections from CPDM to other political parties.

IV. THE 1990S GHOST-TOWN OPERATIONS IN THE BAMILEKE REGION AS FORM OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION

The political radicalism in the Bamileke region was characteristic of the ghost-town operations declared by the coordination of the opposition. They were actually observed in the Bamileke towns through disobedience, non-payment of taxes, non-payment of electricity¹¹ and water bills¹² and refusal to participate in all public manifestations.¹³ Also, the political awakening of the population was exposed through riots, demonstrations, burnings, tracts and assassinations in Dschang, Bafoussam, Bafang, Bangangté and Mbouda in 1991. In May 1991, the grand stand of Bangangté was burned.¹⁴ Moreover, from Monday to Friday, all stores, markets and some public administration offices remained locked. Activists of political parties in the region organised themselves to ensure the effectiveness of ghost-towns in order to pressurise the government for the organisation of a Sovereign National Conference. Soldiers also ransacked Bamileke-owned shops and petrol stations. In Bafoussam for instance, businesses were paralysed and businessmen suffered from it. As a matter of fact, ghost-town operations had a negative bearing on the region, a vital economic area in Cameroon. More than 750 billion francs CFA were lost in five months. The no cash flow nomously affected development. This explain why Emmanuel Nzété, Mayor of the Bafoussam

Urban Council with other Mayors of the region complained about the lack of financial means to justify their deficiency of development initiatives.¹⁵ In Dschang, Mayor Paul PankaTsobgny stated that the economic activities slowed down up to 50%. As a result, it culminated in the non-payment of council staff.¹⁶ Since the economy of the country was running down, "some Bamileke businessmen opted to send their money out of Cameroon before the 1991 devaluation when they was a rush to the banks and Biya begged them to return their funds."¹⁷

Public properties were also destroyed. Public schools were attacked by members of the opposition. In Mbouda, they succeeded to destroy some materials in the government primary school of Bamoussang (Mbouda). In fact, they ransacked blackboards, chairs and tables.¹⁸ Apart from the destruction of public buildings, several prisoners succeeded to escape from jails.¹⁹ On the 29th of July 1991, a public car, Renault 4 CA-12954-A of the governor's office was burned down by demonstrators. On the 31th of July 1991, while demonstrating, Pierre Foka, a male nurse in the Tagny policlinic in Bafoussam was crushed by a Renault 12 OU-7063-A.²⁰ On August 21st, 1991, Fru Ndi organised a mass demonstration in Bafoussam. He was wounded because of his opposition to the police forces that tried to stop the demonstration by force.²¹ These were some aspects that attest to the radical manifestation of ghost-towns in the Bamileke region in the early 1990s.

Furthermore, the tripartite accords that took place in Yaoundé from October 30, to November 17, 1991, did not convince all those who attended it. Kadji de Fotso, one of the prominent Bamileke entrepreneurs during the Conference, seized the opportunity to criticise the economic situation of the country. According to him things were moving from bad to worst.²² After the Yaoundé talks, the radical opposition decided to strengthen the ghost-town operation and civil disobedience. In Bafoussam, Mayor Emmanuel Nzété failed to deviate the on-going political uprising and turned it to an ethnic issue. He organised a meeting in the council hall on 3 December 1991 with quarter heads, political leaders, municipal councillors and economic entrepreneurs. He actually criticized the leaders of political parties coming from Douala, Yaoundé and Bamenda to persuade the population to continue the ghost-towns in Bafoussam.²³ He therefore realised that the local parties were quite absent on the political scene. But, the majority of leaders who organised meetings in the Bamileke region came from the Littoral and North-West Provinces. These were for instance Antar Gassaguay of the *Parti National pour le Progrès* (PNP), Ni John FruNdi of SDF, Ndeh Ntumazah of *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC), Bello Bouba Maïgari²⁴ of NUDP, Jean J. Ekindi, leader of the *Mouvement Progressiste* (MP)²⁵ and Hameni Bieleu of the UFDC. The Bamileke Region and its capital, Bafoussam, became the channel through which reciprocal influences flowed between Anglophone and Francophone political cultures. Nzété did not succeed because

the majority of the population was already enrolled in the newly created political parties.

