

# Historiographical Analysis of Rebels' Eating Habits under the Maquis in West-Cameroon (1957-1960)

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**Abstract:** In the aftermath of the Second World War, several states on the African continent embarked on the race for freedom; the peoples living under the domination of French power expressed their desire to leave the colonial yoke. In Cameroon, it is through the nationalists that voices are raised against the colonial government in place. It was also through their initiative that a political party was born in 1948: the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC). This political formation clearly poses the problem of the reunification and independence of Cameroon; which earned him his ban by an ordinance, signed on July 13, 1955, by the French High Commissioner Roland Pré. This prohibition pushes its militants and the nationalists to go underground. Thus ensued a war characterized by a series of assassinations. The case of the MP Samuel Wanko, assassinated in 1957, is important since it marks the official beginning of the maquis in Bamileke land. During the war, the escalation of violence will generate the displacement of "rebel" populations from their usual lands to the bush. Unlike other research on the maquis, which places particular emphasis on nationalists' battles, the present study shows how these *maquisards* adapted their eating habits and diet not only to their new environment, but also to the war situation they were facing. In this perspective, this research aims to make a historiographical analysis of the eating habits of the nationalists living under the maquis in the Bamileke land, by answering the question of knowing: how did the *maquisards* of the Bamileke land feed themselves during this pivotal period in the history of Cameroon? Methodologically, the resolution of this problem is based on the analysis of written and oral data. This consists of the collection, processing, criticism and interpretation of the said data, as well as the use of a multidisciplinary approach integrating anthropology and sociology. It appears from the data that during the maquis, the nationalists adopted new eating habits, some of which persisted well after this pivotal period in the history of the Bamileke people. More so, they used foodstuffs to defend themselves.

**Keywords:** eating, eating habits, mutations, maquis, Bamileke land.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The history of the black continent is tainted by the colonial fact. Begun in 1884 and spurred on by the Berlin Conference, colonization in Africa extended until after the Second World War. From this moment, we observe a great wind of claims blowing over a set of territories. This wind was preceded by the French African conference in Brazzaville, which was held from January 30 to February 8, 1944. This gave indigenous Africans the opportunity to participate in the political management of their territories (Abwa, 2010). After this conference, the colonized peoples of Africa are resolutely demanding their freedom. The situation in Cameroon during

this period is a bit special, even if it follows the course of events. Indeed, unlike the colonization of other countries of the black continent, that of Cameroon after the German defeat is ensured by two powers: France and Great Britain, respectively for Northern and Southern Cameroon. Like the other colonized territories of the continent, Cameroon follows the movement of freedom. It is in this perspective that a political party called Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC) was born in 1948. This political organization whose slogan is "immediate independence and reunification of the two Cameroons" is the window through which the nationalists intend to put pressure on the colonial administrators, in order to achieve the goal of independence (Abwa, 2010). But, in the face of their protests, France systematically responds in a brutal way, by further oppressing the people whose living conditions are increasingly difficult; prompting them to protest further. With a view to taking control of the prevailing situation and stifling the people's desire for independence, the French High Commissioner Roland Pré was assigned to Cameroon. It should be noted that the situation prevailing in Northern Cameroon obliges France to become very quickly aware of the rise of nationalism in Cameroon. The arrival of Roland Pré represents a response to this nationalist outbreak, because he was a specialist in sabotaging nationalist movements. He illustrated himself in several other territories under French domination, such as Algeria. Upon his arrival, he signed by the ordinance of July 13, 1955, the banning of the UPC (Deltombe, Domergue, & Tatsitsa, 2012). From that moment, the members of this party, determined to achieve their goals, went underground to put an end, as Mbembe (1996) says, to the conflict born of the demand for independence by using force. This is the beginning of the maquis.

The war of independence in Cameroon begins first in the Sanaga-maritime. Then, it spreads to the west of the country. Indeed, on December 2, 1956, the UPC took the initiative of the war of independence at the Makaï conference. Thus, on December 3, 1956, its Secretary General, Um Nyobe, set up the conditions facilitating the resistance in the Sanaga-maritime. These go through the creation of a political formation: the *Comité National d'Organisation* (CNO), whose main objective is to annihilate the actions carried out by the colonial authorities and their allies. For its operation, this organization relies on the war effort of the peoples. The said effort consists of supplies, subscriptions and information (National Archives of Yaoundé). Moreover, following the

example of this political formation, created in the logic of a program in six (6) main points, Pierre Simo and Kuifotso set up in 1957, in West Cameroon, the *Sinistre pour la Défense Nationale du Kamerun* (SDNK), which later became, in 1959, the *Armée de Libération Nationale du Kamerun* (ALNK) under Martin Singap's leadership (Mbembe, 1996). These political institutions had as essential objectives to find effective means to lead the people towards a better-structured protest action, and later towards freedom. Unfortunately, they will not be without consequences ([www.les-renseignements-généraux.org](http://www.les-renseignements-généraux.org)). Indeed, faced with the observation of the resolute commitment of the Cameroonian people to independence, the colonial forces are responding with coercive methods, including kidnappings, imprisonments and assassinations. Among these numerous murders, those of Samuel Wanko in 1957 and Ruben Um Nyobe in 1958 have a great resonance, since they mark the official start of hostilities in the Bamileke land (Abwa, 2010).

