Assessment of the Reasons for Chieftaincy Conflicts in Muyuka Sub-Division of the South-West Region of Cameroon

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Abstract

Chieftaincy disputes in the Muyuka Sub-Division of Fako Division, Cameroon, are deeply rooted in the historical, socio-cultural, legal, and political landscape of the region. These disputes, often revolving around succession rights, land tenure, and external political interference, are exacerbated by colonial legacies and ambiguities within modern legal frameworks. This study investigates the causes of chieftaincy disputes in Muyuka, focusing on the tensions between traditional leadership structures and statutory governance. Using a qualitative research approach, including semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, the study examines how colonial interventions, land tenure conflicts, and political manipulation contribute to the complexity of these disputes. The findings highlight the need for comprehensive reforms to address legal ambiguities, protect traditional practices, and limit external interference. This study contributes to the understanding of chieftaincy conflicts and offers recommendations for conflict resolution through a balance of traditional customs and modern governance frameworks.

Keywords: Reasons, Chieftaincy, Disputes, Muyuka sub-division, Governance, Resolution

Introduction

Chieftaincy disputes in the Fako Division of Cameroon, particularly in Muyuka Sub-Division, are deeply embedded in the historical, socio-cultural, and political landscape of the Region. These disputes often arise from questions of succession, land tenure, legitimacy, and external interference from political elites or economic operators.[2] A key characteristic of these disputes is the interplay between traditional leadership structures and modern legal frameworks, both of which are often in conflict due to their differing interpretations of authority and legitimacy. Colonial legacies, particularly the imposition of foreign governance structures, have had a lasting impact, exacerbating tensions within communities over traditional leadership roles.[3]

Chieftaincy disputes in Cameroon, particularly in the Muyuka Sub-Division of the Fako Division, are a multifaceted issue deeply intertwined with historical, socio-political, and legal dynamics. These disputes, while rooted in traditional authority structures, are significantly influenced by colonial legacies, modern governance frameworks, and external political manipulation. The works of scholars

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[2] Fonchingong, C. (2014). "Firming up Institutional Policy for Deprived Elderly in Cameroon", *International Social Science Journal*, *65*(217-218), 175-188.
[3] Fanso, V. G. (1997). Colonial Rule and Political Conflict in Cameroon. New York: Oxford University Press.

such as Nkwi and Nyamnjoh (1997)[4] provide a foundational understanding of how historical power dynamics, shaped by both pre-colonial and colonial interventions, have contributed to contemporary chieftaincy conflicts. The colonial system of indirect rule, as highlighted by Ekali (2017),[5] fundamentally altered traditional governance, laying the groundwork for ongoing disputes over legitimacy and succession. Baldwin (2015),[6] in examining similar dynamics in East Africa, argues that colonial interventions weakened traditional authority, leaving a legacy of leadership struggles that persist in regions such as Muyuka, although the specific manifestations of these disputes may differ based on local histories and contexts.

In Cameroon, the legal frameworks governing chieftaincy, as critiqued by Takougang (2018),[7] often fail to effectively integrate traditional systems with modern state laws, creating ambiguities that prolong conflicts. This dissonance between customary and statutory law complicates succession disputes, particularly in the context of land tenure, which chiefs historically managed. Studies such as those by Manga (2019)[8] and Mbaku (2005)[9] further underscore the role of political elites and economic operators in exacerbating these conflicts, often manipulating traditional authority for personal gain. Similar dynamics are observed in other African contexts, as explored by Oomen (2005)[10] and Kyed and Buur (2006),[11] who discuss the challenges of integrating traditional governance into state legal frameworks, revealing common patterns of conflict over legitimacy and authority across different regions.

The socio-cultural implications of chieftaincy disputes are profound, affecting not only governance but also community development and social cohesion. As noted by Fonchingong (2013), disputes over chieftaincy titles can divert resources from community development initiatives, stalling progress and fostering divisions within local populations. The socio-economic stakes of chieftaincy positions, as explored by Afigbo (1986)[12] in Nigeria, further complicate these conflicts, as they confer significant status and control over resources. In the Cameroonian context, as Logan (2009)[13] and

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[4] Nkwi, P., & Nyamnjoh, F. (1997). "Regional Balance and National Integration in Cameroon: Lessons Learned and the Uncertain Future." *African Studies Review*, *40*(1), 55-82.