V. POLITICAL PARTIES AND THEIR ACTIVISM IN THE BAMILEKE REGION IN THE 1990S

Law No. 90/56 of December 19, 1990²⁶ paved the way to the official creation of political parties in Cameroon. In the Bamileke Region, several Bamileke political entrepreneurs created their parties in order to take part in electoral competitions. More than 22 parties were created and headquartered in the various towns of the Bamileke Region namely, Bafoussam, Mbouda, Bafang, Bandjoun, Dschang and Bayangam. Therefore, these parties contested representative seats against other parties which were widening throughout the country. This section analyses businessmen political politicking in region during the 1990s.

The political transition of the 1990s in the Bamileke region was equally characterised by the organisation of rallies by the opposition parties so as to radicalise the political awakening of the population. Throughout the region, they aimed at sensitizing the population about the significance of the on-going political atmosphere in the country and enlisted get more militants. For this purpose, they sold membership cards, sensitise the population on terms like democracy, political parties, national conference and political agenda.²⁷ The *Rassemblement pour l'Unité Nationale* (RUN) organised a rally on 11th May 1991 in Bafoussam.²⁸ In Mbouda, the SDF organised a popular meeting on 2nd September 1991 with more than 2.000 participants. In the Menoua Division, Fidèle Vougmo of the UPC organised a meeting on 4th of September 1991. Samuel Eboua, leader of the NUDP and Bello Bouba Maïgari held mass rallies in Dschang on the 21st of September 1991 and in Mbouda on the 22nd of September of the same year. In September 21, 1991, Mathieu Tagny, Provincial Coordinator of the CDU in the West Province organised a rally in Bafoussam with more than 200 participants. Hameni Bieleu of the UFDC organised a meeting in Bangangtéon 27th September 1991 for the launching of the activities of this party in the Ndé Division.²⁹ The 3rd August 1991, he was in Dschang for the same purpose.³⁰

Elsewhere, within the framework of electoral competitions, the activism of political parties in the Bamileke region consisted in participating or boycotting the electoral process. The radical parties such as the CDU and SDF intended to establish a blockade to the electoral process because of the loopholes and shortcomings noticed in the electoral code. On the contrary, many other parties qualified as moderate and opportunist stated their intention to participate in the 1992 elections. They did so because they wanted to take the opportunity given by the unstable situation to overthrow the Yaoundé regime. Amongst those parties were: NUDP, UPC, RCR, and NPC-BUSH and PNP. As regards this last party, on 11 January 1992, Antar Gassaguay, president of PNP known as *Parti National pour le Progrès*³¹ organised a meeting in Mbouda where he condemned any

form of violence and called upon the youth to vote and as future leaders of the country.³² However, despite all the electioneering from the CPDM, the Bamileke region voted in favour of opposition parties.

VI. DEFECTIONS FROM THE CPDM TO OTHER POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

The political behaviour of the Bamileke businessmen who echoed the newly created parties is analysed under the “cross carpeting politics.”³³ This behaviour resulted from the indoctrinating strategy adopted by a radical opposition influenced by psychological and historical stereotypes. Their various meetings helped them to influence the political behaviour of the population throughout the region with new programmes and hope. This politicking was steered by several Bamileke political entrepreneurs who failed to win a representative position during the 1987 municipal and 1988 legislative elections. As presented in the following paragraph, some businessmen who strained to emerge in the CPDM without success before 1990, became, president, vice president, secretary or any other post in the new parties. As Djeundam asserts, “it was difficult for the masses to be involved in the high positions of the CPDM because businessmen occupied all the seats in order to contain the opposition.”³⁴ The latter case happened all over the Bamileke region where the CPDM central committee replaced most of the candidates elected by local committees in 1987 and 1988. As a matter of “cross-carpeting politics,” many former local representatives, parliamentarians Councillors and Mayors decamped from the CPDM and started a political crusade in the opposition.³⁵

