

FROM CONVIVIALITY TO THE EMERGENCE OF CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE ABORIGENES AND ALLOGENES OF MASSANGAM IN CAMEROON (A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS)

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Abstract

This article attempts to examine the degrading conviviality that exists among the diverse ethnic groups, the early settlers and the late settlers, in the Massangam sub-Division, a small locality in the Bamoun Kingdom of the Western Region of Cameroon. Since the pre-colonial era, the population of Massangam and its leadership were very receptive and hospitable towards other ethnic groups (late settlers) within their community. These qualities attracted successive waves of visitors of diverse origins to explore this locality, settle and benefit from its striking friendliness. Massangam grew to prominence due to its exemplary peaceful multi-ethnic cohabitation, a good illustration of peaceful co-existence in Cameroon. Using the qualitative research method and depending on interviews, field investigations and other literature we found out that, today Massangam has been affected by conflicts opposing the aborigines and other ethnic groups due to disregard for earlier engagements and agreements which promoted initial conviviality. Why was there initial exemplary peaceful co-existence between the people of Massangam and visitors from other ethnic groups? Why did such relations dwindle into mutual suspicion and conflicts? What should be done to promote peaceful co-existence among the different ethnic groups of Massangam in particular and in Cameroon in general? This paper will seek to provide answers to these questions and more.

Key words: Cameroon, Massangam, inter-ethnic cohabitation, conviviality, conflicts

Introduction

Situated in the Noun Division of the Western Region of Cameroon, the sub-division of Massangam has a total surface area of about 2215km²¹. Formerly called “Njissangam”, the core of this territory was originally constituted only of a handful of individuals, animated by a great spirit of conviviality and peace. These people got into contacts with the Bamouns, probably at the end of the 18th century during the war of

¹Youchachou Kouotou « La société d'exportation forestière du Noun (SEFN) et le développement de l'arrondissement de Massangam (1972-2004) », Masters Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2014, p.22.

conquest of King Mbouombouo. This population was later on assimilated and incorporated into the vast Bamoun kingdom which was in its full process of extension. Today the sub-division of Massangam is a mixture of 26 villages divided into three groupings which are: Foyouom with 10 villages², Mambain with 12 villages³ and Mancha made up of 4 villages⁴. This evolution is as a result of the attraction of this locality for decades now due to its hospitality towards on populations coming from other horizons of Cameroon. Given its history, Massangam had imposed herself as a reception land; but today, Massangam is plagued by ethnic divisions. This reality imposes itself on apprehending those historical facts which attest of the convivial nature of Massangam and investigate the context which brought about these misunderstandings. The analysis of this problematic is divided into three parts. The first part deals essentially with the links between conviviality and the origin of the name Massangam. The second part focuses on immigrations and the peaceful cohabitation that followed. The last part deals with inter-ethnic dissensions and the destabilizing factor to harmony.

I-Origin of the name Massangam: an illustration of the convivial nature of its populations

History recognizes Ncharé Yen (1394-1418)⁵ as the founding father of the Bamoun kingdom. This ancestor of Tikar origin left from the present-day Adamawa region of Cameroon, more precisely from a place called Rifoum, which became Kimui and later on Mbankim⁶. The arrival and settlement of the first wave of Bamoun migrants in Massangam dates back to the 18th century. They were the warriors of king Mbouombouo who ruled the Bamouns from the period 1757 to 1814⁷.

This belligerent ruler had considered the extension of his territory the main objective of his period of reign. History regards him as that monarch who made the physiognomy of the Bamoun country⁸. Besides, for Christraud Geary, “The Bamoun expansion actually started with the reign of King Mbouémboué”⁹; and Engelbert Mveng clearly pinpoints that the latter wanted to “take as borderline for its kingdom Rivers Mbam and Noun”¹⁰.

During one of his numerous territorial conquests, Mbouombouo and his men arrived at a place called *Njissangam*. They met two men conversing at the foot of a baobab tree, drinking raffia wine and smoking dried rolled tobacco leaves¹¹. The group in question was composed of natives of *Njissangam* who were later on joined by peoples coming from neighboring villages like Mabou, Machu, Njikpata and Njibetgouan¹². In

² It refers to villages of Massangam, Mankembouot; Mantam, Mansoun-foyouom, Njingouot, Mankoukou, Mankoumbi, Machatoum, Makom and Mankakoun.

³ It refers to villages of Malanden, Mansouen-Mambain, maripa, Mandiyang, Maloua, Maloung, Makpatoum, Mayakoué, Mansen, Makouopchichi, Magna, Makouopsap.