[5] Ekali, F. M. (2017). "Colonial Legacies and the Crisis of Traditional Leadership in Cameroon." *Journal of African History*, 23(4), 147-165.

[6] Baldwin, K. (2015). "The Paradox of Traditional Chiefs in Democratic Africa." Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[7] Takougang, J. (2018). "The Legal Dimensions of Chieftaincy Disputes in Cameroon." *Journal of Modern African Studies*, *56*(2), 233-248.

[8] Manga, B. (2019). "Political Manipulation of Chieftaincy in Cameroon." *African Journal of Political Science*, *14*(3), 67-85.

[9] Mbaku, J. M. (2005). "Judicial Systems and Conflict Resolution in Cameroon." *Cameroon Law Journal*, *12*(2), 123-145.

[10] Oomen, B. (2005). Chiefs in South Africa: Law, Power and Culture in the Post-Apartheid Era. London: James Currey.

[11] Kyed, H. M., & Buur, L. (2006). "New Sites of Citizenship: Recognition of Traditional Authority and Group-Based Citizenship in Mozambique." *Journal of Southern African Studies*, *32*(3), 563-581.

[12] Afigbo, A. E. (1986). The Igbo and their Neighbours: Inter-Group Relations in Southeastern Nigeria to 1953. Ibadan: University Press.

[13] Logan, C. (2009). "Selected Chiefs, Elected Councillors and Hybrid Democrats: Popular Perspectives on the Co-Existence of Democracy and Traditional Authority." *Journal of Modern African Studies*, *47*(1), 101-128.

Bime (2021)[14] highlight, chieftaincy disputes erode trust in traditional institutions, undermining social cohesion and hindering efforts to resolve conflicts through customary mechanisms. These findings suggest that chieftaincy disputes in Muyuka are not merely about succession or land rights but are deeply embedded in the socio-political fabric of the region, shaped by historical legacies, legal ambiguities, and external influences.

2.1. Remote Causes of Chieftaincy Disputes in Muyuka Sub-Division

2.1.1. Historical Legacies

The historical context of Muyuka Sub-division serves as a crucial backdrop for comprehending the genesis of chieftaincy disputes. The area has a rich tapestry of indigenous cultures, each with its unique system of governance and traditional leadership. Over the years, colonial interventions, administrative reorganizations, and shifting power dynamics have contributed to the emergence of contested claims to chieftaincy titles. The historical legacy of colonial rule, including arbitrary delineation of territories and imposition of administrative structures, has left a lasting impact on the traditional institutions, paving the way for enduring conflicts.

The seeds of contemporary chieftaincy disputes in Muyuka Sub-division can be traced back to Cameroon's colonial past. The imposition of indirect rule by German and later British colonial administrations significantly altered traditional systems of governance. Colonial powers recognized and interacted with select chiefs, often based on their perceived willingness to cooperate with colonial agendas. This preferential treatment sowed discord among rival claimants to chiefly stools, creating tensions that persist to this day.

Furthermore, the arbitrary carving up of territories during colonization disregarded pre-existing social and political boundaries. This created chieftaincies with overlapping jurisdictions, a recipe for future conflict over legitimacy and control of resources. The legacy of colonialism also lies in the introduction of a foreign legal system that often clashes with customary law regarding chieftaincy selection and inheritance.

2.1.2. Land Tenure Concessions

Chieftaincy disputes in the Fako Division of Cameroon, particularly in Muyuka Sub-Division, are significantly influenced by various factors, with land tenure concessions being a prominent remote cause. These disputes often stem from issues related to the control over community land, community forests, and the royalties that accrue from these resources. A particularly notable instance is the surrender of land by the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) in the Fako Division.