On this light, Fidèle Vougmo, former secretary general of the CPDM in the Menoua Division henceforth campaigned for the UPC in the same town. Mathieu Tagny, former UPC, Cameroon Union (CU), Cameroon National Union (CNU) and CPDM member and Mayor of the Bafoussam Mixed Rural Council in 1967 joined the CDU in Bafoussam in 1991 as provincial representative. He did join the CDU not only due to his failure during the 19987 election, but mostly because he encountered political threats from the party in power. In fact, he was imprisoned in 1968 in Yaoundé for embezzlement of public funds. Philippe Wandji, proprietor of the “Matemfen Institute” joined the UFDC in the Ndé Division.³⁶ In August 1991, three Municipal Administrators of the Dschang Mixed Rural Council and a Councillor resigned from the CPDM and joined the CDU and UPC.³⁷ The presidents of Mbamenzi and Baham decamped from the CPDM to the NUDP on the 26th of March 1992.³⁸ Jean Teinkela, former member of the CNU and CPDM also resigned and joined the NUDP in the Menoua Division. He was consequently candidate and elected MP in 1992 on the NUDP list with Magella, G. Samago, Juliette Matemze, Gaston, Ngang Essoue and Pierre Jaze.³⁹ Nevertheless, the aforementioned cases are only a picture of some local CPDM leaders who joined the opposition political parties created in

the 1990s. Apart from those who created their parties, more than 65% of the Bamileke joined the new parties created within the framework of pluralism. This assertion is verified in the results of the 1992 presidential, legislative elections and the 1996 municipal elections across the region.

VII. BUSINESSMEN AND PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL ELECTORAL COMPETITIONS

Since the 1992 legislative elections in Cameroon, Bamileke Businessmen endeavoured to transform their financial means into political resources. Their participation in local political competitions across the Bamileke area revealed more on this statement. The political competition resulting from the multipartism stimulated some businessmen to support the CPDM and other to find a position in the new political parties. This is analysed as a way to safeguard their economic activities for those who supported the party in power and a method to emerge politically for those who entered in the opposition.

In the course of the 1990s, during elections, CPDM businessmen opined for electoral gifts⁴⁰ or “political generosity” in order to show their pragmatic or realist tendency vis-à-vis the electorate. For this purpose, they vested on bureaucratic and economic elite namely: former and current members of government, civil servants, traditional rulers and businessmen. In the Ndé Division for instance, Marcel Niat Njifenji who claimed to be realist declared to the population that he was working in the government for the transformation of GTSS (Government Technical Secondary School) into high schools; the creation of new GTSS and the multiplication of health centres in the Ndé Division.⁴¹ In a similar way, Victor Fotso, CPDM member in Bandjoun welcomed traditional leaders of the Mifi, militants and non-indigenous women of Bafoussam living in Bandjoun in his private residence. While requesting them to vote for his party, he gave them gifts.⁴² But the nature of those gifts was not revealed by the source of this information.

On their part, the newly created political movements were more idealists and opportunists than pragmatic. For this reason they adopted proximity campaigns added to public rallies. They took any opportunity to denigrate the government and the CPDM. The parties that accepted to participate in electoral competitions thought that election was the only way to fight and overwhelm the CPDM and bring political changes in the country. For this reason and moreover, the *Rassemblement Camerounais pour la République*, RCR led by Samuel Wamboorganised a rally on 15 February 1992 in the Bafoussam municipal stadium wherein he advocated dialogue, respect of institutions and the participation in electoral competitions. Because of this statement, the 500 participants shouted at him, accusing him to be developing the politics of stomach.⁴³ On the 23rd February 1992, Jean Mbouende of the UPC party organised a meeting in Bafang calling upon the population to take part in the legislative elections of March 1st of the same year. It was in the same

perspective that Moïse Ketcha of the NUDP organised his meetings in Bangangté on the 27th of February 1992. The results of our research helped to reveal the Bamileke businessmen who succeeded to get electoral seats after the 1992 legislative elections see table 1 below.