During the war of independence, the rebels, to escape assassinations, disperse leaving urban areas where their security was no longer guaranteed, to lead the resistance in rural areas, where vegetation constitutes a new strategic combat space. In these places, the nationalists who fight to obtain their freedom are called upon to solve other problems on a daily basis. Indeed, the human being is compelled to satisfy several physiological needs, including that of eating every day. However, in this context of war, it was difficult to provide for this need. Nevertheless, the fighters in these inhospitable places have deployed strategies allowing them to feed themselves daily. The analysis of these strategies constitutes the object of this study. Thus, this research aims to provide an answer to the questions of knowing: what strategies did the nationalists implement to meet their food needs under the maquis? How were these strategies put to use in a military perspective and how did they influence the eating habits of the Bamileke long after the maquis? These questions make it possible to analyze a facet of the maquis hitherto neglected in the literature. These include the daily life of the rebels in general and their diet in particular.

To fight the colonial army, the nationalists chose the strategy of the maquis, that is to say life in hiding. They found refuge in the bush where they gathered in camps and adapted their diet to the prevailing context. Two strategies were implemented: going to get supplies or receiving food aid from the populations who, without taking an active part in the fighting, were in solidarity with their cause. These rebels took advantage of the supply of foodstuffs to thwart the plans of the adversary, using the foodstuffs offered to them by their environment as weapons of defense. Moreover, during this struggle, the Bamileke people saw some of their products lose their symbolic value, while others, previously neglected, benefited from greater socio-cultural consideration. To better understand the eating habits of the nationalists of the Bamileke land during the maquis, this research emphasizes the methods of supplying of the rebels, the types of food consumed as well as their methods of preparation and

conservation. Furthermore, it reveals how the rebels used food supplies from a military perspective. Finally, it is interested in the changes in the eating habits of the populations of the Bamileke land under maquis.

## II. DAILY LIFE AND FOOD DURING THE MAQUIS

The death of Um Nyobe in 1958 pushes the members of UPC to claim freedom in a more vehement way. However, the maquis that is taking place in Cameroon is characterized by the asymmetry between the forces present. Indeed, facing the UPC fighters, under-equipped and poorly trained, are the well-trained and over-armed colonial forces. It was with a view to compensating for the inadequacy of their archaic armament and their under-training that the rebels used the environment that surrounded them, in particular by setting up settlement sites commonly called camps. In this part of the study, we are interested in the camps present in Bamileke territory. How did these present themselves, and what foodstuffs did their residents consume on a daily basis?

### 2.1. Establishment, presentation and organization of war camps

Before the presentation of the camps, it is important to recall the reasons why the nationalists of the Bamileke land decided to engage in the war of independence and why the battles in this region were the most violent. Indeed, like members of other Cameroonian ethnic groups, the Bamileke had expressed their desire to see Cameroon become an autonomous state (Noumbissie Tchouake, 2007). By participating in the Second World War on the side of France, to help this colonial power to get rid of Germany, they hoped that freedom would be their reward. At the end of the war, the conference held in Brazzaville in 1945 made it possible to establish less coercive colonial laws. These, although effective in the other territories of Cameroon, are slow to be applied in the Bamileke zone (Noumbissie Tchouake, 2017). In addition to forced labor and the progressive non-recognition of the power of traditional authority, the Bamileke are deprived of all sources of wealth, in particular land (Waté Sayem 2013). Paradoxically, all these expropriated lands are not used, as evidenced by the fact that from 1944 to 1950, only 339 hectares out of the 1135 hectares of global area were exploited (Dzukou, 1975). On the other hand, the colonial authority reacted with violence to all the initiatives taken by these populations to obtain the return of the despoiled lands. Among these initiatives, we can cite among others: the establishment of the *Syndicat des Petits Planteurs* (SPP), which began its activities in the Bafang subdivision as the first Bamileke union, under the leadership of Jean Baptiste Sataipoum Happi and Jean Mbouende; the connection between the SPP and the *Union des Syndicats Confédérés du Cameroun* (USCC-CGT) in 1944, with the objectives of recovering land and preserving the power of traditional chiefs (Noumbissie Tchouake, 2007); as well as the birth of the *Kumzse*, an association of people claiming independence, which brought together in the years 1947, all the elites and traditional dignitaries of the Bamileke land of Dschang and the entire region (Noumbissie Tchouake, 2017).

These groups have favored the rise of nationalism in Bamileke land; reason why during the battles in this area, the populations were particularly committed and determined. Despite their inferiority, they engaged in very violent clashes with the colonial army. It was in a strategic logic that they were organized in camps. What were these camps like? How were they organized?