⁴ Inoussa Npitndap, 55 years, village chief of Massangam, Massangam, interviewed on the 10 July 2013.

⁵ Henri Marti, « Histoire et coutumes des Bamoun », *Dissertation from the French Institute of Black Africa, n°5, 1952, p.11*. It is convenient for us to precise here that in some documents, mention is made of the Bamum, while in others we instead come across the appellation Bamoun, or better still Bamoun for a third category. It is therefore important for us to emphasize on the fact that these three orthography designates one and the same people. For this present write up we opted for the third orthography.

⁶ Claude Tardits, *L'histoire singulier de L'art Bamoum cameroun*, Paris, maisonneuve et Larose, 2004, p.16.

⁷ « Plan de développement de la commune de Massangam », document des archives de la commune de Massangam, 2009.

In certain works like that of Engelbert Mveng instead of Mbouombouo, the orthography of the name of this sovereign is instead Mbwé-Mbwé (Cf. Engelbert Mveng, *Histoire du Cameroun*, tome I, Yaoundé CEPER, 1984, p.242). Christraud Geary on his part retains Mbouémboué. We simply want to precise that it refers to the same person. Added to these differences in orthography, other works like that of Christraud Geary on *Mandou Yenou, photographie du pays bamoun, Fouban, royaume ouest-africain*, situates the beginning of Mbouombouo's reign around the year 1820.

⁸ A. Njiassé Njoya et al. *De Njoya à Njimoluh : cent ans d'histoire bamoun*, Fouban, Editions du palais, 1984, p.9.

⁹ Christraud Geary et Adamou Ndam Njoya, *Mandou yenou, photographie du pays bamoun, royaume ouest africain*, München, Trickster Verlag, 1985, p.19.

¹⁰ Engelbert Mveng, *Histoire du Cameroun*, tome I, Yaoundé CEPER, 1984, p.242.

¹¹ Youchachou Kouotou, « La société d'exportation forestière du Noun », p.24.

¹² Inoussa Npitndap, 55 years, village chief of Massangam, Massangam, interviewed on the 10th July 2013.

its spirit of conviviality, the small gathering of *Njissangam* had reserved to this “king going to war” together with his followers a warm welcome which did not leave them indifferent. These strangers were invited to share in the raffia wine¹³. Having integrated their small grouping, they had continued with their conversation in a friendly manner with their host¹⁴.

Attracted by this act of sympathy, Mbouombouo sought to discover more about these extraordinary people who lived contrarily with the ambient attitudes of an environment of distrust and challenge vis-à-vis strangers and most especially armed strangers. He, who knew only about war, interrogated the men on the *raison-d'être* of their presence under the baobab tree. Those concerned responded calmly that it was in their habit to meet up at that particular spot in order to discuss matters concerning their community, with the aim of seeking lasting friendly solutions in the event of any internal disagreement or simply for a good relaxation.

This honest response left the Bamoun ruler dumbfounded as he was surprised by this great culture of peace and conviviality. His war-like nature was at once subjugated by the friendly attitude of the inhabitants of *Njissangam*. Mbouombouo forgot about war and instead requested his host if they could always come join them for their discussion sessions. Faithful to their spirit, the group accepted their request with joy. It was then that Mbouombouo again stunned by their behavior decided to name that area *Massangam* a suggestive name for peace. Etymologically, the name *Massangam* has two components drawn from the bamoun language namely “*Mas*” which means “The place where” and “*Sangam*” which signifies “The place for conversation or better still “The place for dialogues”.¹⁵ This new place name was convenient to this populace due to its culture of peace.

Through this history one can retain a lot of moral lessons dished out to the ruler of the Bamouns by these “men of dialogue». Indeed it is convenient for us to reiterate the fact that, the history of the Bamoun retained of this ruler to be an essentially belligerent being who expanded his kingdom through mortal battles waged against its neighbours. Formerly, on his ascension to the throne, Mbouombouo had openly declared that “I will lay the border line of my kingdom with blood and black iron. War is my concern”.¹⁶ Curiously, with its culture of non-violence, the populace of *Massangam* had called the attention of this belligerent ruler that there were other possibilities to achieve his goals without necessarily shedding blood. These men of peace and dialogue had imposed on these Bamoun warriors the need to preserve their energy and lives. As their history unfolds, we realize that this noble act was not circumstantial; it was in their habit and an old tradition which continued with the passing of time. For king *Nsangou* one of Mbouombouo’s successors at the helm of the bamoun kingdom had also during his period of rule appreciated the ambient peace of the *Massangam* population. The history of the Bamouns actually reveals that after Mbouombouo, the kingdom

