

# Understanding the Romance between Kings and Islam in the Nso and Babessi Kingdoms of the Bamenda Grassland in Cameroon

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**Abstract:** The conversion of the Monarch of the Nso Kingdom, Patrick Sehm Mbinglo I, a Roman Catholic Christian to Islam in 2014 provoked widespread panic in the Catholic dominated Nso Kingdom of the Bamenda Grassland, Cameroon and the *Guardian Post* Newspaper of October 30, 2014 even talked of "mass exodus to Islam feared as Nso King Converts". This event provoked this paper which sets out to investigate the introduction of Islam in the two Bamenda Grassland royal palaces. Using primary and secondary sources the study examines the conversion of some Nso and Babessi Kings to Islam arguing that their decision to adopt Islam was due to the presence of Hausa traders and Fulani graziers, Bamum influences, political, social and economic considerations rather than the genuine spiritual or religious gains of Islam. Islam in the Bamenda Grassland therefore has a bright future because the religion unlike Christianity can accommodate and guarantee certain royal practices and aspirations

**Key Words:** King, Nso, Babessi, Islam, Conversion, Bamenda Grassland.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Cameroon, Africa in miniature as it is often referred to, is a country both in West and Central Africa. With a triangular shape covering about 475440 square kilometres, it is situated between the Lake Chad in the North and the Atlantic Ocean in the South and between Nigeria in the West and Gabon, Congo and the Central African Republic in the East. Its climate, vegetation and landscapes are as varied as its culture or peoples. Inhabited by about 25 million people divided into about 250 ethnic groups and languages, the people were introduced to Christianity and Islam in the 19th century. Christianity came through European missionaries along the coast and Islam through Hausa and Fulani traders and jihadists in the North.

The first Kingdom that embraced Islam was the Kanem Kingdom which is known to have blossomed around the Lake Chad basin between the 9th and the 19th centuries. In the 11th century its chief converted to Islam and as was the case elsewhere in West Africa, many of his subjects accepted Islam and in the 17th century Islam was at its peak in this kingdom<sup>1</sup>. From the 16th century, many pastoral Fulani arrived the Lake Chad Basin in search of pasture. They settled at the

peripheries of indigenous Kidir<sup>2</sup> states without land and access to political power. In fact they were treated like second class subjects and excluded from the politics and the economy of their host communities. However they were feared and respected because their Muslim elite were known to possess charms and were fortune tellers. They also served the Kidir aristocrats as scribes, lawyers and teachers.

In 1804, Uthman Dan Fodio initiated an Islamic revolution in Northern Nigeria (Hausa Land) with the objective of converting pagans, reforming the Islam practiced by nominal Muslims, acquiring grazing land for the pastoral Fulani and overthrowing the corrupt Kidir aristocrats. Modibbo Adama was designated by his peers in North Cameroon to lead the course of Islamisation in Fombina<sup>3</sup>. The jihads successfully established Islam in the North of Cameroon from the Lake Chad to the Adamawa Plateau and by 1860 there were already 40 lamidats headed by Muslims<sup>4</sup>. The conquered territory was constituted into the Emirate of Yola or Adamawa which was a province of the Sokoto Caliphate. The Bamenda Grassland was not part of this Emirate but it suffered from the far reaching consequences of the holy wars in the north as it became vulnerable to the expanding Islamic culture.

The Bamenda Grassland was found on the Western Plateau of Cameroon and south of the Adamawa highlands which runs from Nigeria to Cameroon. In the South there was the Equatorial Rainforest and in the East the Matazin river. The region was inhabited by people of Tikar and Bali Chamba origins whose histories indicated that they migrated from the North where Islam was established in the first half of the 19th century. They migrated southwards due to the holy wars, draught and Fulani harassments. The Tikar were the first to arrive the region after the disintegration of the dynasty at Bankim sometimes in the 14th century. Due to further family squabbles, insecurity and continuous Fulani raids, they migrated in waves and created many chiefdoms such as Nso, Babungo, Kom, Bafut, and Bum. The Bali Chamba arrived

<sup>2</sup> Kidir is a fulfulde word for pagan or nonbeliever.