Let us note from the outset that when the maquis began, the rebels lived normally in their usual houses, and did not fear betrayal. They gathered at night, in places set up to hold meetings in order to find strategies for getting out of the colonial yoke. Amadou Ahidjo claimed that these men: “live legally during the day and illegally at night.” (Kanguelieu Tchouake, 2003). Once tracked, the latter took refuge in the bush where they set up camps. Kanguelieu Tchouake demonstrates that these camps were generally located at the foot of mountains (Bamboutos, Manengouba, Nlonako and Koupé), on hills, around streams or rivers. He goes further by noting that these places were chosen according to strategic, defensive and above all food motives. In addition to these camps, the rebels took advantage of the caves offered to them by their environment.

The Bamileke land is made up of a particular vegetation, because its very dense shrubby plant formation with rugged relief is dotted with numerous caves serving as refuge. These natural caves were, for the rebels fleeing the colonial administration, places of asylum still called camps (Kouosseu & Kuikoua, 2017). The camp can be defined as a gathering place. It is the place of stationing or instruction of a military formation (Dictionnaire Larousse en ligne, 2018). The Dictionary La toupie en ligne (n.d.) mentions that the camp can also be a location temporarily occupied by an army. In fact, the rebels did not have a fixed place of residence. They moved from cave to cave, depending on the dangers they faced, including being discovered or arrested by the forces of the colonial administration.

Natural caves were not the only places of refuge for nationalists. Next to them, there were established camps which were nothing more than large residential houses in the hinterland of the Bamileke land, in which the rebels took shelter. There are two main ones: those created to shelter the combatants, also called commando camps, and those built to secure the inhabitants of the village, also called regrouping camps. This research focuses more on commando camps. But, let us first specify that the creation of the camps required the transformation of the dwelling houses into combat bungalows. As Sieliénon Marcel indicates, about the village of Bamendjou, the choice of camps depended on certain criteria. This informant explains that they were large houses consisting of several rooms, including at least four bedrooms and a large living room, with woven straw roofs and raffia bamboo doors, able to gather 100 to 150 people or *pongouong* (Name given to the combatants during the maquis, in the local language of the Bamendjou village). This large number of people was possible, specifies Sieliénon Marcel, since the constructions in

Bamileke country have a precise morphology. They are neither dispersed nor linear. They are designed in the form of concessions (a kind of main houses which have, around them, outbuildings, all arranged in such a way as to form an arc of a circle. The consequence is that the transformation of a main house entailed that of the whole compound into a camp, and houses made of rammed earth bricks and thatched roofs were prized because of their ability to withstand bullets and explosions/gunfire from colonial army gunships.

Several camps were created during the maquis. Kandja Kessi, an informant, lists for example the Sokoundjou, Tadjoukin, Tinkap, Tse din and Tadion camps for the communities of Bamendjou, and Tsinda Thomas, another informant, cites those of Bakoutio, Batomeni, Batia-Mekié in the other parts of the region. He also specifies that these names generally stem from the patronymic of the person in charge of the concession. Apart from the two main types of camps mentioned above, Kanguelieu Tchouake (2003) explains that the rebels, in certain areas, had camps for military training. These were created far from the village, in peaceful places. This was the case in Bafang for example, where we had the camps of Folentcha, Komako, Kotcha, Batcha, and at the Babouantou-Bantou border with the large flat and grassy fields, which served as a training ground for the rebels.

With regard to the organization of these camps, it should be noted from the outset that not all the combatants resided there. These structures were made up of people of different age groups and sexes, including men, women and young people. Fotso, Tchoumboué, Pinta and Langue (2010) specify that in the camps, the combatants were headed by a “general”, assisted by “commanders”, “captains” and “warrant officers”. These forces were divided into “regiments”, “battalions” and other “sections” which covered military “zones”, “districts” and “sectors”. On a day-to-day basis, the essential tasks such as the design of combat strategies, the political, military and sports training of the combatants by the executives, as well as the day and night surveillance of the access roads to the site of implantation were carried out by men. The latter were also magicians, technicians and nurses (Kanguelieu Tchouake, 2003). On the other hand, the general information, secretariat, manufacture of traps and magic potions, preparation of meals, cutting of wood, and supply of agricultural and pastoral products were the responsibility of women. It should be noted that apart from the kitchen, a task on which this research will focus later, these women had the role of concealing the access roads in the villages. To do this, they went, on a daily basis, to the crossroads near the camps, to form ridges on the tracks that led there, in order to disturb the colonial administrators. Raspail Baeshlin (1968) reveals that they could also, in the same logic, dig large trenches to block the roads. This author notes that this task was not difficult for them to accomplish, since in Bamileke societies, women are skilled in working the land. Likewise, they played their role as providers by bringing back tubers and other food products, which constituted the menu of the inhabitants of the camp.