It is plausible that the original population of *Massangam* had a different origin from that of the Bamoun. Such an apprehension can be deduced from allegations made by authors like Fifen Ousseni, who in his *Maîtrise* dissertation in History defended in the university of Yaounde I in June 2000, pinpoints on page 16 that, if the bamoun population seem homogenous today, it was heterogeneous in the past, constituted of the *Tikars* and other populace whose kings were defeated and obliged to integrate the bamoun community. *Christraud Geary* on his part mentions that during the conquest of this territory by *Ncharé Yen* (XIV century), the bamoun had met on the spot *Pa-Mben* whom they had subjugated. He continues to avouch that in his conquest, Mbouombouo had subjugated forty-eight nations (Cf. *Christraud Geary et Adamou Ndam Njoya, Mandou Yenou, photographie du pays bamoum, royaume oust africain*, München, Trickster Verlag, 1985, p.19). The population met in *Massangam* by Mbouombouo were certainly part of the subjugated population.

¹³Some people will be surprised, knowing the religion practiced today by the kings of the bamoun kingdom, that is Islam, to hear people say that the king drank alcoholic drinks. It is important for us to put aside this ambiguity precisating that the bamoun kingdom became a sultanate only after the islamisation which occurred subsequently at the reign of Mbouombouo, more precisely under *Ibrahim Njoya* who ascended the throne at the end of the XIX century. Cf. *Soulemanou Pomeyou* “Les titres nobiliaires dans l’évolution historique du royaume bamoum: 1394-1992” *Maîtrise* dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2000, pp.2-5.

¹⁴*Inoussa Mpitndab*, interview of 10th July 2013.

¹⁵*Inoussa Mpitndab* interview of 10th July 2013.

¹⁶*Christraud Geary and Adamou Ndam Njoya, Mandou Yenou*, p.19.

witnessed a period of instability accompanied by the successive murder of kings Gbetnkom(1814-1817) and Mbienkouo (1817-1818).¹⁷ It was amidst this disorder that the *tu pank* or chief guard of the palace of servile origin ascended the throne between 1818 and 1863 under the title *fon Ngouwouo*¹⁸. After “the reign of this slave,”¹⁹ prince Nsangou, grandson of Mbouombouo took over the throne through violence ejecting *fon Ngouwouo*. Nsangou reigned from 1863 to 1885²⁰. He is the one who continued with military conquests initiated by his grandfather Mbouombouo²¹. In the course of this initiative, he also found himself in Massangam, precisely in a place called *Massédapa’a*,²² where he also met just as his grandfather did in the past a small group conversing and smoking tobacco leaves. These men did not go against the culture of peace and conviviality practiced by their ancestors and which was also a trait of their population. They equally invited the king to share in their tobacco. Just as it was in the past with Mbouombouo, the same scenario repeated itself. While accepting the tobacco offered him, King Nsangou noted the fraternal reception susceptible to exterminate any bellicose intensions which they could have vis-à-vis these strangers²³.

It is important to point out that king Nsangou who had crossed several stages of which Malantouen, neighboring village of Massangam, where its inhabitants did not show any signs of acceptance or welcome, could not remain indifferent vis-à-vis the soothing welcome of the Massangam populace. It is for this reason that he exclaimed in the following words «This is really Massangam»²⁴. Through this exclamation he confirmed the reputation of Massangam being a welcoming land to all strangers. This tradition continued with the passing of time and even the people did not go against this culture of peace because even during the colonial period, Massangam still upheld and maintained its hospitable values to the benefit of immigrants coming from all corners of Cameroon. By so doing, this small town built around itself the reputation of being a land of inter-ethnic cohabitation.

II-Immigrations and peaceful cohabitation

Massangam is viewed as one of those areas of Cameroon where national integration is an undisputable reality. It is made up of a cosmopolitan population with the majority being the Bamouns because of their position in settling permanently and the domination or assimilation of conquered population who consider themselves as aborigines. We also have a multitude of ethnic groups considered as allogenes of which the majority of the Bamileke populace coming from the present Western region of Cameroon and a few Hausas. The reasons for their immigration are varied.

¹⁷ Ousséni Fifen, «Le pouvoir de la reine dans le royaume bamoun : le cas de la reine Njapdunke, 1874-1904» Maîtrise dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2000, p.23.

¹⁸ Ibid, p.23.

¹⁹ A.Njiassé Njoya et al., De Njoya a Njimoluh, p.24.

²⁰ Ousséni Fifen, « Le pouvoir de la reine », p.24.