Table 1: Bamileke Businessmen elected for the 1992-1997 Legislature in the Bamileke Area

Ref.	Division	Name	Party	Ethnic group
1.	Bamboutos	Monika Mbibowo	NUDP	Bamesso
2.		Raphael Mowou	NUDP	Mbouda
3.		Bruno SahoDounala	NUDP	Batcham
4.	Menoua	Pierre Jaze	NUDP	Dschang
5.		Jean Teinkela	NUDP	Bafou
6.	Mifi	Anatole Nouassi	UPC	Bamougoum
7.		Josephine Nguetti	NUDP	Bafoussam
8.		Madeleine Tchuinté	CPDM	Bayangam
9.	Ndé	Marcel Niat Njifenji	CPDM	Bangangté
10.		MoïseKetcha	NUDP	Bangangté

Sources: <http://www.assnat.cm/index.php/en/members-of-parliament/5th-legislative-period>, accessed May 26, 2017.

Looking at the table above, out of the 20 MPs elected in the Bamileke Region in 1992, 10 were businessmen and women from different political parties namely NUDP, CPDM and UPC. This reveals the level of implication of Businesspersons in electoral competitions in that area of Cameroon during the transitional period. The NUDP supremacy occurred because of the absence of the SDF which boycotted the elections. However, it participated in the 1996 council elections and reversed the political tendency in the region.

VIII. THE 1996 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS AND THE POLITICAL EMERGENCE OF BAMILEKE BUSINESSMEN

The 1996 council elections⁴⁴ allowed the political emergence of several businessmen and women in their various home towns. They seized the opportunity giving by the competition to point out their mobilising capacities either around the “New Deal” policy or the opposition ideas. Hence, the 1996 elections in the Bamileke region revealed both the egocentric and ethnocentric behaviour of political entrepreneurs. Also, apart from the politicisation of traditional chiefs owing to their partisan involvement in politics, many candidates entered in the political game⁴⁵ for the first time and businessmen tried to reinforce their leadership positions in their home towns. Besides, the rivalries resulting from the 1987 elections influenced the constitution of lists for the first council electoral competition under pluralism.⁴⁶ In each political party, a list of criteria governed the selection of candidacies

due to internal antagonism. For instance, the selection was anchored on: militancy, discipline, skill, loyalty, *bona fide*, patriotism of candidates and their capacity to mobilise financial resources for the development of their locality.⁴⁷ It is obvious that businessmen had more odds to hold local power in this context. Instead of campaigning for a clearly stated agenda, they chose to draw population attention on their personal and CPDM achievements in the village namely buildings, employment of young people of the village in their companies and the administration, gifts, roads, bridges, schools, hospitals and so on.

However, the opposition parties campaigned for a real implementation of a liberal democracy in Cameroon. They called for the creation of an independent electoral body and the democratisation of the electoral code. In this perspective, the SDF which won the majority of the seats based its campaign on the principle of “Power to the people.”⁴⁸ In this way, it intended to give power to the population as stated by democracy. On their pamphlets written for the purpose of these elections, the SDF affirmed that it wanted to make a radical change and restore the power to the right proprietor because “dictators seized the power of the people since independence.”⁴⁹ From this standpoint, it promised to develop infrastructures of health, sport, leisure, roads and bridges; and raise the price of coffee in some localities like Fokoué (Menoua Diviosn).⁵⁰ In like manner, the local leaders of SDF undertook to buy a bag of coffee at 60.000 francs instead of 50.000 Fcfa in case of its victory.⁵¹ In contrast, in Penka-Michel, administrative authorities reported that this method was a way of intimidating not only them, but voters, traditional rulers and CPDM businessmen in order to get the majority of seats.⁵²

In 1996, the CPDM Businessmen co-opted almost all the Traditional Rulers and quarter heads of their constituencies in their candidacies. Consequently, in the political pluralism, some Chiefs lost respect from the population. This electioneering strategy from the party in power contributed more to the politicisation of the function of Bamileke sovereigns.⁵³ However, some traditional and opportunist Chiefs refused to participate in politics as candidates due to the multi-party system. They opined that, in a pluralist context, they could no more be identified to a particular party such as to influence the choice of the population. In like manner, Sokoudjou, Chief of Bamendjou for instance decided to stay away from politics.⁵⁴ For him, the Chiefs “could not be in competition against their subjects [population].”⁵⁵ Some other Chiefs qualified as “doubtful” chose to participate in underground politics by advocating support of the party in power, CPDM to their people in an informal way.⁵⁶ This was the case of the Chiefs of Baleng, Tela, Bafou, Kana II, Bafang, Kamga; and Bandja, Tchoupé. For the two last cases, they instead opted to introduce their wives as representative of the CPDM in their locality.⁵⁷ This revealed partly the political socialisation of the family in the Bamileke society during this period.