The children who took part in the armed struggle went to do their work during the day and returned to their family homes in the evening. They got down to the supply of food, military equipment, and the design/dissemination of leaflets (Waté Sayem, 2013). These child soldiers also played the role of sentinel, consisting for them of going to a crossroads or to a strategic place with a large fruit tree, to watch for the arrival of the enemy and give the alert to the nationalists, in particular in imitating the cry of a bird or an animal. To do this, they climbed to the tops of tall fruit trees all day long. Returning to the camps to report on their day of watch, they brought back various fruits (guavas, mangoes, safous, avocados, passion fruits, and cola for example), depending on the seasons. Those of them who played the role of customs officer, such as Siéliéno Marcel, Feunou Jean Marie and Feugang Kéne Jean, had to go to their posts with a container. This was supposed to serve them as an alibi, claiming to be looking for a drinking water point, in case their activities were the object of suspicion on the part of the colonial authorities (Waté Sayem, 2013). At the end of the day, they supplied the camps to which they belonged with water.

## 2.2. Supply of foodstuffs, preparation, consumption and preservation of dishes in the maquis

During the maquis, children, women and soldiers provided food supplies to the camps. While men officially went in search of food, women and children took advantage of the performance of their daily tasks to bring food back to the camps. In addition to these foodstuffs, men were responsible for bringing in “female staff” for the kitchen. Before analyzing the task incumbent on men with regard to the supply of foodstuffs, we will insist particularly on the way in which the latter were recruited and how they recruited the “female personnel”.

The fighters present on the western lands were nationals of several ethnic groups. Kanguelieu says that there were Mbos, Abo, Duala, or Bassa. Enock Kwayep, on the other hand, insists that they were more Bamileke (Kanguelieu Tchouake, 2003). The recruitment of the rebels fell to Martin Singap, the former right-hand man of Felix Roland Moumie and Paul Momo. The latter recruited in the various bases of the UPC, established in Mounjo and in the Bamileke land. Alongside these men, the *mandjond* (a group whose primary vocation was to promote mutual aid, in particular the construction of members' houses), which became the water group following a shock in 1959, also worked in recruiting rebels. It should also be noted that a large part of the financing of the members of UPC came from this organization. Thus, the enlisted rebels recruited other members of the UPC in order to increase the number of teams.

With regard to recruitment into the teams, the soldiers generally carried out kidnappings within families, in markets, on the roads, at school, or in the fields. Rebels to implement this recruitment procedure exploited the slightest opportunity that presented itself. For example, in 1959, when the Bamileke expelled from Douala were dropped in Bafang, each of them

had to walk back to their native village. The rebels took advantage of this to select soldiers among them (Fotso, Tchoumboué, Pint & Languieu, 2010). It is important to note that the recruitment of young girls took place in the surrounding villages. According to Siéliéno Marcel, an informant, they had to make up the teams of cooks, unlike the other women. Recourse to kidnapping was justified by the fact that the mobilization of young people constituted a source of problems, since it was difficult for their parents to accept their engagement in the rebellion, even if everyone participated in it in some way or another. Djokam Marie Louise explains the conditions of her abduction. She reveals that one evening, her mother was working out of the room, when she saw men approaching her. Hurriedly, she said, her mother came into the living room and picked her and her sister up to the bedroom. She laid them on the mat, covering them with clothes, then lay down on them. The men, once in the room, raised her violently, lecturing her. Then one of them touched his fingers to the breasts of the two girls. Due to the fact that her breasts were larger than those of her younger sister, practically invisible, they took her back to the camp. According to this informant, several other cooks had been abducted by this method, and they were sometimes moved from one camp to another. Pangop Marie Françoise, an informant, who says she worked in Bagam where she was captured, then in Dschang, Mbouda and again in Dschang, confirms this information.

We can list three main techniques of supplying rebel men. First, they carried out field searches, organized according to camps and programs. Mekembe Adolphe mentions that some allowed them to refuel in their plantations, and others opposed it (Kanguelieu Tchouake, 2003). Nevertheless, informant Marcel Siéliéno explains that men went from one plantation to another, and from one village to another, in search of food. They generally brought back all sorts of consumable animal products; tubers such as taro (*Colocasia esculenta*), macabo (*Xanthosoma sagittifolium*), sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*), white yam (*Dioscorea alata*); commodities such as maize (*Zeamays*), cowpea bean (*Vigna unguiculata*), banana (*Musa sapientum*), or plantain (*Musa paradisiaca*) (Atemkeng Makowa, 2017); fruits and drinks, in particular white wine (drink obtained from the sap of raffia (raffia wine) or oil palm (palm wine) which is left to ferment so that it becomes alcoholic).

Secondly, the nationalists went to attack vehicles to strip the travelers, considered as traitors, of their victuals. Informant Melong Roger gives some indications on the food he brought back to the camp. He cites in particular products that can be kept for several days, as well as rare and expensive products such as bread and Kumba cake, which were popular; cans of sardines, chocolate, or butter, red and peanut oil, as well as some tubers, cubes and salt. This second method was very important, because it allowed the nationalists not only to stock up on meals, or non-perishable and rare foodstuffs, but also to identify traitors in the village. It also happened that they stole populations' cattle or poultry. For example, during a terrorist raid in the Bani massif and the localities of Bamendou II and

Fonakeukeu, the rebels stole three oxen from Mbororo herders (Kuikoua & Kouosseu, 2017). These repeated thefts will also push a group of people to collaborate with the rebels. This is the case of the Mbororo who no longer wanted to lose their cattle, or the traditional chiefs who wanted to regain their authority.