Traditional leaders or chiefs in many African societies, including those in the Muyuka Sub-Division, typically hold custodial rights over communal lands and forests. These lands are not only economic assets but also carry cultural and spiritual significance for the communities. The control over these lands allows chiefs to allocate land for farming, settlement, and other uses, which can become a source of power and wealth. Consequently, disputes may arise over who gets to be the chief, as this

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[14] Bime, M. J. (2021). "Economic Impact of Chieftaincy Disputes in Cameroon: The Case of Fako Division." *Journal of African Studies*, *16*(2), 89-102.

position holds the authority to manage these valuable resources.[15] In addition to direct control over land and forest, chiefs often benefit from royalties or benefits derived from these resources. For instance, if a company like the CDC operates on community land, it may provide the local community (and by extension the chief) with certain royalties or compensations. Disagreements over the distribution or management of these royalties can lead to conflicts within the community, as different factions may support different leaders whom they believe will better serve their interests.[16] A specific example that has exacerbated chieftaincy disputes in the Fako Division is the surrender of land by the CDC. This land, originally managed or owned by the corporation, was returned to the community and thus came under the control of local chiefs. The redistribution and management of this newly acquired land can lead to significant disputes, particularly if there are ambiguities about the boundaries, the rightful ownership, or the distribution of benefits derived from the land.[17]

These factors collectively illustrate how land tenure concessions can be a remote cause of chieftaincy disputes in Muyuka Sub-Division. The combination of economic benefits and symbolic authority associated with land and forest resources makes the position of chief highly coveted, leading to intense and sometimes prolonged disputes.

2.1.3. Legal Intricacies

The legal framework governing chieftaincy in Cameroon is riddled with ambiguities and inconsistencies. The legal instrument regulating chieftaincy of 1977, Decree No.77/245 of 15 July 1977 offers a skeletal framework but leaves significant room for interpretation, particularly regarding issues of succession and dispute resolution mechanisms. This ambiguity creates fertile ground for rival factions to manipulate the law to their advantage, further entrenching conflict.

The legal intricacies and complexities related to the interpretation of customary and statutory laws in Cameroon significantly contribute to chieftaincy disputes, particularly in the Muyuka Sub-Division of the Fako Division. These disputes often arise due to controversies over the recognition, classification, and installation of chiefs, blending traditional norms with modern legal frameworks. These elements create a fertile ground for conflicts within communities, as detailed below:

In Cameroon, the recognition of traditional leaders can involve both customary practices and statutory requirements. Customary laws, which are based on traditions and oral histories, often do not align neatly with written statutory laws enforced by the state. This discrepancy can lead to disputes when different factions within a community may support different candidates based on differing interpretations of customary legitimacy versus legal endorsement. For example, the

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[15] Anye, N. C. (2015). "The crisis of leadership legitimacy in Cameroon's chieftaincy conflict", *Journal of African Political Science*, *20*(1), 101-119.

[16] Takougang, J. (2017). 'The politics of chieftaincy in Cameroon since colonial days", *Cameroon Journal of Political and Social Affairs*, *5*(1), 22-34.

[17] Mbaku, J. M. (2019). "Land tenure and conflict in Africa: The case of the Cameroon Development Corporation", *African Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *19*(3), 45-65.

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government may recognize one chief through statutory means, while another candidate may claim legitimacy based on ancestral lineage or local customs.[18]

The classification of chieftaincies into different grades or categories, such as first-class, second-class, and third-class chiefs, further complicates matters. This classification often influences the resources and authority available to a chief. Disputes arise when communities or individuals feel that the classification of their chief does not accurately reflect their historical importance or contribution to the region. The criteria for these classifications, often a blend of customary significance and administrative convenience, can be a source of contention.[19]

The installation of chiefs typically requires adherence to both customary rites and statutory procedures. Discrepancies in these processes can lead to prolonged disputes. For instance, if statutory laws require certain formalities that are either ignored or superficially adhered to, it may lead to legitimacy challenges. Additionally, if the customary rites are perceived to have been manipulated or bypassed, it can result in factions within the community contesting the authority of the installed chief.[20]

These legal intricacies and complexities create a multifaceted challenge in the administration of chieftaincy affairs in Muyuka Sub-Division. The overlapping and sometimes conflicting layers of customary and statutory laws can significantly exacerbate disputes, particularly when they intersect with issues of power, identity, and economic interest. However, the official recognition and legitimacy of a chief ultimately rests with the government, which operates within the confines of statutory law. This creates a situation where a chief selected according to customary law might not be recognized by the state, leading to disputes and contestations.

