

TIMOTHY MUSIMA OKIA  
Yaoundé, Cameroon

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN BAKUNDU DURING GERMAN COLONIAL RULE IN CAMEROON: 1884-1914

### THE GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING OF THE BAKUNDU

Bakundu land is located in the south-eastern region of the present Meme Division of the South West Region of Cameroon. It cut across three subdivisions, namely: Kumbal, Konye and Mbonge. Bakundu land is geographically divided into two parts: northern or upper Bakundu, and southern or lower Bakundu, occupying an area which is approximately 300 square miles.<sup>1</sup> These two parts are separated by a distance of nineteen miles as the crow flies or by thirty five kilometres of driveable road.<sup>2</sup>

Northern Bakundu is bounded by the Balong tribe to the north, the Bafaw tribe to the east and the Ngolo, Balue and Mbonge tribes to the west and south. Southern Bakundu is bounded to the west and north by the Mbonge tribe, to the east by the Ekombe and Bafaw tribes and to the south by the Balong, Barombi, Bai and Bakweri tribes.<sup>3</sup> The Bakundu tribe is made up of 36 villages with 21 in the south and 15 in the north.

The drainage system is influenced by the main hydrographic network comprising the Meme and Mungo Rivers and their tributaries. These rivers take their rise from the Rumpi Mountains despite running in different directions. These rivers flow along the western and eastern boundaries of the Bakundu area.

These rivers are only accessible around the south due to their mature stage. These rivers have contributed immensely to the socio-economic development of the

---

<sup>1</sup> A. D. Garson, *Reassessment Report on the Tribal Area of the Bakundu. Kumba division*, National Archives Buea (NAB), 1932, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, Map of Cameroon, Buea Douala (N.B-32-W) and Mamfe (N.B-32-X); *Topographical maps showing administrative divisions and subdivisions of the south west, littoral, northwest and western provinces*, National Geographic Centre, sopecam, Yaoundé 1979.

<sup>3</sup> A. D. Garson, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

Map: A



Map: B



Maps showing the position of Bakundu in Cameroon (A) and south west region (B)

Bakundu people. This is due to the fact that the Mungo River has its outlet east of Victoria (Limbe) and forms part of the Anglo-French boundary, while the River Meme has its outlet in the creeks of the Rio del Rey area, influencing exchanges with people from other areas.<sup>4</sup> An example is the River Mungo, which was used by the villagers of Banga, Bombe, as well as Ndifo to trade with the Douala natives. Furthermore, most of the European factories during the colonial period were stationed on the banks of these rivers. The Bakundu people and neighbouring clans brought their produce and sold them to the German factories which played a large role in their economic life and living standards.

#### THE GERMANS IN BAKUNDU LAND

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 1884, the German flag was hoisted in Douala indicating that Cameroon had been annexed by Germany. The hoisting of the flag was preceded by the signing of the Germano-Douala treaty, through which the Douala kings

<sup>4</sup> F. B. Carr, *An Assessment Report on the tribal area of Mbonge and Bakundu in the Kumba Division of the Cameroons province*, NAB, 1922, p. 7.

surrendered their sovereignty to the Germans. Following this, the German Reich appointed Dr. Max Buchner as the imperial representative in the territory.<sup>5</sup> This was in a bid to effectuate German presence in the territory. The Cameroon territory, referred to by the Germano-Douala treaty of July 1884, was not the whole territory as we have today but was only a narrow coastal strip that had been involved in various contact with the Europeans including Bakundu and other clans. In the Germano-Douala treaty, one of the clauses stated that the Germans were not to penetrate the interior to trade with the hinterland as it was the exclusive right of the Douala's. Not later:

"...the Germans were determined to explore and penetrate the interior. Not only did they wish to bypass the monopolist Douala traders, but they also feared French and British influence in the north. Moreover, the shortage of labour which resulted after the development of new plantations meant that fresh sources of labour had to be tapped in the interior regions of Cameroon".<sup>6</sup>

Due to the inability of Dr. Max Buchner, who was the first imperial representative in the territory, to accomplish the aforementioned motive, on July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1885, he was replaced by Julius Baron von Soden.<sup>7</sup> He became the first governor in the territory. He was charged with the responsibility to extend German presence to the hinterlands of Cameroon and the quelling of any anti-German campaigns.

