

# The Traditional Institution Of Manyu Division, Cameroon (1990-2011): An Intersection Of Chiefs And Party Politics

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**ABSTRACT:** This article attempts to analyze the changing attributes and role of the Traditional Institution within the framework of new political dispensation in Cameroon since 1990. The Institution came under immense pressure from politicians. The advent of multiparty politics placed the chiefs who were at the apex of the institution in the difficult position: whether they should be partisan, non partisan or stay neutral in an election, the image and importance of the institution as the epitome of the customs and tradition of the people was undermined. The study made use of secondary and primary sources for the collection of data. Concerning the secondary sources, use was made of an extensive literature that offered some general and specific information about the study. After critical analyses of archival data and interviews, tangible evidence emerged as to the fact that Manyu inhabitants at the time be they indigenes or non-indigenes were affected either positively or negatively by the involvement of Manyu chiefs in party politics. To ensure an easy understanding of the study, we adopted a conventional analytical pattern. We used both the chronological and topical approaches. These approaches aimed at chronologically illustrating the evolution of chiefs' involvement in politics and thematically examining the changes that the division noticed during the period under study. Our findings reveal two central issues: Firstly; the fundamental human rights of subjects was tempered with. Secondly, they lost respect before their subjects, given that some of their subjects doubted their legitimacy as divine rulers or true leaders. This article also argues that despite this, the institution still remains a very important instrument in local governance and nation building in Cameroon. The article ends with a perspective view for a better interplay between traditional institution and the state for the benefit of the division's development.

## Introduction

Power alternation from one leader to another has been a serious setback in the democratic process in Africa since independence. Incumbent leaders are hardly ready to relinquish power peacefully through free and fair elections. Many challenged most election results in Africa because a lot of irregularities and election rigging characterized them. Most often, the elections did end in violence. In some cases, the leader was forced out of power or even killed in power. This confirmed the fact that nobody ever waged a war against his people and succeeded. As former British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill remarked when he paid tribute to the British fighter pilots during the Second World War that, "never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few." Therefore, any chief of Manyu Division who failed to collaborate with his subjects is considered to be on the wrong side of History. In order to draw a line between the role of the chief as a traditional ruler and as an "administrative auxiliaries", a decree was enacted. According to article 19 of Decree No. 77-245 of 1977, traditional chiefs were granted broad and ill-defined powers, for example the decree stated that traditional leaders are required to aid administrative authorities in guiding their people. Under Article 20, chiefs were also responsible for transmitting the directives of the administrative authorities to their people and ensuring that such directives are implemented. Moreover, chiefs helped as directed by the competent administrative authorities in the maintenance of law and order and in collecting taxes and fees for the state and other local authorities. Article 20 required chiefs to carry out any other mission that may be assigned to them by the local administrative authority.

Administrative authorities were required to evaluate traditional chiefs on a yearly basis, considering their efforts to promote economic and social development. Government officials reserved the right to take disciplinary measures against chiefs in cases of shortcoming in the performance of their duties, inefficiency, inertia, or extortion from citizens. There appeared to be no administrative mechanisms, other than the courts through which citizens could lodge grievances about local chiefs. It stated that the government was bound to protect chiefs against contempt interference, abuse or defamation to which they were exposed to by reason or on occasion of the performance of their duties. Traditional rulers had no legal powers of arrest and were not considered to be above the law. Palace guards were meant to fulfill strictly ceremonial functions with no formal legal status. The non-statutory functions of traditional rulers came from their positions as natural leaders of their respective communities. As influential members of their communities, they undertook under-listed functions: settlement of disputes through arbitration. Mobilization of their people for development purposes. In this capacity, they acted as links between their communities and development agencies, including central government departments, local government organs, Non Governmental Organisation(NGO, diplomatic missions, religious bodies and welfare associations. Use of the agency of annual festivals as traditional rulers mobilized their people for the purpose of planning and seeking avenues and opportunities for executing development projects. At the national level, mobilization of masses for the socio-economic and cultural development was also part of the duty of the chiefs. Again, the chiefs were at the service of the administration, ready to carry out any other duties assigned to them by the divisional officers or mayors. These included health sensitization campaigns like vaccination, agricultural campaigns and clean up campaigns. It was clear that for the chiefs to carry out these responsibilities, they resided within their areas of jurisdiction. However, most Chiefs of Manyu Division were guilty of this clause because they lived out of their chiefdoms. Although there was no clause in the