2.1.4. Bolstering Legitimacy

A contender might promise a more equitable and transparent land allocation strategy, aiming to garner support from marginalized groups within the community who feel they have been historically disadvantaged. This could involve pledges to prioritize land for community development projects, such as schools or healthcare facilities, or to ensure that individual land rights are respected and protected. These land-related disputes can become deeply intertwined with the core issue of who has the rightful claim to the chieftaincy. Resolving them often hinges on settling the leadership question itself.[21]

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[18] Nkwi, W. G. (2016). "The challenges of customary authority in the 21st century: An exploration of the shift from pre-colonial to modern forms of chieftaincy in Cameroon", *Journal of African Law Studies*, *10*(1), 110-129.
[19] Fonchingong, C. (2018). "The dynamics of community conflict and cohesion in Cameroon" *Journal of Community Development and Life Quality,* *6*(4), 234-249.
[20] Awasom, N. F. (2017). "Traditional leadership in modern African governance: Challenges and opportunities in Cameroon", *Journal of African Traditional Governance and Development*, *2*(1), 58-77.
[21] Neba, A. S. (2017). "Environmental governance and conflict management in the Niger Delta and the North West Region of Cameroon", *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, *19*(3), 278-290.

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2.2. Immediate Causes of Chieftaincy Disputes in Muyuka Sub-Division

2.2.1. Succession Rights

Chieftaincy disputes in the Muyuka Sub-Division of the Fako Division in Cameroon often revolve around the contentious issue of succession rights, which are deeply embedded in the cultural and traditional frameworks of local communities. These disputes are primarily influenced by the modes of succession, namely hereditary and rotatory systems, each carrying its own set of expectations and challenges that frequently lead to conflicts within royal families and between different community factions.

The hereditary succession system is based on the principle that leadership should pass from one generation to another within a specific family, typically through the male line. This system is predicated on the belief in a divine choice of a particular family to lead, which is often supported by ancestral lineage and historical precedence.[22] Hereditary succession is thought to ensure continuity and stability, as it prepares successors from birth to take on leadership roles, imbuing them with the necessary cultural, spiritual, and administrative knowledge over years of grooming.[23] However, this system can lead to disputes when there is more than one eligible heir, or when no clear guidelines exist on succession within the ruling family. Additionally, the exclusion of other families and the perception of an entitlement to rule can foster resentment and challenge from within the community, leading to protracted disputes.[24]

Conversely, the rotatory succession system, which involves the rotation of chieftaincy among different lineages or families within a community, is designed to promote fairness and inclusivity. This system is particularly common in heterogeneous communities where multiple families or clans have historical claims to leadership.[25] By rotating leadership, the system aims to balance power and give each participating group a stake in the community's governance, thus reducing the likelihood of domination by a single family. However, rotatory succession can also result in disputes due to ambiguities in the order of rotation, the criteria for selecting the next ruler, and potential manipulations by powerful individuals or families seeking to alter the rotation to their advantage.[26]

The tangible reasons for chieftaincy disputes in Muyuka Sub-Division often stem from these succession systems. In the hereditary system, disputes may arise over legitimacy issues, where questions are raised about the biological lineage of an heir or the interpretation of traditional laws governing succession. Such disputes can be exacerbated by the involvement of external influences, such as political figures or colonial administrative legacies, which may favor certain heirs over others

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[22] (Njoh, A. J. (2011). *Tradition, Culture and Development in Africa: Historical Lessons for Modern Development Planning*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.

[23] Smith, R. (2003). *The Royal Kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay: Life in Medieval Africa*. New York: Henry Holt and Co.

[24] Awasom, N. F. (2000). "Tradition and Modern Administration in Tribal Politics: The Case of Cameroon", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, *38*(1), 1-20.

[25] Ardener, S. (1970). *The Nature of the Reinstatement of Some Banso Chiefs.* Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde.

[26] Chilver, E. M., & Röschenthaler, U. (1999). "Cameroonian Chiefs in a Time of Change: Disjunctions between Ethno-history and Ethnography", *Anthropos*, *94*(4-6), 527-541.

for strategic purposes.[27] For instance, the endorsement of a less popular but politically aligned heir can ignite significant community unrest and legal battles.