The author precises here that different dates are advanced in order to situate the death of Nsangou particularly those of 1886, 1887, 1888 and 1889. But according to him the date 1885 seems to be the most probable

²¹ Note should be taken here that Gbêtikom and Mbienkouo were brothers, sons of king Mbouombouo : As for Ngoungouré who ruled only for thirty minutes, she was the mother of king Nsangou. For more details read Ousséni Fifen, “Le pouvoir de la reine dans le royaume bamoun: le cas de la reine Njapdounké 1874-1904”, Maîtrise dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2000, p.25.

²² *Massédapa’a* is a bamoun word composed of *mas* which means “place where” and *sédapa’a* designates “tobacco”.

²³ Inoussa Npitndap, interview of 10th July 2013.

²⁴ Ibid.

a- The pioneer bamileke of Massagam

The Bamileke are counted amongst the first allogenic population to have settled permanently in Massagam. Oral tradition reveals that the first Bamileke arrived in this locality around 1923²⁵. Tamajon Francois and Yanzé André are regarded as the pioneers. They all came from Bandjoun precisely from the small village of Baga-Fondji in the present day Koung-khi Division²⁶. Their first contact with Massagam was first of all sporadic. Actually, both of them were itinerant traders on both sides. They brought kolanuts which they sold to the Bamoun population and on the spot they bought palm oil which on their return they resold in Nkongsamba, Bafia or Bandjoun²⁷. They were usually accompanied by porters who carried their goods. Their permanent settlement together with their respective families was motivated by the nature of welcome given to them by the aborigines. Massagam was thus a conducive environment for their economic prosperity which made them to slowly abandon their trade in kolanuts and reconvert, first, in the sale of clothes and later, on zinc for the construction of houses²⁸.

The successes registered in their numerous activities in the locality of Massagam attracted Bamileke towards Massagam. This rush was mostly perceptible around the 1930s. Their arrivals became more regular, the result of individual initiatives. Some prominent immigrants during this period were Fonsi Mathieu, Quejiwo Abraham, Tchanan Mathieu, Nono Daniel; Tchimi Gaston, Tchimi Joseph, Djogouga Joseph, Tchabou Martin, Ngoupayou Aboubakar, Tchabou Daniel, Tamajon Mathieu (nephew to Tamajon Francois), Goupgap Jean, Mipo Jacob. If this second generation immigrants could benefit from modern means of transport like cars, the pioneers like Tamajon R Francois and Yanzé André on their part had only their two legs to go from Baga-Fondji to Massagam, galvanized with the hope of a better living; a better world.²⁹ The attractions that Massagam offered the Bamilekes were quite enormous. The chief of Massagam had manifested a spirit of conviviality which facilitated the integration of the Bamileke in the midst of the Bamoun society.

Some Bamileke immigrants found themselves at ease in their host land to the extent that some of them did not hesitate to abandon Christianity and convert to Islam; religion practiced by a great majority of the Bamouns. This religious reconversion sometimes led to the changing of given names and in other cases their patronym. Two examples are retained to illustrate this fact. First was the case of Goupgap Jean who later became known as Goupgap Ousmanou after his reconversion to Islam and Mipo Jacob who also Islamized and bore the name Mounpain Yacouba.³⁰ These facts clearly attest that the immigrants embraced the practices of Massagam and were deeply rooted in their host land. Others could even think that this voluntary choice of the immigrants to be Islamized was just one of the strategies adopted so as to easily integrate themselves and enjoy all the economic benefits that Massagam had to offer.

The cooperative nature of the Bamileke was indeed a consolidating factor for their integration in Massagam. This encouraged Chief Njikam Chakou Ousmanoyu to freely give them land. Actually, history

²⁵ Francois Tamajon, 43 years, son and namesake of the first bamileke immigrant, Massagam, interviewed on the 24th February 2013.

Inoussa Npitndap, interviewed on the 10th March 2013.

²⁶ Francois Tamajon, interview of 24th February 2013.

²⁷ Isaac Mounpain, around 70 years, chief of the bamoun community in Massagam, Massagam, interview of 24th February 2013. For more precision, it is important to point out that trade in kolanuts in the bamoun kingdom is anterior to the coming of the bamileke. Actually, it was after the extension of the kingdom by Mboumbouo that the bamoun country became one of the biggest commercial centres of the region. The trade in kolanuts was therefore one of the sources of the kingdoms wealth. Cf Christraud Geary and Adamou Ndam Njoya, *Mandou Yenou, photographie du pays bamoun, royaume oust-africain*, München, Trickster Verlag, 1985, p.20.

²⁸ Isaac Mounpain, interview of 24th February 2013.

²⁹ Inoussa Npitndap, interview of 10th March 2013.