The third method can be considered more legal than the other two, since supporters of the rebellion, who lived outside the camps, went shopping to supply the combatants or made donations to them. Mbororo men, for example, brought, as Kuikoua and Kouosseu (2017) mention, food purchased or food prepared by their wives, and in-kind donations such as curds, meat, bread, rice and rice, cola. For example, the veteran fighter Kamdoum says that the two pans of fresh curds that ended up in the Balatsit camp in Bamendjou, where he had been abandoned by his rebel teammates, after the irruption of the French security forces, had been given to them by Mbororo herders. This is not the only case, since Ernest Ouandié had received a beef from Chief Alhadji Ardo Guidada, to the great pleasure of the fighters (Kuikoua & Kouosseu, 2017). However, Kanguelieu Tchouake (2003) mentions that in-kind donations made to the rebels could consist of oil, salt, food products such as cassava and macabo; rice, bread, goats, pigs, fish, and many more. However, they had established, to meet their needs, a financial contribution called "patriotic fund". The latter varied from 200 to 500 CFA francs for women, and from 1,200 to 1,500 CFA francs for men. It should also be noted that depending on their activities, some people could pay a sum ranging from 3,000 to 20,000 CFA francs. For example, the Mbororo who had large cattle could pay a sum approaching 20,000 CFA francs (Kuikoua & Kouosseu, 2017).

Like men, women took part in supplying the camps with foodstuffs and subsistence. To do this, they did work that brought them some money. They could thus fulfill the payment of patriotic funds, or even offer foodstuffs and meals to the rebels. Djousse Cathérine, our informant, indicates that she was a donut seller. During the maquis, she received the symbolic sum of 300 CFA francs every day, from the hands of the camp leader Bakoutio, in exchange for a basin of donuts made from corn flour. Other women, including the Mbororo in particular, sold yams, dried boiled potatoes or even shea butter (Kuikoua & Kouosseu, 2017). In addition, women farmers used the money collected after the sale of the products of their crops to pay patriotic funds or they used it to make in-kind donations to the rebels. Raspail Baeshlin (1968) states that they offered them foodstuffs such as maize, beans and plantain. How were the foodstuffs collected in this way prepared?

The preparation of food in the camps during the maquis was done in the morning and in the evening, every day of the week, as revealed by the informant Djokam Marie Louise. The kitchen utensils used to prepare meals were made by the rebels themselves. They used materials from their environment to make objects such as millstones and wheels, pestles,

calabashes, clay or leaf containers (Atemkeng Makowa, 2017). On the other hand, some utensils were purchased. These include pots, sieves, ladles and plates. Others could also come from donations made by sympathizers to the nationalist cause. Sielenou Marcel mentions that women who did small business (selling peanuts, bananas, corn fritters, yams and potatoes) had come together to offer the combatants in his camp two large saucepans for the preparation of food, and some dishes which the soldiers used to eat.

Just like the utensils used for the preparation of meals, those used for consumption were acquired by purchase, manufacture or donation. In war camps, meal times were determined by the sound of a bell. Siélienou Marcel confirms that this was the case in the camp of the great mission of Dschang, where he says he stayed. Generally, the fighters gathered to eat just at the end of the morning military exercises. Sometimes meals were disrupted by the passage of a colonial army helicopter. Our informant Melong Roger, reveals that in this situation, the men were forced to leave their bases to take refuge under trees, in the bushes or in the tall grass called *sissongho*, until they received information indicating the departure of the intruder and the return to normal. Makowa Rachel, another informant, confirms this information.

Regarding the type of meal consumed, the informant Djokam Marie Louise specifies that it happened that supplements such as couscous were prepared in the camp, but that the sauce was prepared in the hiding place of the day. This is why meals whose sauces did not require fire or those whose preparation required less cooking time were particularly popular, no doubt for strategic reasons. Among them, we can cite the *nkui* sauce in the Hauts plateaux; yellow sauce in the Dschang camps; kneaded in the *Bamboutos* (except that of macabo, which could cause itching in the throat and mouth when it was not sufficiently cooked). Alongside these dishes, Djokam Marie specifies that the rebels ate other dishes that were brought to them daily at the camp. These include *loug* (a kind of sweet yam that can be eaten raw or cooked), mashed potatoes, pig bananas, corn and beans, or canned goods (chocolate, sardines, butter and milk). However, she mentions that she was forbidden to cook a commodity like bananas, the cultivation of which was the source of the expropriation of indigenous lands by the colonial administration.

The preservation of foodstuffs during the maquis was not easy. To solve this problem, certain camps were established to play the role of granary. In this regard, Kouosseu and Kuikoua (2017) present a food depot that was located in Batcha. The police discovered this food storage place on June 7, 1960. It contained 3 tons of rice, several boxes of milk, packets of sugar and other products (Dschang safety report). In addition, foodstuffs could also be kept in soldiers' living camps.