<sup>3</sup> Fombina is a fulbe or fulfulde word for the South and the South here was the land south of Kanem between the Lake Chad and the Bight of Biafra

<sup>4</sup> D. Abwa, "Imperialisme européen et expansion de l'Islam au Cameroun", in *La Culture Arabo-Islamic en Afrique au Sud du Sahara: Cas de L'Afrique de L'Ouest*, p.38

<sup>1</sup> Hamadou Adama, *Islam au Cameroun: Entre Tradition et Modernite*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2004, p.14

much later in the 19th century following the disintegration of their dynasty at Dschang in 1835 when their charismatic leader Gawolbe was beheaded by Bamileke warriors. They migrated under different princes and founded chiefdoms like Bali Nyonga, Bali Kumbat, Bali Gham and Bali Gashu<sup>5</sup>. Amongst these Bamenda Grassland Kingdoms, the Nso and Babessi Royal families had spectacular encounters with Islam

## II. ISLAM IN THE NSO PALACE

At the time of the establishment of the Nso dynasty at Kimbo in the first quarter of the 19th century, the Nso were already aware of Islam. The founder of the Nso chiefdom Ngonso was the elder sister to Chare Yen founder of the Bamum chiefdom and Morunta who migrated into the interior of Cameroon from Bankim after a succession crisis following the death of their father at Kimi.<sup>6</sup> Ngonso and her followers settled in Kovifem where they were attacked and displaced by Fulani slave raiders who used formidable horses and swords to overpower the Nso. It was probably at this time that the Nso were in contact with Islam. From Kovifem the Nso took refuge in Tavissa where Ngonso died and her subjects finally arrived Kimbo, the present settlement<sup>7</sup>. Initial efforts by Fulani slave hunters to forcefully convert the Nso therefore failed as they escaped to a more defensive site.

As early as 1880s, Hausa Kola nut Traders were in regular contact with Nso as they carried out long distance trade between Northern Nigeria and the Bamenda Grassland that was rich in Ivory and Kola nuts. There were also occasional Fulani graziers who passed through the territory on their way to German posts. Sporadic Fulani raids on the Mbum and Nso lands from Adamawa were still common on the eve of German occupation of the Bamenda Grassland. These raiders like the pastoralists and traders left traces of Islam in the Kingdom.

By this, time European or German imperialists were already in Nso. They arrived at the time the Nso were at war with the fraternal Bamum Kingdom during which Nso warriors beheaded Nsangu the Bamum King. The defeat pushed the new Bamum King Njoya to seek for an alliance with the Islamic Kingdom of Banyo in order to suppress a palace rebellion. Banyo accepted the alliance on condition that Njoya converted to Islam. The conversion was effected and Njoya received war charms (*médicament de guerre*) from Banyo<sup>8</sup>. With the charms, Njoya became a formidable warrior and he won many wars against some neighbours. In 1906 he accepted to assist the Germans in the invasion of Nso defeating the Nso

under King Sembum II and committing unacceptable atrocities against their brothers<sup>9</sup>. This was another confrontation between the Nso palace and Islam and it was believed that the Bamum military prowess was as a result of Islam.

At the time the Nso royal family was contemplating to embrace Islam, the Germans decided to check the expansion of this religion by accepting the implantation of Christianity in Shisong-Kimbo by the German Sacred Heart Fathers in 1912. The King of Nso offered land to the missionaries. He also sent princes and princesses to mission schools. All these because Christianity was against the many royal wives in the palace, the worship of ancestors and the overbearing influence of Nwerong in Nso politics.<sup>10</sup> Despite these differences between the palace and the church, the King of Nso did not immediately embrace Islam.

At the end of the First World War, Cameroon was partitioned and the expected Islamic influence from the already largely Islamised fraternal Bamum Kingdom could no longer be there because of frontier and customs barriers British and French Cameroons. The Bamum Kingdom, seat of Islam in the Western Grassland of Cameroon was placed in French Cameroon while the Kingdoms of Nso and Babessi were in British Cameroons. However with the British decision to annex British Cameroons to Nigeria for administrative convenience, larger numbers of Fulani herdsmen from Nigeria arrived Nso leading to disputes between them and the local farmers over grazing land. Hausa traders led by Mallam Maidougou Inusa from Katagam, Nigeria also came in and the British set up Alkali Courts to handle disputes between Muslims<sup>11</sup>. There were also Court Clerks of the Bansa Native Court and Messengers called *Dongaris* from Hausaland in Nigeria.<sup>12</sup> The King of Nso realised that Islam had come to stay in his Kingdom given the British protection of Islamic practices. King Ngah Bifon I therefore sent Umaru Dor and Garba Langwa to Ngaoundere to study Hausa and Fulfulde languages so as to ease communication problems between himself and the Hausa Muslims (who preached in their language)<sup>13</sup>. Majority of the Nso traders also learned Hausa and Fulfulde languages for communication purposes given that by 1922, there were already close to 100 Hausa people in Nso.