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decreed that allowed for the retirement of chiefs, it however reserved for each chief the right to abdicate if the need arose. However, chiefs went beyond the official role ascribed to them by the state as “administrative auxiliaries” to involve in party politics in order to influence and shape the destiny of the country. The survival of these chiefs was not supposed to depend on how well they manage their role as state auxiliaries but on how they reconcile their role as the representatives of the people and custodians of tradition. On the contrary, they believed that their survival depended on how successful they can reconcile the interest of the state and theirs, leaving out that of their people. For meaningful development to take place there must be peace and stability. These in some villages in Manyu Division have been disrupted due to the crisis between the chief and his subjects. In some villages, chieftaincy disputes have been perennial and have lasted for so many decades with adverse effects on the communities as some indigenes refused to invest in villages ravaged by succession problems. Others have migrated out and settled in the cities. From the foregoing trends, the fundamental question is : what evolutionary pattern did the Chieftaincy institution of Manyu Division experience and how far did this conform to its central role as the custodian of the customs and traditions of the people? This will be guided by the following research question: How did the chiefs of Manyu Division conduct themselves during reintroduction of multi party politics in 1990? To make the article issue-focused, it probes into the involvement of chiefs in multi party elections and argues that this was more for their personal than neither community nor national interests.

### Chiefs and Political Election

In a democratic framework, the enthronement of political leaders is done through the mechanism of political consultations (elections), which quite often might produce some adverse consequences on the society and human relationships. Conflict is rife because during the election exercise there is excitement and euphoria and also the atmosphere of battle and contest prevails. Prospects exist for victory as well as defeat. The atmospheres become very uncertain with fears and hopes. The possibilities for change and continuity exist side by side in peoples’ immediate consciousness. Voters reflect on the record of the past leaders and the promises of the new aspirants for power. At the end of the exercise, there must be victory and defeat. The new context of multiparty democracy with strong divisive forces certainly presented stronger challenges to the traditional leadership in Manyu Division. Chiefs nevertheless remained attached to the old philosophy and demonstrated a strong commitment to the ruling party. It was in keeping with this practice that the situation resulted to the conflict of interests between the chiefs and their subjects. The chiefs’ intentions to implement “guided democracy” as democracy that took deep and firmed roots at the grassroots was met with strong resistance from their subjects who thought that the playground should be left open and level for all. That democracy must not defeat its own essence of the greatest happiness of many, justice, peace and stability in the society. Introducing such a conflict-provocative framework was considered by the subjects as undemocratic. After some delay, the first multiparty legislative election was organized in Cameroon