The foodstuffs not only kept the fighters alive, they also served as weapons of defense. Similarly, the supply of foodstuffs was put at the service of war.

### III. FOODSTUFFS IN THE SERVICE OF WAR DURING THE MAQUIS

During the War of Independence, the nationalists were able to take advantage of food supplies to obtain war material. Among these foodstuffs, some have made it possible to fight against the enemy, because they have proved to be effective weapons.

#### 3.1. *The supply of foodstuffs for the transport of military equipment*

The word supply often refers to the action of providing food and ammunition to a place, a fleet, an army, a troop, which was deprived of it (Dictionnaire Larousse en ligne, 2018). The supply during the maquis in West Cameroon did not only concern food, but also war material. To a certain extent, one can consider that the military supply was the hidden face of food supply. This means that food supply allowed rebels to obtain weapons. Indeed, claiming to perform the drudgery of looking for wood for culinary purposes, the child soldiers carried on their heads, and for several kilometers, bundles in which weapons were concealed. Following the military strategy of the *Armée de Libération Nationale du Kamerun* (ALNK) and allied countries (Onana Mfegue, 2005), weapons of all kinds transited from Guinea Conakry, Ghana, and Nigeria to the Cameroonian coasts, to feed the rebels of the UPC. Once on the coast, the weapons were transported under the leadership of rebel leaders, to the various subdivisions of the Bamileke land (Waté Sayem, 2013). The choice of child soldiers to transport weapons to the camps was not accidental. For our informant Singap Marcel, they were in the best position to deceive the vigilance of the colonial administrators. The procedure being long, the children traveled many kilometers, then rested when the need arose for a few hours, in order to regain their strength. After which, they continued to the place which had been indicated to them. For the nationalists, it was the safest way to get arms to combatants.

The weapons used by the Nationalists were of two types. Kanguelieu Tchouake (2003) differentiates between traditional and poisoned weapons and so-called modern ones. Traditional weapons were made by Bamileke blacksmiths who had decided to put their knowledge and production to the benefit of nationalist fighters. These blacksmiths were grouped together, as reiterated by Fotso et al. (2010), in armories that had been created at the same time as the ALNK, and whose main posts were in Mbam and Ndé. Some traditional weapons started from the North-West. Indeed, *La Presse du Cameroun* of Thursday, May 5, 1960 attests that the security forces, during a patrol in the Bamboutos massif located between the North-West of the Bamileke department and British Cameroon, recovered 50,000 cartridges of caliber 12,750 jackets, 250 caps, 500 pairs of sneakers, 2 war rifles, 11 trading rifles, all belonging to the rebels. Modern weapons consisted of 12-gauge bullet guns (Waté Sayem, 2013). However, this ammunition was not available on site. To obtain them, the nationalists had to travel to Bamenda, where they

were manufactured. To transport them, they used bags containing tapioca. This cassava-based food also allowed them to feed themselves, in cases where the camps were subject to the passages of colonial army helicopters, which made the meal of the day inedible, because the dust they raised mixed with food. The tactic used was simple: the balls were first bagged using plastic, and then covered with notebook sheets to avoid any contamination, once introduced into the tapioca powder. After pouring a certain quantity into the bottom of the bags, the packets containing the ammunition were added to the middle, before being covered with tapioca. The bags thus made were closed and transported on the head to the base of Dschang-Bagam, by those who pretended to go to the neighboring village, in order to trade. It is thanks to this subterfuge that the rebels could obtain supplies not only of an easily preserved and usable foodstuff, but also of equipment allowing them to wage war against the French colonial administration.

The gunpowder followed the same path as bullets. In this case, rebels resorted not to bags of tapioca, but to bags of cassava flour (Waté Sayem, 2013). Among the peoples living in the Bamenda region, cassava powder, commonly called *fonio*, was used to make special dishes. During the maquis, it was consumed by rebels, in the form of cassava couscous, with different sauces. Its reduced cooking time was particularly attractive to soldiers, who had little time to spend on food. Similarly, in the event of an enemy attack, it had the advantage of being easily transportable by fighters and cooks. It therefore played a dual role in the maquis: food and a means of concealing military equipment.

The ingenuity of rebels did not consist only in the use of food supplies for military purposes. It also consisted of the use of food as defense weapons.

#### 3.2. *Foodstuffs: a formidable defense weapon*

Foodstuffs proved to be weapons of defense for the peoples of West Cameroon who were fighting a fierce battle against the colonial administration. Among these foodstuffs, peppers occupied a central place. It is a more or less fleshy pod that contains many seeds in its interior cavity. This foodstuff, which grows on plants that can reach about 1.5 meters in height, exists in several shapes, sizes, colors and flavors (Dictionnaire Le Petit Robert en ligne). In Cameroon, there are three types of peppers: the bell pepper, the Mexican chipot and the piquillo de Lodosa ([www.gastronomiac.com](http://www.gastronomiac.com)). These three species of dicotyledonous plants with a pungent taste have been cultivated in West Cameroon and used as condiments in the preparation of dishes. In addition to these peppers, the Bamileke people have other spices considered as peppers, such as *nguedjo*, *sop*, or *bird pepper* (Atemkeng Makowa, 2017). All these peppers are used in cooking for their pungent flavors and particular tastes.