Again, Islam became attractive to the Nso royal family because unlike the Muslims in other parts of West Africa who

<sup>9</sup> V J Ngoh, *History of Cameroon since 1800*, Limbe, Pressprint, 1996, p.114

<sup>10</sup> For more, see, J. Lafon, *A History of the Catholic Church in Kumbo Diocese, 1912-1988*

<sup>11</sup> Che-Mfombong W. Bamenda Division under British Rule: From Native Administration to Local Government, MA Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde, 1980, p.p.198

<sup>12</sup> J L Nfi, *Nigerians on Mission in the British Southern Cameroons*, Bamenda, Baron Printers, 2013, p.30

<sup>13</sup> K L Tanlaka, "We are all one Kola, the nut which brings peace, joy and life in Nso Society, Cameroon", Master of Philosophy in Visual Cultural Studies, The Arctic University of Norway, 2013, p.41

<sup>5</sup> For more on the Chamba Migrations see, Nyamndi, B.N., *The Bali Chamba of Cameroon*, Paris, Editions Cape, 1988

<sup>6</sup> F.M.Fomine, "The Bamum Dynasty and the Influence of Islam in Fomba, 1390-Present", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigerias*, vol.19, 2010, pp116-131, p.111

<sup>7</sup> P.N., Mdzeka, *The Core Culture of Nso*, USA, Jerome Radin co., 1980, p.8

<sup>8</sup> D. Abwa, "Imperialisme Europeen et Expansion de L'Islam au Cameroun" in, *La Culture Arabo-Islamique en Afrique au Sud du Sahara: Cas de L'Afrique de L'Ouest*, pp50

were aggressive, condescending to non-believers and often violent in their evangelisation efforts, the Muslims of Nso (all of them Sunni) had, throughout the years, been accommodating. Consequently they were able to convert influential members of the community.

The opportunity for the King of Nso to embrace Islam came with the reunification of the British and French Cameroons in 1961. In July 1961, the successor of Ngah Bifon I, King Sehm II (Mbinkar Mbinglo (1947-1972) was invited personally at the last minute by Sultan Njimoluh Seidou Njoya to attend the Fumban Constitutional Conference that was to draft a constitution for the reunited Cameroon. The encounter between Mbinglo and Njimoluh permitted the two Tikar brothers to revive their cooperation and brotherliness. When the King returned home, he converted to Islam taking the name Ibrahim<sup>14</sup>. He became the first Nso King to become a Muslim and implement a series of public policies that favoured Islam. For example he provided Muslims with land near the palace for the construction of a Mosque. Work started in 1963 under his personal supervision and by 1965 the Nso Palace was beautified by an imposing magnificent Mosque. He also adopted some Islamic practices and by the time he died he still had his 100 wives.

The construction of a Mosque at the Palace was protested by Nso Christian who told their king that;

We have no problem regarding your majesty's conversion and Islamic Baptism that is your majesty's personal prerogative. However, we strongly object to the construction of a Mosque in the Nso Palace; the Palace does not belong to your majesty; it is the Palace of all Nso people<sup>15</sup>

The protest did not yield the desired results because the Mosque remained and is still in the Palace today

His successor El Hadj Mohammed Dini, King Ngah Bifon II (1972-1983) also left the Catholic Church and converted to Islam with his great notables like the Sub-chiefs of Yuwar, Ndzendzev, Taakum, Luun and Mvem..He was the first Nso King to go on pilgrimage to Mecca. His successor El Hadj Saidou Fanka, King Ngah Bifon III (1983-1995) abandoned Catholicism and the name Lawrence for Islam in December 1986, went on pilgrimage to Mecca and completed the building of a magnificent Mosque in the Palace.<sup>16</sup> The 1960s, 1970s and 1980s were characterised by regular exchanges between Nso and Bamum Muslims and between the King of Nso and the Sultan of Bamum. In 1971 the Muslim Head of State of Cameroon Amadou Ahidjo visited the King of Nso to congratulate him for his new religion and the rapprochement with the Bamum King. This was in line with Ahidjo's efforts towards national unity and national integration in Cameroon