³⁰ Francois Tamajon, interview of 24th February 2013.

for example retains that it was Tamajon Francois who made the promotion and use of aluminium zinc in the construction of huts in Massangam. This smart trader frequently gave out small loans to the Bamoun aborigines whenever they had any financial difficulties³¹. This attitude of his made him to become the personal and most trusted friend of chief Njikam. In reality, the Bamoun of Massangam saw in him a good Samaritan who had to be well taken care of and someone they needed to have beside them, of which the need to help him settle permanently on their land. Taking into consideration this precise case one can therefore talk of a relation based on personal interest between the two groups.

The chief of Massangam had ceded hectares of land to Tamajon who was then free to settle his Bamileke brothers newly immigrated in the land. This territory given to the bamileke was baptized *Koutou bain* which means “Bamileke camp”.³² Today *Koutou bain* has become a big quarter known as Manga II. Later on, the Bamileke who had now become land owners turned into land sellers. We can bring out here the case of Gareba who sold a portion of his land to Amos Kimbi a native of today’s North West region who arrived Massangam in 1982³³.

Added to this the Bamileke showed signs of dynamism and participated in the radiance of the village especially that of the Bamoun population. This could be seen through their numerous economic and commercial activities³⁴. They were particularly engaged in the cultivation of tea and food crops, trade and the rearing of goats and fowls. They initiated the rearing of pigs in Massangam, an animal which till then was not known to the people of that locality, manifested their curiosity and admired this animal which was strange to them³⁵.

The trust which the Bamileke gained from the Bamoun seemed to have no limits. Actually, Chief Njikam Chakou Ousmane even made use of some Bamileke in his royal court as guards such as Nngoupayou Aboubakar who was also served as a traditional doctor.³⁶ This post was only in the hands of those who could be trusted and who had access to palace secrets and chiefs privacy. In clear terms, some Bamilekes had become esteemed confidants of the Bamoun chief of Massagam.

Encouraged by this esteem and confidence, the Bamileke of Massangam showed proof of a good organization, by putting in place agricultural cooperatives which permitted the agriculturalist to unite their efforts. This led to the creation of vast individual plantations. They were also special because of their capacity to function with *njangi* groups, a kind of bank for the poor, which gave to one another small loans to finance individual projects.³⁷ It is convenient to point out that, the attitude of the Bamileke in Massangam was similar with those of Makénéné and in the Mungo; other areas of Bamileke immigration in the 1920s. This attitude of theirs made them to conquer lands belonging to the aborigines.

b- Other immigrated populations of Massangam

Apart from the Bamoun and Bamileke there were other diverse populations who immigrated into Massagam of which their presence strengthened the effectiveness of the thesis of interethnic cohabitation in Massagam. Amongst them were the peul and their Haussa associates. Their settlement was favoured by the fact that they shared a common religion with the bamoun: that is islam. Their transit in the region is even earlier to the arrival of the bamileke. Their first transit was less felt because they were nomads who were interested only in street trading.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Amos Kimbi, 55years, chief of the anglophone community of Massangam, Massangam, interviewed on the 5th March 2013

³⁴ Inoussa Npitndap, interviewed on the 10th March 2013.

³⁵ Moussa Kouotou, around 100years, bamoun patriarch, Massangam, interviewed on the 3February 2013.

³⁶ Zakari lamajé, son of a bamileke immigrant, Massangam, interviewed on the 6th March 2013.

³⁷ Isaac Mounpain, interviewed on 24th February 2013.

In reality the Haussas were frequent in this region even before the arrival of the Germans in the area on the 6th July 1902.³⁸ Following the exchanges that occurred between the Europeans and the Africans observed during the reign of king Mbouombouo, the Haussas played the role of intermediaries by buying luxury products (jewels, cloth) in European factories established around the coast of Cameroon particularly in Douala and which they brought back and sold in the markets of the Bamoun kingdom.³⁹ It was chief Njikam Chakou Ousmanou who in giving them free land to settle, had also caused their permanent settlement in Massangam.

The first Hausa to have settled in the area was called Maloum Kiékié. He arrived Massangam towards the end of the 1920s. The warm welcome given him can be justified by the fact that he taught the Koran to the aborigines. He even held the post of the first central imam. It was after his departure from this post that Ngnabi Salifou, a Bamoun from his koranic school, succeeded him⁴⁰. A good majority of the Haussas who immigrated into Massangam were tailors. Even Maloum kiékié practiced this trade. Highly appreciated for his Islamic teachings and the dexterity with which he made the *Dassiki*, a kind of outfit popular among the Muslims. He freely received land near the first central mosque of Massangam; land on which he finally built his house⁴¹.