When we go into the context of the War of Independence, we realize that the peppers mentioned above were very important. Indeed, they were dried and crushed with millstones and

rollers, by women and young girls. Thus, we obtained a kind of "magic potion", made of chili powder and grains of sand. This substance, crushed and reduced to powder, was kept and distributed to nationalists, as well as to child soldiers, to serve as a defense weapon. According to Yougoua Henri, our informant, the use of peppers was essential, because weapons were always insufficient. He tells us some memories as a child soldier:

*It was very difficult for us to have knives or weapons. I think it was nearly impossible. But we had this powder given to us by the rebel leaders. As soon as we were chased, suspected and arrested, we used this powder to blind those who held us captive for a while in order to escape.*

*I still remember that day when my uncle and I were going to a base at the entrance to the city of Bamendjou. Along the way, we were attacked, and my uncle shot dead. While the others were dragging his remains, a soldier carried me on his shoulder to bring me to the large colonial base. On the way, I waited for a place empty of people, and I escaped thanks to the powder I poured into his eyes. So I returned to the camp crying and passed on the news.*

It emerges from the elements developed above that the nationalists in the maquis used foodstuffs for both nutritional and military purposes. It should however be noted that if during the maquis period, certain foodstuffs were adopted because of their practicality in times of war (ease of cooking them, their shelf life, or their usefulness for transporting weapons and ammunition in the camps), the fact remains that these have settled durably within the populations of West Cameroon, well after the exceptional period constituted by the maquis.

#### IV. CHANGES IN BAMILEKE EATING HABITS DURING THE MAQUIS

The War of Independence had a major impact on the consumption of dishes or certain foods in Bamileke territory. There are two major changes. On the one hand, we observe a systematic consumption of raw products and on the other hand, we note the desacralization of some specific products and dishes.

##### 4.1. Consumption of raw foods

During the war, rebels fleeing the enemy left the camps to take refuge in the bush. In these places, the latter faced significant food problems. It should be noted from the outset that making a fire there, without being spotted, was not an obvious thing because of the smoke, which could signal a human presence to third parties. Ymelong Thadée, an informant, explains that even if the necessary to make fire was not lacking, the rebels did not always have kitchen utensils making it possible to prepare meals. Indeed, in the situation they found themselves in, finding a pot or a calabash was very difficult.

The lands of West Cameroon are remarkably fertile, hence the presence in this area of varied crops. This diversification of

products has proved to be an asset for the rebels because, in the difficult living conditions of the bush, characterized as noted above by the impossibility of making a fire without signaling its presence, the fact that certain foodstuffs could be eaten raw was an undeniable advantage. This is particularly the case for potato (*Ipomeabatatas*) and cassava (*Manihotesculenta*) tubers (Bell, Mück, & Schuler, 2000). The potato, for example, was prized because harvesting it requires more skill than strength, and its taste is slightly sweet. *Loung*, a kind of sweet yam that was grown all over the Bamileke region (Atemkeng Makowa, 2017), is another tuber eaten raw during the maquis. We hardly find this commodity in the menu of the people of this region. Easy to harvest, this food allowed the rebels living in the bush to meet their food needs. For Djokam Marie Louise, this commodity has been consumed so much that it has been emptied from the ground; and it is because at the end of the war, it was not replanted that it has almost disappeared from the food habits of the Bamileke. Tubers were not the only foods eaten raw by the rebels. The latter have sometimes been interested in insects, such as termites, crickets and locusts

The maquis ended in Bamileke land with the execution of leader Ernest Ouandié in 1971 (Noumbissié Tchouaké, 2007). Long before, that is to say in 1960, the proclamation of the independence of French Cameroon favored the exit of the men from the bush. Although now outside this hostile environment, they have kept some of the eating habits that the exceptional situation in which they found themselves pushed them to adopt. Indeed, the Bamileke continue to consume raw tubers to this day. For example, children love sweet potato because of its flavor. This eating habit has been passed down from generation to generation since the period of the maquis.

The influence of the maquis is not limited to the consumption of raw products. Certain foods either lost their value or began to occupy a prominent place in human diets, not only during the war, but also after it.