<sup>14</sup> Ibid,p.41

<sup>15</sup> Tangwa G B, "The Fon's Hajj: Legacy of Sehm III", The Ngonso Magazine, 2014, p.17

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.42

The last spectacular conversion was that of the current King Patrick Mbinglo or Sehm Mbinglo 1 in 2014. In 2014, King Mbinglo visited Libya at the invitation of President Muamar Ghadaffi whose Pan-African dream proposed the Islamisation of the most influential Kings on the continent. When he returned, he converted to Islam on October 30, 2014, went on pilgrimage to Mecca with the Palace Imam Sheikh Mohammed Khalid and 42 other followers<sup>17</sup>. This was followed by the conversion of many princes and princesses and the renovation of the Palace Mosque with funds from Libya. Islam therefore regained prominence in the Nso palace from 2014. Patrick Sehm Mbinglo I now Alhadji Sehm Mbinglo I immediately abandoned his conspicuous seat in the Kumbo Cathedral. Many of his Nso admirers followed him because in Nso the King was always right.

Fig.1 Alhadji Sehm Mbinglo I (Center)



Source: The Guardian Post, Wednesday, October 29, 2014, p.3

### III. ISLAM IN THE BABESSI PALACE

The first Muslims in the Bamenda Grassland and Ndop area in particular were some Hausa cattle traders led by Sarkin Belarabe who arrived the region in about 1909. They migrated from Kano in Northern Nigeria and passed through Takum,

<sup>17</sup> Guardian Post, " Mass Exodus to Islam Feared as Nso Fon Converts", p.3

Banyo and Fumban, the headquarters of the Bamum Empire before reaching the Bamenda region. By 1916, there were fifty of these Hausa traders in the Bamenda Station. The second wave of Muslims were Fulani who under the leadership of Ardo Sabga arrived the Bamenda Grasslands in 1916 and settled in Babanki-Tungo, one of the Tikar village Kingdoms in the Ndop Plain and not far from Babessi<sup>18</sup>. According to their oral tradition, they migrated from the North of Bamum land in French Cameroon. Unlike the Hausa Muslims who were traders in cattle and other goods, the Fulani were cattle farmers who found the Ndop Plain very rich in pasture and suitable for their activities. Their presence in Ndop therefore marked the beginning of Islamisation.

The presence of Muslims created a major problem for the British colonial administrators whose administrative policy of Indirect Rule required the use of local institutions and local laws and customs in the administration of homogenous communities. It was for this reason that in 1945, the British created an Alkali Court in Bamunka Ndop to serve the more than 11,000 Muslims in the Bamenda Division of the Southern Cameroons. The first chief judge or Alkali Ahmadu was a graduate of the Kano Muslim Law School from Yola but his scribes who could speak Fulani language (Fulfulde), read Arabic were Bamum immigrants who were already familiar with the Koran<sup>19</sup>. These were the Bamum agents of Islamisation in the Ndop Plain. Although these Bamum Muslims were in the Southern Cameroons administered from Nigeria, they felt more at home than the Hausa traders from Northern Nigeria. Consequently they integrated the host communities without hesitation.

The Alkali Court in Bamunka-Ndop had out stations in Abakpwa-Bamenda and Jakiri in Nso before the creation of permanent courts in these towns. Bamum Muslims therefore left for Bamenda Division to serve in the Courts and other Islamic institutions like the Koranic Schools. They served as teachers, scribes, interpreters and advisers to the chiefs who were ready to accept Islam.

In fact, Bamum Muslims persuaded many members of the royal families especially the crowned princes to accept Islam. They convinced them that Islam unlike Christianity facilitated their tasks as chiefs because Christianity limited them to one wife and did not allow them in church with their traditional caps. The most attractive quality of Islam was the fact that it tolerated polygamy and the worship of ancestors unlike Christianity. Islam was also seen as the religion of the conquering ethnic groups and as a cornerstone of a superior culture<sup>20</sup>. This political consideration resulted in the rush for Islam by chiefs given that in the Ndop Plain the various Kingdoms were struggling for supremacy or paramountcy.