on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1992. Of the major opposition parties, the Union du Populations des Camerouniase ( UPC) and National Union for Democracy and Progress( UNDP) participated in the election. However, the Social Democratic Front (SDF), the leading opposition party in Cameroon boycotted the elections on grounds that the election would not be free and fair. Since it was the first pluralistic election at independence, the political map of Cameroon was not known. Various competing political parties went to the periphery to seek local support in Manyu Division and political leaders did everything possible to involve the traditional rulers in the political competition. The political atmosphere became very tense. During such moments, the ruling party expected all chiefs to give it unflinching support. Scapegoats were sometimes dethroned. The involvement of traditional rulers of Manyu Division in the political consultation in Cameroon was first to consolidate their position and second for them to convince their subjects to vote for the ruling party. It became a common practice for chiefs to slam a curse on any person resisting to vote for the Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM), the ruling political party. In Mamfe town, the female association called *Ma-awa* had to perform a ritual in stark nakedness meant to curse anybody who would vote for any other political party than the CPDM. The *Ekpe* society, the regulatory society in Manyu Division also fixed a heavy fine on any defaulter. Notwithstanding, this political maneuvering in the division, the UNDP won all the three available parliamentary seats in the division at the end of the first multiparty political consultation. This was to the disappointment of the supporters of the ruling CPDM in the division. Although international observers noted a number of irregularities on the polling day, these irregularities were not enough to have had an impact on the election results. The election monitors considered the conduct of elections as generally free and fair. In the national results, the CPDM of Paul Biya won 88 seats, the UNDP of Maigari Bello Bouba, won 68 seats, UPC of Augustine Frederick Koudock won 18 seats, and the Movement for Defense of Republic ( MDR) of Dakolle Dai Salle won 6. Since CPDM never had majority in the parliament, the party negotiated an alliance with the MDR and got 6 parliamentary seats to constitute a simple majority in the parliament. Many came to the conclusion that some opinion leaders were not struggling for the interest of Cameroonians as a whole but for their personal and family interests. This was so because the 6 parliamentary seats were very essential to turn the political table and change the fate of Cameroon if the 6 seats were used to form an alliance with the other opposition parties. The chiefs of Manyu Division were shocked when they discovered that the three available parliamentary seats for the division were all taken by the opposition UNDP. This was a clear testimony that chiefs could no longer dictate the political leaning of their people to an extent. They struggled within their power to influence the outcome of the poll to no avail because this election was slightly free and fair. The chiefs were caught into an atmosphere of fear and panic that their position as the auxiliaries of administration was threatened. Against this backdrop, Amaazee believes that the chiefs’ claim that they brought down E.M. L Endeley from power in favour of J.N Foncha in 1959 needs re-examination. On the contrary, Chief Kima holds the opinion that, the chiefs’ claim needs no re-examination. According

to him, though the reason for the chiefs to support Foncha in 1959 might have coincided with the direction of the political wind of change, the strategies used by chiefs in 1959 were different from that put in place by the chiefs during the 1992 Parliamentary elections. In 1992, there was the use of force, intimidation and manipulation. Therefore, there is no gainsaying that in 1959, chiefs were a political force to reckon with. The chiefs of former Southern Cameroons as a whole stood for the truth and for common interest. When E.M.L Endeley the first Prime Minister of Southern Cameroons deviated from the original aspiration of chiefs which was secession pure and simple from Nigeria and he started negotiating for integration with Nigeria, the chiefs of Southern Cameroons also turned their backs at him in the 1957 elections in which he slightly defeated Foncha. So in the 1959 elections, Foncha finally ousted him because the chiefs gave their full support to Foncha instead of him. Foncha became the second Prime Minister of Southern Cameroons in 1959. Following the defeat of the ruling CPDM party in the parliamentary elections in Manyu Division, on 25<sup>th</sup> of August 1992 in the midst of opposition disorder, President Biya called for presidential election on 11<sup>th</sup> of October 1992 and the chiefs became very conscious of future defeat. Therefore, Chiefs of Manyu did all their best to see that the incumbent president Paul Biya wins the election in the division even through unorthodox methods. They resorted to intensify intimidation and manipulation. Through the technique of intimidation, the law that had earlier been instituted in the most feared regulatory society of the land called *Ekpe* was reinforced and anyone caught voting for any other political leader other than Paul Biya was to pay a heavy fine to the *ekpe*. Like elsewhere in the country, chiefs' palaces were transformed into polling stations for them to personally supervise their subjects on the elections day. The Election Day was marred by widespread irregularities, violence and human rights abuses. The chiefs were alleged to have rigged the elections in favour of the ruling CPDM by stuffing ballot boxes with ballot papers. In some villages like Ndekwa, Ntenako and most of Obang villages, ballot papers of the CPDM were put into the envelopes by polling station agents for voters to prevent them from any mistake of voting for any other presidential candidate other than the CPDM's presidential candidates. At the end of the polling through out the country, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) for international affairs condemned the poll as fraudulent and noted that the government of Cameroon took unusual extreme and illegitimate actions to ensure the victory of the incumbent president. A few days later, the National Vote-Counting Commission had finished their work. The Supreme Court reluctantly proclaimed the results that gave president Paul Biya winning results of 39.5 % of the votes, as against 35.5% for John Fru Ndi and 25% for Maigari Bello Bouba. The supreme court endorsed these as official results. The proclamation of these results immediately sent the opposition supporters on rampage. As the people went about shouting their disapproval of a "stolen Victory", they vented their anger on unemployment and economic hardship in the country that had remained a nightmare to many. So, anybody identified with the ruling CPDM party was considered as an enemy. Traditional rulers became the main targets since they supported the ruling CPDM. The situation became compounded when the people