Another group of people who came and swelled up the population of Massangam was made up of some immigrants coming from present day North West region of Cameroon. Actually a good majority of this population was made up of the Nso.⁴² Upon arrival in Massangam, they were warmly welcomed by Chief Njikam Ndam Chouaibou, successor to Njikam Chakou Ousmanou⁴³. These natives from the North West region of Cameroon, devoted themselves mostly in small agricultural activities with little reward or compensation commonly referred to, as “job” and commonly worked in palm plantations belonging to the bamouns. Actually, they were not owners of the land they cultivated. It was only later and thanks to the friendly nature of their relations with the aborigines that they created their own tea plantations and other food crops. They were also involved in trade and were particularly involved in the sale of local drinks like *cha’a* and palm wine. The majority of those involved in automobile mechanics in Massangam came from the today's North West region of the country. The only bakery in the locality belonged to an immigrant from the North West and nick named by the Bamouns *askpa-Na’a* or “cow foot,” may be because of the fact that, earlier he was a cow foot seller.

Whether Hausa, Peuls or migrants from other parts of the country, the friendly nature in which they were welcomed in the locality favoured their acquisition of land through donations by the aborigine population. This was the case of Peter Bassi, a native from Bambili village in the North West who arrived Massangam in 1979. He was welcomed by Adamou Sani who worked in a filling station. The latter had lodged him in one of his buildings in the central town⁴⁴. In the same manner, the installation of Amos Kimbi in this locality was facilitated by Adamou Sani in 1982.⁴⁵

Benefitting from such an opportunity, Peter Bassi started as a gas repairer. Chief Njikam Ndam Chouaibou was greatly flattered by this trade which was not yet in existence in Massangam. He could already foresee the advantages of this trade on the population of Massangam. Peter Bassi practiced this trade

³⁸ Christraud Geary et Adamou Ndam Njoya, *Mandou Yenou*, p.20.

³⁹ Ibid., p.20.

⁴⁰ Mama Ndam ; 70years, member of the local islamic council ; Massangam, interviewed on the 1st March 2013.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Actually, in an announcement made in Bafia in 1999 during the « Mbam Arts and Culture », it was said that the king of Rifoum in the tikar plains had three children respectively named Nsharé Yen (founder of the bamoun kingdom), Mfo Nso (parent of the Nso) and Mfo Mbaam who is the founder of the tikar state of Nditam in the Mbam valley.

⁴³ Inoussa Npitndap, interview, 10th March 2013.

⁴⁴ Peter bassi, 61 years, trader, native from Bambili, Massangam, interview, 3rd March 2013.

⁴⁵ Amos Kimbi, interview, 5th March 2013.

with happiness for close to 34 years⁴⁶. He later on bought a piece of land from an aborigine in the person of Layout Mesac and built his house. He bought another piece of land from Njidoum on which he created a tea plantation. Another portion of land was used for the cultivation of Kolanuts, pepper, and other food crops⁴⁷. His achievements in Massangam made him owner of many houses destined for rents.

Other immigrants from the North West freely acquired pieces of land in Majamtein quarters. This was the case of Joseph Pivaga who arrived Massangam in 1978 thanks to his uncle Samson who was a driver in the SEFN (*Société d'Exploitation Forestière du Noun*). It was as a result of a job offer launched by this company in search of a mechanic that Samson called on his nephew Joseph Pivaga who already had some notions about the trade.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, it is important for us to have another Interpretation in relation to land donation. Actually, they were in most cases motivated by certain matrimonial alliances between the aborigines and allogenes women. This was the case for example of Joseph Pivaga who had as wife a young girl of Bamoun origin in the name of Adaheu Adama. This union greatly worked in his favour for his full integration in Massangam⁴⁹.

If Massangam therefore offered Cameroonians an example of a successful integration contrary to certain tensed areas where we sometimes have deadly confrontations between aborigines and immigrants just as was the case for example in the north west between the Bali-Nyonga and the Bawock⁵⁰ or even in the Bamoun country between the Mbororo and the Bamoun,⁵¹ Nevertheless it is suitable to heighten that, this integration is sometimes tainted with certain minor crisis which mostly oppose individuals and not really ethnic groups.

III- Some Discrepancies between inhabitants: A breach to hospitality.