Though, eligible citizens chose to vote massively for the opposition in spite of the presence of the said Chiefs, in spite of the electoral gifts received from them. They shared rice, soap, Champaign, wine, matches, iron sponges and oil to the electorate. In Penka-Michel also, Jacob Fossi offered 10 million for the electoral campaign of the CPDM.⁵⁸ The CPDM leaders who positioned their economic properties in order to get the votes of the people did not obtain the expected effects. But, except in the newly created Koung-Khi Division where the CPDM won all the seats of the three Councils, people of the other Division in majority collected those gifts and voted for the opposition parties. In expressing its political consciousness in favour of the opposition of a radical change in the country, some SDO(s) qualified the population as "naïve and ungrateful"⁵⁹ because they voted for the opposition.

Table 2: Businessmen Elected as Mayor in the Bamileke Region after the 1996 Elections

Divisions	No.	Councils	Elected Mayors	Political Parties
Bamboutos	1.	Batcham Rural Council	Samuel Tsofor	SDF
	2.	Mbouda Rural Council	Jacob Tchio	SDF
Koung-Khi	3.	Bayangam Rural Council	André Sohaing	CPDM
	4.	Djebem Rural Council	MoïseNzeakouMoyou	CPDM
	5.	Pete-Bandjoun Rural Council	Victor Fotso	CPDM
Menoua	6.	Dschang Rural Council	Martin N. NguefackJeutsa	SDF
	7.	Penka-Michel Rural Council	Philippe Nkonla	SDF
Mifi	8.	Kongso Rural Council	Charles Sonagou	SDF
	9.	Lafé Rural Council	Mathias Ouetchoua	SDF
Nde	10.	Bassamba Rural Council	Jean Calvin Heumen	CPDM
	11.	Bazou Rural Council	Pierre Tchanque	CPDM
	12.	Tonga Rural Council	Jean Marie Nana	SDF
Upper-Nkam	13.	Bafang Urban Council	Jean Pierre Nkamga	UFDC
	14.	Bakou Rural Council	GodefroyTsayDjeuga	SDF
	15.	Bandja Rural Council	François Njélé	CPDM
	16.	Banwa Rural Council	André Lachunu	CPDM
	17.	Kekem Rural Council	Boniface Tadjounteu	SDF
Upper-Plateaux	18.	Baham Rural Council	Joseph Pone	SDF
	19.	Batié Rural Council	Pierre Fankam	SDF

Source: WRA, File on the 1996 Municipal Elections in the West Province.

Table 2 above shows that 19 businessmen were elected in the Bamileke region after the 1996 council elections. It is obvious

that the electioneering strategy of the CPDM did not work as planned. In their respective constituencies, the population expressed hope and confidence in the political parties created in the course of the transitional period. However, the CPDM went out with reinforcing electoral stratagem.

IX. LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS OF 17 MAY 1997 IN THE BAMILEKE REGION

In the Bamileke region actually, the re-carving of the constituencies into electoral and administrative entities intended to satisfy the political appetite of the big men in their respective villages. In a gerrymander approach,⁶⁰ they advocated ethnic separatism through the balkanisation of constituencies. Thus, the wealthy Bamileke political entrepreneurs belonging to CPDM could find themselves in an elitist position within their home town or village. The Koung-Khi and Upper-Plateaux Divisions were created from the Mifi Division dominated by the SDF. Each of the newly created Division aimed to favour the CPDM elite such as Victor Fotso and André Sohaing in the Koung-Khi and Kontchou Kouomegni in the Upper-Plateaux.