remembered the Kumba- Mamfe road constructed as earth road since 1947 and remained untarred since independence. The backwardness of Mamfe town and the entire division was attributed to the poor state of the Kumba- Mamfe road and the general state of roads in the division. The inhabitants of Manyu Division were surprised to discover that the division that was booming in the 1960s was dead then. They also blamed the backwardness of the division on the lack of political will of the Biya's regime. The people became sick and tired of empty promises of the New Deal government. In the face of all these, some Manyu inhabitants, especially those who voted for the opposition SDF party wanted a change at the helm of the state. Therefore, the subjects accused their chiefs and Divisional Officers of election rigging. The election results sparked a series of protests in Manyu Division especially in the Mamfe, Ntenako, Nchang, Tinto, Eyumojock, Kembong and Okoyong where chiefs' palaces were attacked and barricades mounted to press for the cancellation of election results that never favoured their SDF opposition presidential candidate, John Fru Ndi. There were more serious clashes in other Anglophone areas especially in North West Region which was the SDF stronghold. These demonstrations led to destruction of property and some attacks on CPDM barons. On the 27<sup>th</sup> October 1992, the government declared a State of Emergency in the then North West province. The SDF presidential candidate John Fru Ndi, who declared himself as winner of the election even before the official proclamation of results by the Supreme Court was put under house rest. Biya again counted on the pledges of traditional authorities to regain his popularity. In an attempt to protest against the alleged "stolen victory", and as part of measures to restore his lost glory in the division, the Head of State took the lone Ministerial position of the division from Eyumojock Sub-Division where violence was not too severe to Mamfe Central Sub-Division where violence was very severed. In this light, Ogork Ebot Ntui who was the Minister in Charge of special duties at the Presidency of the Republic was replaced by Dr. Ayuk Takem Jacob who became the Minister for Scientific and Technical Research with a greater portfolio. The regime had made it a duty that in any government, there must be at least somebody from Manyu Division. In all, traditional rulers of Manyu Division had the misconception that they could exploit the authority and influence their royal office accorded them to compel their people to vote for their candidate as their predecessors had done in the 1950s and 1960s. Traditional rulers were mistaken because such a consideration made little or no impact in the new dispensation. In fact, faced with different situations and circumstances the people readily displayed different attitudes towards the institution of chieftaincy and custom. In addition, there was an increasing decline in the role the chieftaincy institution played especially in taking decisions for their people. The next election was the municipal and council elections that were slated for the 21<sup>st</sup> January 1996. Chief's palaces were again transformed into polling stations. This exposed the chieftaincy to more danger and rigor than they had ever been in the past. Chiefs' involvement in national politics and in national elections placed them at the crossroads of tradition and partisan politics. They were believed to be the "axis of peace" during elections as they did in the past but it was

discovered that they had ceased to be so. This reputation was supposed to be maintained, for the country could not suddenly turn into the "axis of crisis". Nevertheless, when the aspirations of many people in particular and Anglophone Cameroonians in general could not be achieved through the ballot box, they concluded that some of their reasonable grievances could probably be resolved by presenting an Anglophone problem to the powers that be