Though the Bakundu people had been in contact with the Europeans before 1884 through the two main rivers of Meme and Mungo, the Germans first settled in Bakundu land in 1891 with the establishment of the Bombe station by the German Basel missionaries.<sup>8</sup> Officially, Dr. Eugene Zintgraff was the first German to explore and to have settled and passed through the Bakundu land. In a bid to divert trade routes from the north to the Benue and west of Calabar towards German trade at the Douala coast, Zintgraff carried out his first expedition in 1888, where he travelled by water from Douala, the seat of the Kamerun government at the time, up the creeks and the Mungo river to Mundame, a Balong village adjacent to Bakundu land.<sup>9</sup> He then went up to Kumba and Barombi which became the first government station in the area, all having neighbouring clans to Bakundu, meaning that in achieving his aim, Zintgraff passed and settled through Bakundu villages.

The establishment of German administration in Bakundu was very peaceful as compared to other areas where the penetration and establishment of German administration was after fierce resistance, like the Bakweri, Bangwa, and Banyang, among others. The only confrontation between the Bakundu and the Germans

<sup>5</sup> V. J. Ngoh, *Cameroon since 1800*, Presbook, Limbé 1996, p. 63.

<sup>6</sup> T. E. Mbuagbaw et al, *The History of The Cameroon*, Longman, London 1987, p. 55.

<sup>7</sup> V. G. Fanzo, *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges*, vol. 2: *From the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to Present Day*, Macmillan, Hong Kong 1989, p. 35.

<sup>8</sup> Nyansako ni-Nku, *The Pioneers: A Centenary Picture Book 1886-1986*, Buma Koh and Co., Yaoundé 1986, p. 34.

<sup>9</sup> T. E. Mbuagbaw et al, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

occurred in 1901-1903 whereby a German patrol attacked the northern Bakundu villages. This confrontation was aimed at capturing Nakeli an Ngolo cannibal, who was said to have taken refuge in those northern Bakundu villages. The German patrol team's unfruitful search for Nakeli led to the destruction-by-fire of most of these villages, which included Itoki, Mbu, Ibemi Mbakwa, and Koba, in which many people lost their lives.<sup>10</sup>

The peaceful occupation of the Bakundu land by the Germans manifested the hospitable and peaceful nature of the Bakundu people. This nature accounted for the interest the missionaries had on the area. The German colonial administration started with the creation of the Douala and Victoria districts. Full German administration in Cameroon started in 1905 after crushing most native resistance from the other clans. This led to the establishment of twenty six districts, and the Bakundu were administered under the Victoria district with headquarters in Victoria and subsidiary posts in Buea and Rio Del Rey, which were under military companies.<sup>11</sup> Having penetrated and established their control, they then settled down to administrate.

#### THE GERMAN ADMINISTRATION IN BAKUNDU LAND

During the 1880s, German administration in Cameroon was confined to the coast and a few nearby settlements. Victoria and Douala were the main administrative centres but with the explorations of Zintgraff, who took it upon himself to pacify the interior, the German administration was extended to the hinterlands, thereby reaching the Bakundu land.

As earlier mentioned, out of the twenty six districts that were created by the Germans in Cameroon, Bakundu was under the Victoria district. The German colonial administrative policy was based on the master race theory.<sup>12</sup> Through this theory, they saw themselves as superior to other races and had the right to subjugate them, hence upgrading them in due course. Through this policy, the Germans looked at the Bakundu and related people as uncivilised, and it was their mission to civilise them.

In the bid to better achieve the aforementioned motive, the German administration decided to regroup scattered settlements in Bakundu land.<sup>13</sup> This was intended to facilitate administration and the collection of taxes, and also to gather cheap labour for the plantations as was the case with Ndoi, Konye, Bombe, Bole and Banga.

<sup>10</sup> F. B. Carr, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> V. J. Ngoh, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>13</sup> F. B. Carr, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

The German administration in Cameroon was a centralised one, with the governor at the helm of the administration, followed by the district heads, and below the rungs of administration were the chiefs. Before the Germans came to Bakundu land, the word 'chief' or the chieftaincy institution were not in existence. The Bakundu people had their *mowele mboka* as their own administrative head, assisted by the council of elders and various secret societies. This can account for why the word 'chief' has no direct translation in the Bakundu language (Lokundu). This is evident when Walters Samah says that the term chief did not exist in the socio-political parlance of pre-colonial African societies. It was coined administratively by European colonisers to designate African indigenous rulers and collaborators.<sup>14</sup>