<sup>18</sup> Che-Mfombong W., "Bamenda Division under British Administration 1916-1961: From Native Administration to Local Government," MA Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde, 1980, p.20

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p.198

<sup>20</sup> Kees Schilder, "Local Rulers in North Cameroon: The interplay of politics and conversion", *Afrika Focus*, vol.9, no1-2, 1993, p.43

The most dramatic conversion was that of the chief of Babessi on February 22, 1974. The ceremony was presided by six Representatives of the Bamum Sultan, four of the King of Nso and the Modibo from Wainama in Jakiri. There was also the Kings of Baba and Babungo and eight el-Hadj and the Divisional Officer for Ndop himself a prince of the Bamum Sultanate. The ceremony was opened by the special envoy of the Sultan of Fumban El-Hadj Abdou prélat who said "Islam is a religion that respects the rites and customs of the people" and that the Babessi people were likely to follow their chief<sup>21</sup>. Seventy-four people mostly wives and children of the chiefs were immediately converted. The first deputy to the Imam of Fumban took his turn to indicate that Islam respected the traditional chieftdom and the state. With all these declarations, the chief of Babessi dropped his catholic name Michael for Mohamadou and El-Hadj Sainou from Fumban concluded the ceremony with a prayer<sup>22</sup>. This ceremony and others in Babungo and Baba exhibited the influence the Bamum King and Muslims authorities had in the Islamisation of the Ndop Plain.

#### IV. OTHER REASONS FOR ISLAM IN NSO AND BABESSI PALACES

Apart from royal conversions, many notables and subject of the Kings of the areas accepted Islam because it appeared more attracted than Christianity and also because it tolerated some indigenous practices out rightly condemned by Christianity. Islam as adopted by the Kings and notables of Nso and Babessi was not uniform and did not maintain its purity of origin. The existing traditional practices and rituals survived meaning that there was some harmony between the new religion and the culture of the Tikar.

The chiefs could not also resist Islam because it brought along definite advantages of governance and wealth. A traditional leader's distinguished position in society was to a large extent reflected in his access to and control over huge quantities of human and material resources like land wives, children and retainers. All these were guaranteed by Islam and opposed by Christianity. This was true because as the *UNESCO General History of Africa* summaries:

Islam is not only a religion; it is a comprehensive way of life, catering for all the fields of human existence. Islam provides guidance for all aspects of life-individual and social, material and moral, economic and political, legal and cultural, national and international (vol.III, 20)

Furthermore, the chiefs easily accepted Islam because of its expected economic gains. Nso like Babessi were on the axis of the long distance trade between the Bamenda Grassland and Northern Nigeria. The items of trade here included Kola nuts, Ivory and cloth, with donkeys as the main carriers. Adopting Islam permitted the exchange of diplomatic

<sup>21</sup> Regional Archives Bamenda, file, nw/2/74, Gendarmerie Security Report of 1974, p.2

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p.4

embassies and long distance traders provided the Kings with foreign gifts and also served as ambassadors in the relationships that existed amongst the Kingdoms in all of West Africa.

Marital alliances with the Bamum royal family were instrumental in the rate of conversion to Islam in Babessi and the other Tikar Kingdoms of the Ndop Plain. Many Kings accepted Islam as a condition for marriage with the princes of Bamum land. This was the case in Babungo, Bamali and Bamessing that received many Bamum immigrants. These immigrants were the victims of French policies in Bamum land and the Franco-Bamum conflict during the interwar years<sup>23</sup>. For example in 1924 the French attempted to reduce the authority of Sultan Njoya, King of the Bamum by breaking his Kingdom into sub chiefdoms under appointed sub chiefs who were responsible directly to the French administration rather than to Njoya. This led to a rebellion organized by Njoya. When the French finally deposed and exiled him to Yaounde in 1931 where he died in 1933, about 2000 of his supporters migrated in protest to the nearby Ndop Plain in the Southern Cameroons<sup>24</sup>. These supporters were led by Prince Musa Njoya and 25 elderly notables who were very influential members of the Bamum traditional government. The coming of Musa Njoya to Ndop area was very significant because he was heir to the Bamum throne and his migration attracted many Bamum to Ndop. Many Kings in Ndop got married to the Muslim descendants of these Bamum notables in an attempt to link up with the influential Bamum Sultanate

Apart from the royal family, Bamum dissident groups continued to protest the humiliation of their king by migrating under their village or group heads to the Baba, Babessi, Nso, Babungo and other neighbouring Kingdoms. The colonial report of 1926 stated that Chief Njinchara of Bangourain complained that more than 150 Bamum nobles left his village for the Southern Cameroons chiefdoms of Bagam and Bambalang.<sup>25</sup> These notables were followed by their families and admirers and like elsewhere in Africa, these migrations contributed to the spread of Islam.