## A Way Forward

At this point of our study, it would be interesting to draw a balance sheet of the involvement of chiefs in politics as far as Manyu division is concerned. We are not out to throw praises to the chiefs nor are we writing a motion of support to the chiefs as it is the phenomenon in the new political dispensation of Cameroon. Rather, we are out to examine the traditional and political activities of Manyu Chiefs that could be adopted, corrected and or improved upon. To begin with, there is no gainsaying that some activities of some chiefs of Manyu Division need to be encouraged. Some chiefs of this division were identified as agents of development. Some of them understood the sufferings their people were going through. Chief Nyenti of Bachuo-Ntai established a ten hectare of palm tree plantation at Okoyong in which many jobless Cameroonians were employed. Chief Solomon Ashu Arrey of Ossing also established a Rubber plantation along the Ossing-Akat highway and many Cameroonians were employed to work there. These two chiefs again had contributed greatly to the infrastructural development of the division when they have constructed a number of houses at John Hoyt and "small Mamfe" quarters of Mamfe respectively. If other chiefs and members of the elite should emulate these examples, the acute shortage of houses in Mamfe would be a thing of the past. Still in development, Chiefs Arrey of Ossing, Aiyuk Peter of Ntenako and Agbor Tabi John of Ndekwa villages came together for a multi-lateral cooperation and brought pipe born water to the doorsteps of their people. This initiative increased the standards of living of the people. These villages today have nothing to envy from the other villages around the country in terms of water provision. The article is therefore calling on other villages around the country that are going through chieftaincy crisis and social squabbles to bury their differences and work for the progress of their people. If all hands are put on deck for a common purpose, common interest and for the good of the people, then the division may graduate from the doldrums of underdevelopment. In another perspective, some chiefs of Manyu Division were able to use their political positions for the benefit of the entire division and not for personal gains. A glaring example was the case of chief Micheal Tabong Kima of Bakebe village, one time Minister of Mine and Power. As a minister, he was able to use power bestowed on him to extend electricity supply to many villages in Many Division from Bamenda. We are therefore calling on other chiefs of the division who are closer to power to put divisional and national interests ahead of their personal interests. We are not in any way encouraging tribalism and corruption but saying that they should use their offices for the good of the nation as a whole. From our findings, we discovered that many of the political issues which chiefs supported wholeheartedly and stood for were all successful. They demanded for the decolonization and