The Germans, in order to effectively carry out their administration in Bakundu land, needed interlocutors and, as such, they placed a chief in each Bakundu village to help them achieve their colonial policy. Walter Samah went on to say that the German colonial administration randomly and arbitrarily selected and appointed individuals with no claims whatsoever of legitimacy to play this role.<sup>15</sup> This holds true for the Bakundu, where the people chosen at this time were not qualified by traditional requirements, but by their capacity to understand the "white man". This was the case with Mutoko of Boa, Mukete of Bopo, Bekali of Foe, Dikana of Kake and Mutia of Marumba.<sup>16</sup>

The German colonial rule has generally been described as harsh, brutal, and repressive, which is why, according to *Nganda*:

"When the Germans arrived at the Bakundu villages, they asked for our leaders, and our fathers presented to them our *mowele mboka*. They soon realised that these noblemen were treated as servants by the German colonial officials as they did not only carry their bags but also escorted them from one village to another. Our fathers could not bear this humiliation the German colonial officials gave to these noblemen. They shouted at them openly and even flogged them in public. They then decided to present to them boys who were smart and were able to understand their language. These boys were made chiefs of their respective villages by the German administrators".<sup>17</sup>

Once a person was recognised as chief by the German colonial administration, he was integrated into the colonial administrative machinery and given official papers and an insignia of German authority to administrate. These included a hat, cane, the German flag, and uniforms.<sup>18</sup>

Under the Germans, there existed no paramount chief in the whole Bakundu land, as was the case in the grasslands and other places. Thus, each village head was

<sup>14</sup> W.T. Samah, *Chieftaincy: Traditional chief or Royal Pretenders in the Cameroon Forest Region*, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> D. C. Tovey, *Intelligence Supplementary Report on the Bakundu Clan*, NAB, 1937, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> M. Atinda, *Bakundu under colonial rule 1897-1961*, The University of Yaoundé I, 2006, p. 41.

<sup>18</sup> V. J. Ngho, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

solely responsible for the affairs of his village. He was empowered by the colonial administration to hear and try minor cases that arose in the village. Any case which could not be settled was taken to the district officer in Kumba.

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914-1918 saw the eviction of the Germans in Cameroon, hence bringing to an end the thirty years of German administration in Cameroon and in Bakundu land in particular.<sup>19</sup> This paved the way for the establishment of British administration in Bakundu land.

#### SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN BAKUNDU DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD

This section looks at various social policies and changes that came to Bakundu as a result of colonial rule so as to better appreciate its effect on the Bakundu traditional authority system. As K.B.C Onwubiko puts it, the Europeans had a false image of Africa, as they saw it as "one universal den of desolation, misery and crime", and so they wanted to extend to them the material and spiritual benefits of European civilisation.<sup>20</sup> Thus, in analysing the social developments that took place in Bakundu, reference will be made to their social motives for colonisation. From the above, one can deduce that these changes were in the sphere of religion and education. The Germans, who were the first colonial master in Bakundu land, prepared the area for further changes in the future. The Germans were very instrumental in the religious and educational fields.

#### Religion

In regards to religion, Christianity was first introduced to the Bakundu people by the Germans. In Bakundu land, the Germans encouraged Christianity through the Basel mission. This is a Christian mission with headquarters in Basel, Switzerland, and a German branch was established at Stuttgart in order to give itself a German character. This means the Basel mission had a German connection.<sup>21</sup> When Cameroon became a German protectorate in 1884, the English Baptist missionaries, finding it difficult to work with the German colonial authorities, decided to leave the territory in 1886 in favour of the Basel mission. From the coast of Cameroon, the Basel mission decided to move into the hinterland and by 1897, the Basel mission

---

<sup>19</sup> NAB Great Britain, Report by Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Trusteeship Council of UNO on the Administration of the Cameroon, 1947, HMSO, London 1947, p. 40.

<sup>20</sup> K. B. C. Onwubiko, *School Certificate History of West Africa since 1800*, Africana Fep Publishers Ltd., Onitsha 1985, p. 229.