Elsewhere, the leadership antagonism that appeared from the 1992 legislative and the 1996 municipal elections increased its intensity between the members of the traditional aristocracy qualified as conservationists and the political technocrats of CPDM. This leadership opposition could be analysed as a direct result of the way down of the party in power. In like manner, Ngnié Kamga, chief of Bandjoun was opposed to Victor Fotso,⁶¹ a businessman for the position of CPDM representative in the National Assembly.⁶² The Chief claimed to represent the local population in both the traditional and political life. While the second pointed out his financial and electioneering capacities which could help him to overwhelm opposition parties in the Koung-Khi.⁶³ In the Ndé Division, the same rivalry occurred between the Paramount Chief, Nji Molluh Seidou and Niat Njifenji, in the Menoua, Jean Marie Milla Assoute, chief of Santchou and some local members of the CPDM also challenged each other. In the Upper-Nkam, Alphonse Siyam Siewe faced the Chief of Banka, David Monkam Tientcheu. However, all these internal rivalries in the CPDM contributed to a light domination of SDF after the election.

Two dynamics determined the unfolding of the 1997 legislative elections throughout the Bamileke region. Apart from the aforementioned leadership conflicts, the socio-political dynamics and implications of the economic crises of 1995-1996 influenced the unfolding of this election. The devaluation of the Cfa Franc to 50 % in 1995 by France and the Nigerian challenger in terms of importation and its currency, Naira influenced negatively the economy of Cameroon.⁶⁴ In the Bamileke region, it impacted on the business activities of the local populations who faced up difficulties to get a better living standard.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, the 1997 legislative elections in the Bamileke region revealed a lot of electoral list manoeuvres. The latter included intrigues, fraud, schemes, conspiracies, physical disputes and popular uprisings. This occurred perhaps because it was the first participation in elections for many political parties headquartered in the region. In the Bamileke Divisions, there were 17 political parties including the SDF, CPDM, UPC(Kodock), UPC(Ntumazah), CDU, UFDC, NUDP, ANDP, *Nationalisme des Pacifiques du Cameroun pour le Bien-être et l'Unité Réelle contre les Souffrances Des Humains*(NPC/BUSH), Parti Libéral Démocrate (PLD), MDI, RCR, PSU, MDR, ADD, UPR, FSN.⁶⁶This meant that, for the 20 seats of the said constituencies, there were 146 candidates. However, the final results showed the heterogeneous political belonging of the different Bamileke ethnic groups.

Table 3: The Bamileke Businessmen Elected MPs in the 1997-2002 Legislature

Ref.	Division	Name	Party	Ethnic group
1.	Bamboutos	Daniel Tessue	SDF	Bangang
2.		Jean Tsomelou	SDF	Mbouda
3.	Koung-Khi	Ernest Fopoussi	SDF	Bandjoun
4.	Menoua	Christophe Kenfack	CPDM	Balevang
5.		Pierre Fouedjeu	CPDM	Fontsa-Touala
6.		Nguenevit	SDF	Baloum
7.	Ndé	Jean Moussa Tchouta Mbatkam	CPDM	Bangoulap
8.		Mesack Tchana	CPDM	Bazou
9.	Upper-Nkam	Pierre Kwemo	SDF	Bafang
10.	Upper-Plateaux	Joseph Tchuankam	SDF	Bahouan

Source: <http://www.assnat.cm/index.php/fr/les-deputes/6eme-legislature>, accessed May 26, 2017.

As a result of the failure of the politics of stomach and the electoral gifts⁶⁷ during the transitional period, 1990-2000, the new political insights introduced under the multipartism by businessmen impacted and reconfigured radically the electoral dynamics in the Bamileke region. This gives the opportunity to survey the effects of the participation of businessmen in politics in the 1990s.

X. STRUCTURAL RECONFIGURATION OF THE BAMILEKE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

The structural reconfiguration of the Bamileke political arena is part of the implications of the political dynamics in this part of Cameroon. The participation of businessmen in politics transformed the Bamileke region from 1992 to 2000 into a bipolar political sphere led by two dominant factions. On the one hand, there were the traditional aristocracy and Bamileke “big men” both holders of traditional, economic and political powers of decision making for CPDM. On the other hand the local population, holder of electoral votes echoed opposition

parties. Amongst the aristocrat elite, many chose to constitute a political stronghold in favour of the CPDM.⁶⁸ Consequently, they represented the said party in their home towns and in the region. Marcel Niat Njifenji led the CPDM in the Ndé Division, Victor Fotso in the Koung-Khi,⁶⁹ Sylvestre Ngouchinghe in the Mifi; Jacob Fossi in the Menoua, Kadji de Fotso in the Upper-Nkam, Jean Kueté in the Upper-Plateaux and Emmanuel Nganou Djoumessi in the Bamboutos Division. Elsewhere, others in the contrary opted to join opposition political parties. This was a way of expressing their dissatisfaction with the treatment reserved to the Bamileke businessmen in the country.⁷⁰ Hence, the political behaviour of actors turned into the partisan identification of some ethnic groups showing the heterogeneity of the Bamileke political identity.