independence of Southern Cameroons from Britain and this came to pass. When chiefs were disappointed with Endeley, they contributed to his replacement with Foncha. Chiefs Arrey, Aiyuk and Agbor Tabi Supported the Badi water project in their villages and the projects were realised. Chiefs supported the efforts of cultural and development associations and this encouraged the advancement of a number of villages. This explains why the present regime has not neglected the role of chiefs in nation building. The chiefs are therefore called upon to either take up their proper role of watch-dogs in politics or quit politics completely. We saw the chiefs of 1950s as political forces to reckon with. They were able to stand for the truth without fear or favour. They actually represented their people in matters of local and national interests. This explained why when Dr. E.M.L. Endeley went against the original objectives of Kamerun National Congress (KNC) due to personal interest. The chiefs decided to turn their backs also against him and against his party. This sanction started during the 1957 elections when Endeley defeated Foncha's Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) just with a slight majority. In the 1959 elections, the chiefs finally turned their backs against Endeley and he lost the elections with a slight margin to Foncha who commanded popularity from the chiefs. This is an eloquent testimony that chiefs really represented their people. They did not pretend to the authorities by telling them what they would like to hear and to hide from them what they may not want to hear. The most important thing traditional rulers of today must do is to learn the following virtues from the their peers of the past ; truth ,determination and encouragement. Many would have expected them to drop their clarion call for secession and separate political entity for Southern Cameroons after facing a lot of intimidation and threats from the then ruling KNDP. It should be recalled that during Cameroon Commoners' Congress (CCC) political campaign in Wum, the leader of the CCC party, Chief Nyenti Stephen Eyong escaped assassination attempt from the supporters of KNDP. But since they had political ambitions in which they wanted to accomplish, they did not give up. It is a good example to be copied by today's traditional rulers in politics. Traditional rulers and politicians should learn to keep aside personal and egoistic interests. Chiefs should not create political parties or join the ruling party for selfish interest but they should either do so, to enable them to fight for their people from within. In 1961, when the third option that was advocated by many chiefs and some politicians was ignored, Chiefs were already aware of Prime Minister Mafany's call that "politics is not war but a debate of ideas." That explains why instead of calling for violence, civil disobedience or Operation Ghost Town that would have paralysed the country's economy, the chiefs rather called for a peaceful solution to the problem, unlike the case in 1990 during the advent of Multi-party politics and in 1992 after the presidential election results were released by the Supreme Court. When it was alleged that the elections results were rigged by the ruling government to maintain themselves in power, the opposition parties such as the SDF, Cameroon Democratic Union (CDU), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and many others advocated violence, looting and civil disobedience in a bid to press for the cancellation of the election results. Cameroonian chiefs in particular and African chiefs in general should adopt a

truthful and peaceful means in demanding political, economic and socio-cultural concessions. African traditional rulers more than ever before must put aside lies, intimidation, and embrace dialogue as the most acceptable means to achieve ultimate objectives. This will be a good panacea for the country's democracy to forge ahead. American President Bill Clinton once said that "There is nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what is right with Americans," So also does this apply to Cameroon. The political, economic and socio-cultural problems of Cameroon would be solved by Cameroonians and only by Cameroonians alone, not by internationalizing the problems through untruthfulness, intimidation and violence that magic solutions will come. Therefore, the Chiefs of Manyu Division and the other Chiefs must take the destiny of their people and the nation into their hands. From another perspective, chiefs like any other citizens are supposed to have dreams and visions for their Fatherland, to see beyond their personal aggrandizement. It is said that "what an elder sees when sitting cannot be seen by the young while standing". It should be recalled that chiefs and some other politicians of old in former Southern Cameroons foresaw a number of administrative inconveniences that waited either the reunification between Southern Cameroons with "La Republique du Cameroun" or integration with Nigeria. They were fast enough to demand a separate political entity of Southern Cameroons that was rejected without a second thought. If attention were paid to the Chief's Third Option proposal, the popular songs today like marginalization, domination and Anglophone problem would have been technically avoided. Chiefs saw themselves in the light of posterity which other stakeholders did not due to egoism. Thus, Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) activists should stop crying over spilt milk. They have to certainly like what they have. It was observed that some natural rulers were recognized to be patriotic as far as maintaining a one-and indivisible Cameroon was concerned. The chiefs championed for the creation of a separate state of Southern Cameroons in 1959 but failed to bring it fulfillment. When in 1992 the issues of secession was brought up again by members of SCNC, some chiefs who were contacted about the secession of the present North West and South West Regions from the rest of the country, vehemently condemned the idea saying that by-gones are by-gones. As they put it, "It is difficult to reverse history to correct the wrongs of the past. People should learn from errors of the past for a better future." The mistake committed by Southern Cameroons politicians in the past for failing to support separate state for the territory due to selfish interest was not easy to be corrected. Chief Nyenti and other chiefs advised leaders of SCNC to rather request for dialogue with the government to see into some of the grievances of Anglophones. From the above analysis, we can see that traditional rulers before 1990 exercised their political power for the interests of both their peoples and the state at large. They constituted competing and parallel sources of authority. But today, traditional rulers have deviated from the role that was a veritable symbol of black identity in politics and have taken the option of aligning with the government against their subjects. Given that the post-colonial state made traditional rulers believe that the advantages of being a chief meant recognizing and functioning according to the dictates of the