<sup>21</sup> T. E. Mbuagbaw et al, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

## Plate 1

*The Basel Mission Station at Bombe*

Source: Nyansako Ni-Nku, *The Pioneers, A Centenary Picture Book*, 1886-1986.

was in the Bakundu area from Douala, passing through the Mungo River and established a station at Bombe.<sup>22</sup>

The Basel mission was closely followed by the American Presbyterian Missionary Society who arrived in Cameroon in 1879, and by 1900, the effects of these two friendly missionary bodies had been working in Bakundu. Later, in the early years of the twentieth century, the Pallotine fathers brought the Catholic mission into Bakundu land. Thus, during the German colonial era, the two missionary societies that were very present in Bakundu were the Roman Catholic and the Basel missions. These two missionary societies worked very hard and influenced the lives of the indigenous peoples, hence developing them socially. These missionary societies were involved in evangelisation, i.e. spreading Good News and the Christian doctrine in the area, and contributed in other social services. This period saw the westernisation of social customs, which came with the introduction of formal education, Christianisation and modernisation of cultural values such as birth, marriage, and celebrations of death, and the transformation of architectural patterns.

The Basel mission extended its activities in Bakundu, and reverend Nathaniel Lauffer was its first resident missionary. It was from the Basel mission station in Bombe that the missionary society spread its activities to the rest of Bakundu land and neighbouring clans like Balong, Bafaw, Ekombe and Mbonge.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> A. D. Garson, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

The friendly nature of the Bakundu was manifested in the warm welcome they gave the Basel missionaries. Their relations started deteriorating when the missionaries started preaching and having disdain for everything traditional. This brought forth anti-Christian sentiments, especially from those who were more attached to the Bakundu tradition and customs – mostly the elderly. Moreover, the missions in most cases built their Churches near the *etana*<sup>24</sup> of each village, which is a secret house of the Bakundu for which they held a sacred esteem, and they even went as far as destroying them in some villages like Kake, and Bombe, among others. This action was seen as a serious threat to their ancestral worship which made pro traditionalists see the missionaries leave their land.<sup>25</sup> Though these efforts were abortive, it nevertheless affected the Christian missionaries' efforts to convert the people. The destruction of the *etana*, which was the epitome of the people's tradition, also had a negative effect on the Bakundu traditional system, as it paved the way for the victory of Christianity over tradition.

After colonial rule was well established, the missionaries forged a very close working relationship with the colonial administration.<sup>26</sup> This was because the missionaries used the Bible and the Gospel to pacify the indigenous people while laying the groundwork for the colonial authorities to easily implant their administration. The colonial authorities provided security to the missionaries to easily carry out their evangelisation work. They thus worked hand in gloves to prohibit traditional practices that were termed "barbaric" and tantamount to peace and security. Everything traditional was termed 'evil', 'demonic', 'uncivilised', and 'primitive', such as idol worship, polygamy, and traditional post mortems, among other things.<sup>27</sup> The Basel missionaries carried on a very strong campaign against the juju societies<sup>28</sup> as well as burning all their outward signs, like sacred objects, which included masks, drums, magic stones, musical instruments and even the *etana* which were their meeting houses.<sup>29</sup> These *juju* societies were characterised with mysticism, as it has been purported they were linked to various spirits which gave them a double nature. The members were claimed to have "bush souls" in animals within the forests and rivers, depending on the type of *juju* society that one belonged to. The men of the *Maley* society claimed to have "bush souls" in elephants; the *Ngoa Maloba* had theirs in pigs, the *Nganya* in marine creatures while the *Dio* men had theirs in monkeys, leopards and tigers. This credited them the name "neyo o mariba

<sup>24</sup> *Etana* is a secret and sacred house that was usually erected at the centre of each Bakundu village, and it was there that the various *juju* societies had their meetings, kept their instruments and prepared their outings.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with chief Ndome, aged 72, Kake, September 2009.

<sup>26</sup> V. B. Khapoya, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with chief Ndome.

<sup>28</sup> *Juju* societies refer to the various secret, traditional cults that existed in Bakundu which included the *Maley*, *Ngoa Maloba*, *Nganya*, and *Modimi juju* societies.

<sup>29</sup> J. N. Dah, *The Basel Mission in Cameroon 1886-1914*, University of Basel, Basel 1983, p. 183.



neyo o mokondo" literally meaning 'I live in water as on land'. Most of the Bakundu villages, notably Mbu, Itoki, Ibemi, and Kake, had open confrontations with the missionaries during *modimi* and "male" traditional dance celebrations. They tried to send the missionaries out of their villages, but their efforts proved futile because the missionaries were supported by the administration.<sup>30</sup>

In 1898, the village head of Bombe and most of his subjects assembled all their *juju* objects and called on the Basel missionary Lauffer to burn them, promising to be Christians. Other *juju* objects were sold out whenever the natives had the opportunity to do so. It is said that, at that moment, 24 men registered as catechumens.<sup>31</sup> This action by the village head of Bombe was a blow to the traditional authority system, as he made an outwards show of the victory of Christianity over the Bakundu traditional beliefs and institutions. By 1898, the Bombe station and its outstations had 130 Christians and 174 catechumens following the table below.