In Cameroon the free giving of land to immigrants in later years led to contestations by the descendants of their benefactors, the example of the localities of Makenene, Mbangassina or Nkondjock.⁵² Some Bamileke of Massangam were not free from this unsympathetic reaction vis-à-vis the allogenes. A reaction which abrades the reputation of a peaceful land enjoyed by the locality was the attitude of Nsangou. Actually, Rengou, father of Nsangou had sold, at a giveaway price, land to Yanzé André located behind the present day hospital of the locality.⁵³ After his death, his son Nsangou took upon himself to resell a portion of the said land to another person without the knowledge of Yanzé André who, not being in possession of any legal documents recognizing him as the legitimate owner of the land abstained from undertaking any legal proceedings. With a heavy heart, he gave up all claims on the land, leaving Nsangou to do whatever he wanted with the land hence losing the land⁵⁴.

The matter did not end at that level because after the successive deaths of Yanzé André and Nsangou, his son Aboubakar Ndam who being the sole heir to his father, attempted in 2011 to recover the remaining land of Yanzé under the pretext that, the Bamileke had no land rights in Massangam. Vexed and contrary to

⁴⁶ Peter Bassi, interview, 3rd March 2013.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Cletus Ndiaga Ngamsie, 33 years, son of an immigrant « bamenda », Massangam, interview, 4th March 2013.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Quinta kahkuntan Numboh Bauket, « The Bali-Nyonga – Bawock Relations », Maîtrise dissertation in History, University of Yaounde I, 2008.

⁵¹ We were informed during one of our field works the nature of the conflictual relations between these two groups. This will be our next research topic.

⁵² Gabriel Maxime Dong Mognol, « De la conquêtes foncières aux crises interethniques au Cameroun : cas des bamileke et leurs voisins », in François Nkankeu et Christophe Bryant, *Regards multidisciplinaires sur les conflits fonciers et leurs impacts socio-économico-politiques au Cameroun*, Montréal, laboratoire de développement durable et dynamique territoriale, département de Géographie, Université de Montréal, 2010, pp.39-49.

⁵³ Isaac Mounpain, interview, 24th February 2013.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

his father, Isaac Moumpain son and successor of Yanzé André reacted by filing a complaint against Aoubakar Ndam to Aminou, present day chief of Massangam who opted and called for a peaceful settlement⁵⁵. In the course of this procedure, Isaac Moumpain won the case. A legal document was signed on the 30th November 2012 between the two belligerents, the chief and other witnesses; in this case the village chiefs who took part in the sittings championed the negotiation process in view of a peaceful settlement⁵⁶.

This kind of attitude adopted by some Bamoun aborigines brings us to think that in later years, they expressed regrets towards the cession or surrender of part of their land heritage to the allogenes. Their repugnance particularly towards the Bamileke limits itself to some isolated cases. One can retain as example the attitude of Manfonkouat Mama, who was a tenant in one of the stores belonging to a Bamileke in the person of Moumpain Isaac, out rightly refused to pay rents to his landlord. Worst still, he had discretely undertaken measures to be issued legal documents making him the owner of the said store. It required a summation from the law courts filed by the landlord for him to vacate the premises⁵⁷. Others like Chakou Soulé, neighbour to Moumpain Isaac undertook provocative measures like deliberately trespassing boundaries to partially occupy the space of their allogene neighbours. Despite resolution from the chief that this attitude orchestrated over land dispute, the children of Chakou Soulé also continued with mischievous acts towards those considered as invaders of the land of their ancestors⁵⁸.

The indexing of the allogenes by the Bamouns brings us to conclude the emergence of conflicts amidst interethnic cohabitation in Massangam. Indeed, it is convenient for us to point out that; it is difficult to raise conflicts of this nature previously described, of which the protagonist is solely allogenes. The Bamileke and the Nso for example live in an almost perfect entente in a convivial environment. Could this be therefore be a sign of the beginning of discrimination in this haven of peace formerly enjoyed by Massangam. Nevertheless, the facts previously raised, sufficiently alerts on the dangers faced by this locality which risk being registered as one of the zones for the manifestation of this phenomenon of group identity frequently opposing aborigines and allogenes.

Cases of aversion against the Bamileke are recurrent. During the rebellion witnessed by Cameroon after the banning of the *Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC)* in 1955, the Bamileke highly engaged in this armed struggle for independence sometimes aroused distrust and were feared by the aborigines. For precautionary measures and the need to block the importation of this phenomenon of Marquis on their land, the chief of Massangam had insisted on anyone harbouring a stranger to make known of his/her presence. It happened that Nono Martin of Bamileke origin and who had recently welcomed one of his brothers coming from the Bamileke country went against the chiefs call. Ill luck befell him because persistent rumors started circulating in the locality of the presence of clandestine people associated with the UPC maquisards.⁵⁹ Considered as being betrayed, the chief assembled all the inhabitants and insisted on knowing which one of them granted this hospitality to a rebel. Taken by fear, the unfortunate Nana Martin admitted. This confession which contributed in tarnishing the image of immigrants, annoyed the Bamoun notables to the point where one of them named El Hadj Galoummo Adamou could not contain himself, in front of the public and administered a slap on Nono. He was preparing to give another one when he was suddenly stopped by the chief who ordered him to calm down⁶⁰.