Unlike Christianity that presented foreign and white missionaries and teachers, Islam was easily accepted in Nso and Babessi because the missionaries were either from Northern Nigeria or from the neighbouring Bamum Sultanate. Consequently, Islam was not seen as a foreign religion but as a local practice which could be indigenised or adapted to the realities of each community. The clerics from the Bamum Sultanate often made themselves very useful to the

community in practical daily life (and so they increase the appeal of Islam) by offering prayers on request, performing administrative tasks in the palaces, offering medical advice, divining-such as the interpretation of dreams and making charms and amulets. In fact Islam appeared to be responding to the immediate needs of the peoples of these two kingdoms more than any other religion.

The shortcoming of other theological systems especially Christianity worked in favour of Islam. The Kings who were converted in Nso and Babessi were Christians. Since 1912, Christianity was introduced in Nso and Catechumens from Babessi attended doctrine classes in Kimbo. In fact Nso and Babessi Kingdoms were more exposed to Christian influence than Islam. However, Christianity failed to adapt to the realities of these people. The converts of Christianity opposed the powers, privileges and prerogatives of the Kings. Traditional institutions that were vital instruments of traditional government were rejected by the Church. With all these, the Kings found solace in Islam since it was more accommodating.

Political considerations also influenced the romance between Kings and Islam in Nso and Babessi. At independence, the first President of Cameroon, Amadou Ahidjo, was a Muslim and a close friend to the Bamum people, the centre of Islam in the Western Grassland of Cameroon. Ahidjo who counted on the historical and ethnic relations between the Bamum and the Nso and other Tikar Chiefdoms for national unity or national integration attempted to use Islam to achieve his goals. The Kings of Nso and Babessi in the 1960s and 1970s were tolerant and welcomed to Islam in order to please President Ahidjo. Ahidjo personally visited the King of Nso in 1971 to congratulate him for his conversion to Islam and in 1974, the King of Babessi was also converted. Ahidjo also appointed a Prince of the Bamum Sultanate, Sule Njoya as District Officer in Ndop and Nso lands in the 1970s. His presence in these districts greatly worked in favour of Islam. The romance between Islam and the rulers of Nso and Babessi was certainly influenced by President Ahidjo.

Recently and precisely in 2014, the King of the Nso was motivated by the desire for greater riches with which to impress on his people and hold on to power for long. After a visit to Libya, he returned home as a Muslim with the conviction that the Libyan leader will provide him with financial resources for the development of his Kingdom. Islam was presented to him as a source of legitimacy, wealth and alliance with the great Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Ghaddafi who was preaching African unity with emphasis on authentic African values including Islamisation. The King of the Nso people was therefore in quest of greater visibility and recognition in Africa.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study unravelled the uncounted number of converts of Nso and Babessi Kings to Islam. Their decisions to abandon Christianity for Islam distinguished them from the other Tikar

<sup>23</sup> H.D., Mounmbagna, "Autorité traditionnelle et autorité française dans le royaume bamoun entre 1916-1933", DIPLEG Dissertation, ENS Yaounde, 1986, p.45

<sup>24</sup> J. Takougang "Strangers Among us"? French Cameroon Immigrants to British Southern Cameroons, 1916 - 1961," in Olofemi Vaughan (ed), *Indigenous Political Structures and Governance in Africa*, Ibadan, refer: 383-396, 2003, p.342

<sup>25</sup> Fanso, "Trans-Frontier Relations and Resistance to Cameroon Nigeria Colonial Boundaries, 1916-1945", Doctorat d'Etat Thesis in History, Yaounde University, 1982, p.276

Kings in the Bamenda Grassland who never flirted with Islam. The findings reveal that contrary to the views of many Western-Christian scholars that Islam was propagated in Africa by force or war, the romance between Islam and the Nso and Babessi royal families could be explained by the presence of Hausa Kola nut traders, Fulani graziers and influence from Bamum Islamic theocracy in French Cameroon. The tolerance and ease with which Islam cohabited with the traditions of these two Kingdoms, the shortcomings of Christianity introduced in the Bamenda Grassland at the same time with Islam in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were also exploited by these Kings. Lastly the mode or fashion in Cameroon under Amadou Ahidjo (1960-1982) was to convert to Islam, the religion of the Prince. Since then, Islam has continued to attract many converts from Christianity and the trend is likely to continue if Christianity does not adapt to African realities.

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