Table 1  
*Number of converts in Bakundu in 1898*

Village	Number of Christians	Number of catechumens
Bombe	20	24
Kake	17	21
Bole	13	20
Boa	09	16
Banga	16	23
Ndifo	06	17
Konye	14	14
Mbakwa	17	13
Ibemi	05	11
Itoki	07	10
Mbu	06	05

Source: Nyansako ni-Nku, *The Pioneers, A Centenary Picture Book, 1886-1986*, p. 34.

These converts joined forces with the missionaries in discrediting everything that had to do with the Bakundu tradition, especially the *juju* societies which were very diabolical. By embracing the Christian doctrines in exchange for giving up their spiritual heritage and practice, the Bakundu people freed themselves

<sup>30</sup> V. B. Khapoya, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Chief Rudolf Duala, Itoe of Bombe.

substantially from the uncertainties of daily sacrifices, rituals and cleansing ceremonies that were traditionally required. After looking at one of the social changes that took place in Bakundu under German rule, which was the spread of Christianity, it warrants looking at the educational aspect which was also a transformation that took place during the era.

### Education

Before the advent of the Germans in Bakundu land, the type of education that transpired was one that can be termed informal, because knowledge was passed to the children by their elders at home but with the Germans, this was replaced by formal education which came with the creation of learning institutions. The government and voluntary agencies, during this period, proceeded with the opening of schools. As time passed, education was left in the hands of the missionary societies. To Dr. Madiba Essiben, the history of education during the German era can be divided into two phases. The first phase, according to him, ran from 1884-1905 during which education was in the hands of voluntary agencies and the second phase which ran from 1905-1914 was the time the administration was fully involved.<sup>32</sup> This is because, during this period, the colonial authorities wanted to satisfy their economic and administrative demands at the time, as well as the nationalists back home who aspired for a rapid Germanization of the colonial territories.<sup>33</sup>

As far as Bakundu land was concerned, education during the German era was in the hands of voluntary agencies, notably the Basel mission. This was because they were the first to have established in the area and they were backed by the German colonial administration. This mission opened their first school at their station in Bombe, of which the architects were Reverends Lauffer and Scheibler.<sup>34</sup>

Keller, writing on the history of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, states that the Basel mission began with vernacular schools and, before the First World War, 17 of these vernacular schools already existed in Bakundu.<sup>35</sup> The popularity that these schools got at its inception gained it the name *Volksschulen* (schools for everybody). The vernacular schools had a three year course.

The curriculum of these schools was health knowledge, religious knowledge, history, geography, and German language. Each of the vernacular schools was

<sup>32</sup> Madiba Essiben, *Colonialisation et évangélisation en Afrique: l'héritage scolaire du Cameroun 1885-1956*, Université de Bâle, 1976, p. 22.

<sup>33</sup> J. Ayuk, *The Educational Achievements of the Germans in Kamerun: A Case Study of Victoria Division 1884-1916*, ENS Yaoundé, 2004, p. 38.

<sup>34</sup> F. B. Carr, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>35</sup> W. Keller, *The History of the Presbyterian Church in West Cameroon*, PresBook Printing Department, Victoria 1969, p. 43.

placed under a missionary assisted by a catechist. In Bakundu, the Duala language was used as a medium of instruction while Mungaka was used in the grasslands. "Lokundu", which is the Bakundu language was not used, because when the Germans wanted to develop the language, Sese Nambiri, who was the traditional ruler of Banga, told them that "Lokundu" was the same as Duala. These languages have a lot of similarities, which was difficult for an outsider to understand the differences inherent in them. Nambiri's fears were that if the Germans understood "Lokundu", they might uncover all the secrets of the Bakundu people. The villages of Itoki, Mbu, Ibemi, Supe, Bombe, Banga, and Kake were among those hosting the vernacular schools. The fact that these schools were, in most cases, under the Basel mission, goes a long way in showing how the motives of the schools were to fight all inhuman practices that were inherent in the Bakundu traditional culture and beliefs.