party in power, traditional rulers no longer represent their people but themselves. Meanwhile, all attempts to discourage them from politics have failed. For instance, the Western Cameroon House of Chiefs (WCHC) was abolished in 1972 due to the establishment of a unitary state in Cameroon. The formulation of a common chieftaincy policy in Cameroon and the adoption of a new chieftaincy policy in 1977 clearly subordinated them to the state instrument. On the other hand, their double function as traditional rulers and politicians at the same time was a cause for concern. As custodians of tradition and customs of the people, they were supposed to be at home all times to perform traditional rites and preside at traditional council meetings. But due to their involvement in politics, they were unable to take up their traditional responsibilities and thus temporarily handed over their functions to regent chiefs. Some even abandoned their palaces and took permanent residence in towns or cities. Therefore, since it is difficult to reconcile both roles simultaneously, it is necessary for them to drop one for better efficiency just like the case in 1994 with Ibrahim Mbobo Njoya who gave up his function as Minister of Youth and Sports to assume the function of Sultan of Bamum. Popular protests in many African states in the wake of the democratization process and renewed interests in the mechanisms of good governance have resulted in the rise of keywords like transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs. These calls did lead to growing quests for alternative sources of power that could strengthen the democratization process. It is therefore not surprising that traditional authority since then has become actively involved in vying for new political space within the context of the African states. Traditional authorities claim that they are the 'true representatives of the people. An important consequence of this is that they played a limited role in the democratic transition as agents rather than actors in the process. This made things difficult for their subjects as a good number of them tried to influence the political behavior of their subjects, placing them at loggerheads. Therefore, since chiefs have found it difficult to steer clear of politics and maintain their role as custodians of tradition and customs of their people, a redefinition of their roles is very imperative. This is because a clear definition of the role of chiefs within the context of multiparty politics will remove some of the ambiguities that surround the involvement of chiefs in politics. It will also situate not only the chiefs but also their subjects on what role their chiefs were supposed to play in a liberal democracy. This resilience is present in the fields of local administration just as in dispute settlement. It is reasonable enough to highlight the uncertainty that characterizes the chieftaincy institution with regards to the fact that chiefs seem to mediate between the past and present by holding themselves as custodians of tradition and at the same time agents of administration. The involvement of chiefs in partisan politics has helped the post-colonial elite to destroy the future of chieftaincy institution, has reduced the respect of chiefs in the society. For chieftaincy institution to regain its lost authority, chiefs should completely stay away from politics. Let traditional authorities of Cameroon in general and Manyu Division in particular have local development as their primary responsibility rather than involving in politics wholeheartedly. That has produced undesired ramifications such as corruption and bad governance to the detriment of