XI. SUBSTANTIAL MODIFICATION OF THE BAMILEKE LANDSCAPE

The participation of Bamileke businessmen and/or Bamileke migrants⁷¹ in electoral competitions within their home towns contributed to the transformation of the Bamileke townships.⁷² Since section 8 of Law No.92/002 of 14 August 1992 required that candidates for municipal elections should live or give proof of residence in the constituency contested,⁷³ Bamileke migrants started building mansions in their home towns. Beyond these buildings renowned by their architecture and magnitude, the occupation of spaces in the village of origin made them to become political leaders. However, the Bamileke landscape changed progressively in terms of new forms of modern buildings, construction of roads around or moving towards those houses.

Furthermore, in developing strategies to strengthen their dominant position in the Bamileke society, political entrepreneurs in this part of Cameroon dedicated some achieved development projects, streets, junctions or buildings to the ruling party and its President. In addition, the CPDM political actors financed in the construction of the party halls everywhere in the Bamileke Divisional and Sub-divisional headquarters. They also identified streets and quarters to the CPDM national chairman and President of the Republic, Paul Biya and his family. Thus, it is possible to see for instance the “Boulevard Biya” in Bandjoun, the “Avenue Chantal Biya” and Carrefour RDPC in Bangangté; “Carrefour Paul Biya” in Bafoussam.

XII. FORMATION OF ELITE ASSOCIATIONS

The polyarchic⁷⁴ characteristic of the Bamileke political arena accounted for the emergence of a social category of political actors since 1990. The multi-party system reintroduced in Cameroon made it more complex owing to the typology of the Bamileke forming an “oligarchic society” around a category of businessmen. So, the Bamileke elite associations were formed in a national context characterised by ethnic resentments around the sharing of national resources. Led by an awakening of ethnic stereotypes, these developments

caused flexible and violent social conflicts.⁷⁵ In this perspective, ethnic tensions steered to the politicisation of tribal associations. Among them were *La'akam* for the Bamileke, *Essingan* for the Béti, and *Ngondo* for the coastal Sawa people (primarily Douala and Bakweri);⁷⁶ the South West Elite Association (SWELA), *Amicale des élites du Nord* (AMENORD).⁷⁷ This proliferation of traditional, civil and political associations resulted from the deviation of the political debate of the 1990s especially towards ethnic considerations. Also, the increase of political parties was seen as ethnic affiliations in any part of Cameroon. However, in the Bamileke region, association like *La'akam* was created on the 23rd of March 1991 in the Bamougoum chiefdom in order to defend the Bamileke interests and positions in Cameroon.⁷⁸ Their major concern was the sharing of National political and economic resources. But, in the Bamileke region, *La'akam* represented a maker of political personnel during legislative and municipal elections. Its members proposed candidacies for local electoral competitions.

As regards the *Comité de Réflexion et D'Action pour le Triomphe du Renouveau* called CRATRE, it was formed in 1991 by the Bamileke members of the government such as Moussa Tchouta, Marcel Niat Njifenji, Kontchou Kouomegni, and other Bamileke entrepreneurs Kadji Defosso, Victor Fotso, André Sohaing, Françoise Foning and Pierre Tchanque who shielded the CPDM values based on the “New Deal policy.”⁷⁹ Apart from being a political and ethnic association, the CRATRE was also an elitist movement because its members belonged to the governmental and entrepreneurial milieus. Pierre Tchanque, president of the chamber of commerce of Cameroon was the president of CRATRE after its creation. Victor Fotso was honorary president; Tchouta Moussa, vice-president; André Sohaing, treasurer and the Deputy of the Noun Division, NjiKoutou Ibrahim amongst others.⁸⁰ Unlike the *La'akam*, the CRATRE could be seen as a “negationist” Bamileke elite association because in its approach it denied the existence of a particular Bamileke problem in Cameroon. On the contrary, it promoted and advocated governmental achievements in the Bamileke region. For this elitist association, it was necessary for the Bamileke to acknowledge what the government achieved for their locality. The CRATRE, a political instrument used by the Bamileke aristocratic elite to convince the population to vote for the CPDM in the Bamileke region dominated by the opposition.