Rev. Lauffer, in 1902, started a boys boarding school in Bombe and he was assisted by Scheibler and Gruele as teachers. The training at this school lasted for two years and the curriculum was the same as in the vernacular schools, and only sport was an additional subject. The administration, in order to make the students self-sufficient at feeding themselves, established a garden around the school for the students to cultivate. It should be noted that the school sold some of its products from this garden to the African fruit company, an activity that fetched additional revenue for the school. The Bakundu children, who were among the first to enrol, included; from Bombe, Itie Mukwelle and Itoe Nanyinga; from Marumba came Masue Ndoh, Maloba Nangia from Banga, and Ngoe Nobiko from Kake, while others came from neighbouring clans.<sup>36</sup> These young men commanded some respect and admiration from other ordinary villagers as they were regarded as more elevated Bakundu people because they had become semi-Germans (Europeans) due to the education they received. They were the pioneers in modernising the Bakundu society, as their ways of dressing changed; they brought in other European articles that were not at the reach of an ordinary villager, especially those who were recruited to work in the administration and out of the village like in the plantations nearby.

The Basel mission school inspector, Dinkelacker, published many books that were adapted to the official programme drafted in 1910.<sup>37</sup> In spite of the many financial problems faced by the Basel mission to run their schools, education in Bakundu was free during the German era. By 1914, nearly every Bakundu village hosted a Basel mission school.

Though the colonial education during the German era had its demerits and was rudimentary at the time, its impact on the people cannot be overlooked, as it contributed to the broadening of the people's outlook and the unlocking of the

<sup>36</sup> N. Nyansako, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

hidden potentials within the people. The educational system that was set up by the Germans was built upon by the British when they took over the territory and, taking into consideration their lukewarm attitude towards developing the territory, the educational uplifting of the Bakundu clan is thanks to the work that was done during the era of German colonial rule. Most of the present elites of Bakundu are the products of this colonial education. Those Bakundu people who had the opportunity to attend these schools were able to assist the colonial administrators in the various areas where there existed literate people. These educated people saw the essence of western education, and hence promoted it in Bakundu and sponsored other interested Bakundu children. An example is the pioneer minister of tourism in Cameroon; Senator Benjamin Itoe is a product of the education that was provided by the German Basel mission in Bombe Bakundu. The education that was provided during German rule has worked positively for the intellectual development of the clan, as the Bakundu people have found it easy to insert themselves into the rapidly changing times and contributing immensely to the Cameroonian nation building.

Another area that contributed to the social development of the Bakundu people during German colonial rule in Cameroon was agriculture.

### Agriculture

The dominant legacy to Cameroon of the more than thirty years of German colonial rule is evident in the agricultural sector. The Germans took some 120.000 hectares of land for plantations from which they produced coffee, tobacco, cocoa, bananas, oil palm and rubber. By 1913, there were about fifty eight plantations in German Kamerun.<sup>38</sup> Most of them were owned by companies registered and based in Germany, a few were owned by individuals and some by missions. They introduced new farming methods and techniques which improved the quality and quantity of produce.

During German colonial rule in Bakundu land, efforts were made to improve agriculture in the area. The improvement was borne largely by the Basel missionaries who opened a station at Bombe, Bakundu by 1897. At this station, an all-boys school was established in which those who attended became the pioneers of the agricultural changes that came along with the missionaries.<sup>39</sup>

At the Bombe station, the missionaries opened gardens to produce food so as to cater for the boarding students. In these gardens, they improved on the local crops and equally introduced new ones like paw paws and lemons, among others, which were solicited by the German fruit company that was situated in Bombe. The yields from these gardens were sold to the company and the proceeds were used for the

<sup>38</sup> T. E. Mbuagbaw et al, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

<sup>39</sup> N. Nyasako, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

development of the missionary station. The Bakundu children who attended the mission schools gained experience from their German instructors and took the experience back to their respective villages. Most of them opened large farms and used the techniques they acquired at the mission station.<sup>40</sup> They also left the mission station with seedlings to cultivate in their villages.

Furthermore, the school curriculum during the German era laid more emphasis on manual work. Through this, agricultural techniques were taught to the pupils. Apart from crafts, the pupils also spent time in the gardens, where they were taught how to mulch, prepare composted manure, and how to till the soil.<sup>41</sup> This arrangement served as botanical experimentation and the training of the local inhabitants in agriculture.