⁵⁵ Isaac Mounpain, interview, 24th February 2013.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ndam mama, around 70 years, former worker with the SEFN and member of the islamic council in massangam, massangam, interview, 1st March 2013.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

According to our informant, El Hadj Galoummo Adamou had been invested with mysterious powers. All the inhabitants of Massangam of that period knew quite well that a second slap could be fatal for the person receiving it.

From this story we can point out that, the Bamileke of Masangam contributed in the distrust which aroused against them by the Bamoun, thus heightening a sense of rejection. All these constitute factors which contributed in tarnishing the spirit of hospitality; the friendly values of the population of Massangam which, under the influence of lived experiences started being suspicious and integrate the spirit of identity differentiation; that which is detrimental to the reputation of being a host land and land of conviviality which Massangam had been known for a long time.

Another important event seriously tainted the relations between the Nso and Bamoun. In 2012 while they were drinking *cha'a* (traditional alcoholic drink) in an area known as Makare, two inhabitants of Massangam of which one was a Bamoun and the other Nso, engaged in a fight which ended with the death of the Bamoun.⁶¹ This incident created confrontations between the two communities. Bamoun vengeance included beatings inflicted on Anglophone children from the government bilingual school and also the orchestration of a fight in the central town opposing the natives of both communities. The arrest, followed by the incarceration of the perpetrator of the crime helped to calm down the people and order returned in Massangam.⁶² This event nevertheless instilled in the minds of the peoples concerned a certain spirit of differentiation based on ethnic belonging, then a certain identity demarcation, susceptible to manifest at any time. This attests the current precarious situation of interethnic cohabitation in Massangam.

The friendship of yesteryears is also compromised with the present day attitude of some aborigine youths who challenge past agreements between their parents and the immigrants. To illustrate this, we should remember the testimonies of Peter Bassi, immigrant from Bambili in the Mezam division, who at the time of his arrival had bought a piece of land from a Bamoun. Land on which he created a palm plantation. To his greatest dismay, after the death of the one with whom he had concluded the arrangements concerning the land, his son and successor Zakari, denied totally the sale of this land by his father. He told Peter Bassi to stop exploiting the land.⁶³ He argued that, the sale was simply a contract of which the effectiveness was limited only with the two persons concerned. This simply meant that the said contract ended with the death of his father. Not having any sales certificate, Peter Bassi remained without retaliating in the face of all the harassments from his detractor. He decided to abandon the palm plantation desired by Zakari.⁶⁴

This story and most especially its unfolding, aroused so many interrogations on the honesty of both parties. One can therefore conclude here by saying that, the Bamoun sometimes knew well to profit from the absence of legal documents at the time of their parents to recuperate any property acquired by the allogene. But another contrary view is also conceivable. The immigrant population of Massangam could also be suspected of abusing the hospitality, characteristics of the aborigine population who had welcomed them for use in the Bamoun heritage, where the obstruction by Zakari of an attempt to swindle family property. However, if this confusion stops us from adjudicating on the acknowledged guilt of one or the other of the two protagonists, it nevertheless confirms the actual imperfection of inter-ethnic relations in Massangam.

Conclusion

From the above, it is important for us to point out that, interethnic cohabitation in Massangam experienced some momentum. It started off with hospitality, appreciated conviviality, within an atmosphere of mutual profit. Unfortunately, they have evolved today, even though we are not yet at the state of ethnic confrontations, but nevertheless, there are visible signs of a real degradation of the social atmosphere. Dispute, even though minor between aborigines and allogenes hints on the beginning of discomfort in multi-ethnic cohabitation. This remark is a source of worry, because inter-ethnic conflicts have always challenged

⁶¹ Amos Kimbi, interview, 5th March 2013.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Peter Bassi, interview, 3rd March 2013.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

the stability of African countries in general and Cameroon in particular. This dual dimension of the past of Massangam reveals two opposing realities: on the one hand it offers the advantages that one can have from a peaceful inter-ethnic cohabitation, which therefore call on the population of other areas of the country embarked on unnecessary conflicts and on the other hand, it exposes the force with which this phenomenon of group identity deteriorates a legendary hospitality commendable and beneficial both to the aborigines and allochtones.

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