progressive change and democratic process of the country. A way forward is to formally disintegrate the chiefs who went beyond the official role ascribed to them by the state as “administrative auxiliaries” and actually involved in partisan politics. After all, Cameroon is a state of law. To reinforce this goal, the government could reinstate the former House of Chiefs in Southern Cameroons. This could be recognized as the National Association of Traditional rulers like the one launched in Yaoundé in March 2011, called Cameroon National Council of Traditional Rulers. But contrary to what observers thought, the association was going to turn a new page, to be a political forum that will serve as checks and balances to the government. It would push for effective participation in governance; the association seems to be a shadow of itself and another instrument at the service of the government. This could be affirmed by the fact that at the end of the first session in March 2011, they called on incumbent president Paul Biya to run for 2011 presidential elections. It is believed that to be called a supporter, one has to comfort and strengthen the person they so claim to support. If the chiefs declared that they are supporting President Paul Biya, it meant that they were ready to go an extra mile with him. Support to many means standing by the person you declare your support for, sustaining that person’s vision and helping to crystallize and realize it. A motion of support is supposed to mean that if president Biya is condemning corruption, inertia and bad governance, chiefs should be able to elevate themselves into a crusade against all these ills and do everything to combat it wherever it raises its ugly head. Short from being supporters, the alleged millions of people who support president Biya do so only in words. How can chiefs who are supporters of president Paul Biya be the ones embezzling, rigging elections, corrupting the society, blackmailing and perpetrating inertia and bad governance?. Perhaps the chiefs who over credited President Biya for being a victim of a sinful and criminal regime would be judged by history. From the inception of president Biya’s reign, he declared that he was for *Rigour and Moralization*. This meant that he was aware that he had inherited a country that was morally bankrupt and institutionally lax. To restore morality in Cameroon, he has for the past decades spared no energy in combating the many evils he earmarked as controls for an emergent nation. Yet, every passing hour, Cameroon slides steadily into the infernal depth of moral decadence and institutional dishonesty. When some chiefs become experts of immorality and deceit, then we may see them as people only interested in maintaining their conditions, actions, or existence. They are not participating in preventing Cameroon from collapsing as President Biya publicly disapproves. To get to this categorization, Biya’s supporters and chiefs have taken actions like selling village lands to raise money which they eventually embezzle. Remember Chief Ephraim Inoni, former Prime Minister of Cameroon, who preached against corruption but became a victim himself. May we also think of the hundreds of other state functionaries, Vice-chancellors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, directors, commissioners, justices, lawyers, mayors, tax inspectors, customs officers, registrars and others who claim to support the Biya’s regime, but turn around to perpetrate the moral tsunami which has intoxicated Cameroon. Therefore, there is even not need to recognize traditional authority as a

legitimate source of power in the country. Chiefs are not supposed to be politicians but people who are supposed to hold unto tradition. It is regrettable that some traditional rulers perform the functions of politicians. It is in the light of this that it is argued that the chiefs’ status and functions be particularly defined in the constitution. This would enable those chiefs who were once puppets, stooges and collaborators with the government to take their normal positions as power brokers so that traditional leadership may be put back to the governance agenda. In order to assure that the country’s democracy is more recognized by the international community, it would be necessary to keep chiefs out of partisan politics. In this way, they will be a bit neutral and impartial during political consultations. This will boast the country’s democratic process. If it is necessary to involve them in the country’s democratic process, there must be considerable caution as to how this is done. Traditional Institutions as the Cameroonian idea of leadership, is not in itself bad but the traditional leaders makes it anti-democratic. Thus, there is need for precaution in building Cameroon’s democracy with regards to traditional authority. Hence, subjects should have access to the modus operandi of the chiefs to foster their accountability. With transparency and accountability, the fight against corruption and embezzlement would be successfully be won at the grassroots and even at the national level. In the face of this, the chieftaincy institution will be an essential tool to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) outlined at the UN Millennium summit in 2000 and the World Bank Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). This implies a stronger focus on decentralization, community empowerment, and local governance in development work. Only then will Cameroon become an emerging nation by 2035 as envisaged by president Paul Biya.

## Conclusion

The foregoing analysis raises a concern as to the definition of the relationship between traditional authorities and the state. More than two decades after the re-introduction of multiparty politics in Cameroon, a number of successful multiparty elections were organized. More chiefs of Manyu Division developed interest in modern politics again without taking into cognizance the general interests of neither their subjects nor whether tradition and politics are actually compatible. In this light, the Cameroon National Council of Traditional Rulers would be a welcomed relief to a number of chiefdoms because the forum would check some of their excesses. Moreover, this will enable the chiefs to occupy their proper places in effective governance. The study has shown how politics has affected the role of the chiefs of Manyu Division in protecting and defending the culture and aspirations of their communities as trouble-shooters and crusaders of the culture of peace. It further created awareness to the chiefs that not only in politics that they could contribute to the development of their state, but through collective responsibility of all.

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