The establishment of the Botanical Gardens in Victoria was a laudable effort by the German colonial administration to develop agriculture in Cameroon. The garden was founded for the experimentation of tropical plants so as to discover the more valuable ones that could be exploited.<sup>42</sup> After successful experiments, seeds or cuttings were distributed to Cameroonian farmers. The Bakundu people benefited greatly from the scheme, as the missionaries brought them these seedlings, especially cocoa and oil palm.<sup>43</sup> Though much was done to improve agriculture in Bakundu land and Cameroon in general by the Germans, it can be realised that the main motive was to orientate the agricultural system to suit their economic needs as noted by this scholar, This led to a shift from a wholly subsistent economy to a comparatively stabilised system of stratification, a dynamic money-based economy – a cash nexus, individual profit, and wage economy.<sup>44</sup> This is evident from the fact that more emphasis was laid on cash crop production. Cash crop production here refers to those crops which are grown mainly for export and which earn foreign cash in the international market like cocoa, coffee, rubber, oil palm, and others.<sup>45</sup> The Bakundu land lying on the volcanic Rumpi mountain zone is blessed with volcanic soil and a tropical climate which all contributed in favour of the cultivation of these cash crops.

In 1903, the Basel missionaries opened a cocoa plantation in Bombe, and by 1910, all the other Bakundu villages where schools were found had traces of cocoa introduced by the missionaries, since it is a crop that needs a good deal of moisture and heat.<sup>46</sup> When cocoa was planted in Cameroon, it was considered in Germany to be of a superior quality to the central and South American varieties, so it had no

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Peter Ekoe.

<sup>41</sup> N. Nyasako, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>42</sup> V. G. Fanso, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Peter Ekoe.

<sup>44</sup> F. A. Wells, W.A. Warmington, *Studies in Industrialization: Nigeria and the Cameroons*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1962, p. 128.

<sup>45</sup> A. S. Neba, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

<sup>46</sup> T. E. Mbuagbaw et al, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

difficulty in finding a market.<sup>47</sup> The cultivation of cocoa was also promoted in Bakundu land by the indigenous of the area, who worked on the German plantations.

They took along with them seeds when they left the plantation for their villages, and they opened farms. The individual cocoa farms varied in size. There were individuals with over five acres and others with a quarter acre bringing the average at two to two and a half acres. Average farms contained about four different plantings of cocoa and it appeared usual for about half an acre to be planted at a time and slightly over 200 trees were planted to an acre.<sup>48</sup> Garson's report holds that about one third of the cocoa planted during this period gave reasonable yields.<sup>49</sup> Other cash crops that the Germans encouraged in the Bakundu area were rubber and oil palms. The proceeds were used to send their children to the modern schools and cater for other family needs, therefore empowering the Bakundu people economically. This has remained till today as the Bakundu country produces thousands of tons of cocoa, palm oil and other cash crops contributing greatly to nation building and, more especially, bringing personal and local development to the area.

The recruitment of labour for the plantations and colonial tasks contributed to the economic development of Bakundu, in that the people were removed from their homes to mix with people from other areas and learn new farming methods and gain other experiences, which contributed to their personal and general development. In as much as the Germans encouraged agriculture in Bakundu during their stay, it would not have had any impact if trade was not also encouraged.

### Trade

Trade in Cameroon between the indigenous and Europeans before the establishment of German administration was based largely on slaves as the main commodity, though there was exchange in tropical goods for manufactured goods with the Europeans. So, when the Germans finally established their rule in Cameroon, they tried to abolish this trade in slaves and encouraged what was termed legitimate trade. This was trade in other items like ivory, rubber, and palm kernels, among other things.

With the improvement of cash crop production, the German colonial administration was bound to create a favourable climate for this to grow beyond leaps and bounds. During this period, the Bakundu exchanged cocoa, coffee, palm produce, rubber, and other products with Germany for manufactured goods like clothes, liquor, umbrellas, pots, and mirrors, etc.<sup>50</sup> Before the arrival of the Germans in

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> A. D. Garson, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>50</sup> V. J. Ngoh, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

Bakundu land, trade was largely by barter, but in 1902, the Germans introduced the German mark as a medium of exchange. This came to facilitate trade in Bakundu villages, especially those in the south like Kake, Bombe, Banga, and Kombone, which became major trading centres.