XIII. POLITICAL SOCIALISATION OF THE ELITE'S FAMILY IN THE BAMILEKE SOCIETY

This section examines the logics of political socialisation of the family in the Bamileke political field since the advent of multi-partism in 1990 as a political implication of the participation of Bamileke Businessmen in politics. It analyses the political “godfatherism”⁸¹ of family members in the municipal and legislative elections. This is because in the Bamileke society, the political relationship was transformed

into a “symbolic relative system”⁸² exceeding the marital dimension of cognitive systems. That is to say an ordinary relationship based on consanguinity without reference to paternal or maternal lines.

In addition, by affirming their attachment to their village of origin with a number of investments, politician businessmen endeavoured since 1992 to use their financial and economic means as political dividend. Thus the success of socialisation of their family depended especially on their electoral successes in their village of origin. In fact, under the multi-party system, it had become recurrent in the Bamileke region to notice some leaders imposing the members of their family as candidates for local elections. Out of a number of empiric examples noticed in that region, the case of Fotso and Sohaing in the Koung-Khi Division was prominent.⁸³

It appears in the analysis that the socialisation process of the Fotso and Sohaing families in the local electoral game in Bandjoun and Bayangam resulted more from the use of their individual financial means than the support of the CPDM. Since the SDF was dominant in those localities at the re-opening period of multi-partism in Cameroon, Victor Fotso, André Sohaing and the support of administrative authorities succeeded to reverse the electoral tendency in favour of CPDM. Their positions in their respective municipalities as Mayor of Bandjoun 1996 and Bayangam 1996-2015⁸⁴ allowed them to socialise their family members. In the Koung-Khi, Florence Fotso (Fotso's daughter) was invested on the same list with Sohaing for the CPDM candidacy for the 1997 legislative elections. However, as shown before, the SDF won these elections in a context of emotional leadership and political positioning between the urban and local elite⁸⁵ in this locality.

Elsewhere, the political participation under the pluralism in the Bamileke region of Cameroon also caused political allegiances which legitimised the power of representatives in the local political institutions. The success of wealthy businessmen caused the convergence of several political actors around their patronymic. Indeed, some opportunist actors galvanised by the desire to undertake political careers expressed their loyalty and “submission” with the businessmen, their family and more with their political parties for the renewal of the political personnel. Undeniably, this renewal did not allow the permanent circulation of elite in power. But it contributed more to the supremacy of a category of political actors. Contrariwise, Coulibaly asserts that “the rotation of the brains trusts is the feeder sap of the democracy.”⁸⁶

XIV. CONCLUSION

Whilst the links between businessmen and politics have been a constant feature of the multiparty system, the 1990s witnessed significant changes in the way in which Bamileke businessmen have changed from being less attached to political issues to becoming the main vehicles of local political mobilisation. The spread effects were that it resulted

to the reconfiguration of the Bamileke political landscape; the formation of elite associations, upheaval of leadership antagonisms and the political socialisation of the elite's family. All these occurred in a regional context marked by the radicalisation of the Bamileke region in the 1990s because of social non satisfaction experienced by the local population, strengthened by stereotypes of nationalist movements in the region. The period from 1990 to 2000 is transitional period within which the multiparty system was gradually implemented in the country. The multi-party system of the 1990s was thus an opportunity for the big men, holders of

economic resources and the traditional aristocracy, holders of traditional power to challenge each other. Hence, in the Bamileke society, local political alternation is analysed under the perspective of a "passive revolution"⁸⁷ because those who acquired local power came from the same family, the same kinship network, kinships, the same ethnic group. The ethnic group has the population, financially rich and as entrepreneurs are found in great numbers in all regions of Cameroon and their impact on issues cannot be underestimated. Political parties need them for financial supports.

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