##### 4.2. The devaluation of some sacred dishes

The War of Independence had a major impact on food in Western Cameroon. Due to the exceptional situation in which they found themselves, the nationalists had to desecrate certain foodstuffs, which had a particular value within their traditional society. The need to eat led them to the daily consumption of foodstuffs and drinks with symbolic value, the consumption of which was reserved for particular occasions. These include white wine and cola nuts. Before the war, white wine or *matango* was not consumed like water, due to its sacred character. Usually consumed during happy or unhappy events, with the aim of sealing an alliance between men (marriage), or between men and the dead (funeral, burial), this drink allowed nationalists who found themselves in the valleys, to drink when there was no water. This is explained by Ymelong Thadée:

*In the valleys, there were several trees that could produce wine, including palm trees and raffias. On these, the wine*

*pickers always put tanks, knowing that they will not necessarily come to find wine, since their participation in the war reassured us in the bush and gave us the power to drink this wine without fear. In times of hunger and thirst, wine has refreshed us greatly.*

From this assertion, we retain that the wine allowed the rebels to save lives, when the need arose. This was facilitated by the fact that the whole society participated in the war in one way or another. Omnipresent in Bamileke social and cultural life, the cola tree is a fruit tree found in the western savannah. Red or white in color, the cola nut has the particularity of being bitter and harsh in taste. Elderly men generally consume it, although it is not excluded that women consume it (Atemkeng Makowa, 2017). Like white wine, this fruit formalizes the marital union, hence its symbolic character. It played a very special role in the lives of fighters. Indeed, due to its constitution and its richness in theobromine alkaloids and caffeine, this fruit is a nervous enchanter. Therefore, it played a triple role in the lives of soldiers: stimulation, protection and nourishment. As for the stimulation, it should be mentioned that the caffeine contained in this fruit is a stimulating substance that gave courage to the fighters. It should also be noted that the cola is one of the offerings generally made by the living to the dead in Bamileke society, with the purpose of asking for protection from the ancestors. This was the case for the rebels in times of war, who relied on their ancestors to protect themselves. The consumption ritual began with the deposit of a quarter of walnuts on the ground. Due to the fact that this foodstuff passed from the sacred to the profane, since it provided the fighters with food, it was desacralized. Indeed, in the Bamileke society, the consumption of cola is no longer only associated with a specific event. In addition, all people who wish to consume it can take it without constraint. It is also marketed. In the same vein, it should be noted that the *jujube*, which was consumed mainly by the village chief or exceptionally by the head of the family before the maquis (Atemkeng Makowa, 2017), has become a commonly consumed fruit, used by nationalists, to protect itself, in particular by the consumption of its odd seeds. The same is true for certain foodstuffs whose consumption was prohibited for women and children. It was rat and snake meat for the former and poultry eggs for the latter. During the war, the said prohibitions are lifted, particularly in the camps and for the combatants.

As for the products valued during the war, we have the so-called pig banana. This edible fruit of the banana tree, elongated and rounded, first green then yellow punctuated with black spots when ripe, with mealy flesh, was once intended, as its name suggests, for pigs. During the War of Independence, combatants used it in the bush for food, thus challenging the prejudices that weighed on it. Its main advantage is that the duration for it to reach maturity is relatively shorter, compared to other types of bananas.

## V. CONCLUSION

The Cameroonian nationalists of the Bamileke land engaged in the armed struggle against the French colonizer to gain autonomy and have a better life. To achieve these ends, they set up a strategy consisting in the organization and the regrouping of men in the camps. These places, well organized, allowed them to receive daily training from former soldiers of the colonial army, who left to join their ranks, but above all to meet their food needs through direct and indirect supplies. The said supply was essential for the rebels, who used it to achieve other objectives, by putting this activity at the service of war, in particular for the transport of arms and ammunition. In the same vein, certain foodstuffs were used for military purposes. For example, they resorted to foodstuffs of pungent sapidity (chili peppers in particular) offered to them by their environment as a formidable defense weapon to escape arrest, for example.

Ultimately, it must be emphasized that the maquis situation in which the Bamileke nationalists lived had a significant impact on the eating habits of their region. In fact, while some commodities of less importance have acquired considerable value, others have been desacralized. Since this period, certain products have been consumed without any constraint or restriction. They have acquired the status of ordinary food. The proof is that today, these are commercialized commodities. In the same logic, certain previously neglected foodstuffs are increasingly valued, such as the pig banana, whose therapeutic virtues have been discovered, particularly in the treatment of diabetes.

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2	Djousse Cathérine	July 13, 2013	Balatchi	Donuts' seller for the rebels
3	Kandja Kessi,	July 13, 2013	Balatchi	
4	Kouadje Marte	July 13, 2013	Balatchi	Housewife
5	Makowa Rachel <sup>f</sup>	September 12, 2015	Baham	Housewife
6	Melong Roger	June 17, 2018	Balatchi	Fighter in the maquis.
7	Pangop Marie Françoise	July 13, 2013	Bandjoun	Cooker in several camps during the maquis
8	Siélinou Marcel	April 18, 2018	Dschang	Former child soldier
9	Singap Marcel	June 17, 2018.		Former child soldier and arms transporter from Bamenda to Mbouda
10	Tsinda	June 10,	Dschang	Trader

	Thomas,	2013		
11	Ymelong Thadée	July 13, 2013	Balatchi	Ex-bodyguard of Ernest Ouandié, fighter during the maquis
12	Yougoua Henri	April 18, 2018	Dschang	Child soldier in Babadjou

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