The presence of the two natural outlets of the rivers Mungo and Meme leading to Douala and Rio Del Rey and then to Calabar respectively, led the Bakundu to act as a strong base for trade and commerce during the German colonial era.<sup>51</sup> It was around these outlets that the Germans established their companies which influenced trade in the area. These companies included the African Fruit Company at Bombe, which bought fruits and cocoa and the "Westafrikanische Pflanzungsgesellschaft" at Ndifo, which bought kernels. The United Africa Company (U.A.C) and the "Deutsch Westafrikanische Handelsgesellschaft" both had factories in Mbonge, near Bakundu land, which also bought produce from the Bakundu area too.<sup>52</sup>

Despite their short stay in the Bakundu area, the German introduction of a monetary economy which changed the traditional form of trade and contributed greatly to the social and economic development of the Bakundu people. A Bakundu man was able to sell his produce to the European firms and get money to send his children to school, buy clothes, shoes, have good health and sanitation facilities, build modern houses, and acquire European goods that, up until that point, were not easy to obtain, all contributing to the social development of the Bakundu.

#### CONCLUSION

The thirty years of German presence in Cameroon, and Bakundu in particular, will always be remembered as a period that was characterised by socio-economic development and modest prosperity. The Bakundu people saw the introduction of new crops and farming methods, which fetched enough income for the people to begin improving their living standards. The people cultivated and sold thousands of tons of cash crops like cocoa, rubber, and oil palm to the factories stationed around the Bakundu area, especially around the rivers Meme leading to the Rio del Rey area, and Mungo leading to Douala, and others that were stationed in Barombi known as "Johann Albrechtshöhe", Kumba and Mbonge. This was thanks to the road infrastructure that linked the Bakundu villages to Kumba, Mbonge, Mamfe and Buea. With this prosperity, the Bakundu people were able to cater for their personal and family needs, as well as to send their children to acquire western education.

German presence in Bakundu land also brought in some social developments, especially through the activities of the Basel missionaries. This missionary society, which had a German connection, was well established in Bakundu land, with its

<sup>51</sup> F. B. Carr, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>52</sup> A. D. Garson, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

main station at Bombe and minor ones at other Bakundu villages. This missionary society, backed by the colonial administration, waged a war against the *juju* societies and destroyed all their outward representations like the *etana*, and freed the Bakundu man from the uncertainties of daily sacrifices, rituals and cleansing that were traditionally required.

Moreover, this period saw the introduction of western education in Bakundu land which should be noted as a keystone to a person's socio-economic development, and it provides a fundamental base for human development. All the Bakundu villages had at least an elementary school – though rudimentary, it contributed to the broadening of the people's outlook and it unlocked the hidden potentials within them.

The Germans, who were the first to have colonised Cameroon, and Bakundu in particular, laid the foundation for every development that took place in the area. They were the ones who introduced the people to the international economy, western education, new architectural designs, and built roads to ease communication and trade, thereby contributing greatly to the socio-economic development of the people during their thirty year stay in the country.

**Timothy Musima Okia**, PhD student and assistant researcher at the National Centre for Education, Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation, Cameroon (musimatim@yahoo.com)

**Słowa kluczowe:** rządy kolonialne, rozwój społeczny, edukacja, Kamerun

**Keywords:** colonial rule, social development, education, Cameroon

#### ABSTRACT

*German colonial rule in Africa in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century has often been described by scholars and researchers of African history as exploitative, harsh, brutal, and repressive. Motivated by the aforementioned arguments which underline negative aspects of German colonial rule, the aim of this study is to show that, in the pursuance of their diverse colonial motives, Germans directly or indirectly contributed to social advancement of the Bakundu people. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Bakundu people, who live in the now South West region of Cameroon, have been subject to many external influences that have left a trace in the way they presently think and act. Among them, the encounter with Germans stands out. The German experience resulted in construction of roads, introduction of Western education and a new form of administration that widened the Bakundu people's horizon, and cash-crop agriculture which introduced the people to the international market, and thus their income and living standards improved. This article tries to explore social developments under the German colonial rule during their 30 year stay in Bakundu. The realization of the aim of this article is based on a constructivist approach and diverse documentation. Main sources include oral reports from elderly people who, in one way or another, lived through those developments, and archival materials from the National Archives Buea (NAB), not to mention academic research. The analysis of these sources has produced concrete data presenting activities of Germans during their stay in Bakundu.*