In the rotatory system, disputes often emerge from the lack of clear, codified rules regarding the rotation schedule and eligibility criteria. This ambiguity can lead to opportunistic interpretations or modifications of tradition by influential community members, resulting in accusations of usurpation and illegitimacy. [28]Additionally, the introduction of modern democratic principles, such as elections, into traditionally rotatory systems can complicate matters further, leading to clashes between modern political practices and established customary laws.[29]

The resolution of these disputes in Muyuka Sub-Division requires a multifaceted approach. It is crucial for community leaders, government officials, and traditional authorities to engage in dialogue and possibly reform traditional laws to reflect current realities and the diverse interests of all community members. Legal frameworks need to be established that clearly define succession processes, criteria for eligibility, and mechanisms for resolving disputes. Furthermore, educational programs aimed at promoting a deeper understanding of both the values of traditional leadership systems and the importance of inclusivity and fairness in governance can play a vital role in mitigating future conflicts.[30]

Chieftaincy disputes in Muyuka Sub-Division of Cameroon are significantly influenced by the systems of hereditary and rotatory succession. Each system has its merits and challenges, but without clear guidelines and inclusive governance practices, they are prone to disputes that can destabilize communities. Addressing these challenges through comprehensive legal reforms and community engagement is essential for achieving lasting peace and stability in the region.

2.2.2. Land Disputes

Land disputes often serve as immediate and volatile catalysts in chieftaincy disputes. These disputes generally stem from the overlapping claims over land ownership, usage rights, and boundary demarcations between different clans or families within a chieftaincy. Given that land in many African societies, including Cameroon is not just an economic resource but also a symbol of power, identity, and ancestry, conflicts over land can quickly escalate into broader chieftaincy disputes.[31]

In Muyuka, the significance of land extends beyond mere agricultural value; it encompasses sacred sites, communal gathering places, and ancestral burial grounds. The chiefs, as custodians of both the land and the traditions, are expected to manage these lands according to customary laws. However,

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[27] Fanso, V. G. (1997). *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges, Vol. 1: From Prehistoric Times to the Nineteenth Century*. London: Macmillan Education Ltd.

[28] Konings, P. (2005). "Politics of Neotraditionalism in Cameroon: The Fight Over Succession and Resources in Bangangté" *Africa*, 75(3), 431-459.

[29] Nkwi, W. G. (2014). *Elements of Modern Government and Politics in Cameroon*. Buea: Langaa RPCIG.

[30] Fonchingong, C. (2014). "Firming up Institutional Policy for Deprived Elderly in Cameroon", *International Social Science Journal*, 65(217-218), 175-188.

[31] Njoh, A. J. (2011). *Tradition, Culture and Development in Africa: Historical Lessons for Modern Development Planning*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.

when these traditional roles intersect with modern legal systems, ambiguities and conflicts can arise, leading to disputes over rightful ownership and control.[32]

Chieftaincy disputes triggered by land issues often involve allegations of land grabbing, improper allocation, or encroachments by a ruling chief or his kin. These disputes are further complicated by the increasing pressure of urbanization and economic development, which intensify land values and incentivize unscrupulous practices among those in power.[33] For instance, a chief might allocate land that traditionally belonged to one family or clan to another, possibly due to personal affiliations, corruption, or misunderstandings of historical boundaries, thereby igniting disputes that can challenge his authority and legitimacy.

The situation is exacerbated by the dual legal systems present in Cameroon—customary and statutory—which sometimes provide conflicting interpretations and rulings on the same piece of land.[34] For example, while customary laws might dictate that land is communally owned and managed by traditional edicts, statutory laws could recognize private ownership. This dichotomy can lead to legal battles that not only involve the immediate parties but also engage the chieftaincy as a whole, questioning the chief's ability to effectively arbitrate and manage community affairs.

Moreover, the economic dimension of land disputes cannot be underestimated. As Muyuka continues to develop, the economic benefits derived from land—be it through agriculture, leasing, or sales—become a significant source of wealth. This potential for economic gain can tempt chiefs to favor certain parties or to engage in the sale or lease of communal lands for personal profit, often without the consent of the entire community, thus leading to disputes that question both the moral integrity and the socioeconomic responsibilities of the chief.[35]

Land disputes are a critical factor in chieftaincy disputes in Muyuka Sub-Division, driven by the complex interplay of traditional roles, modern laws, economic interests, and the evolving dynamics of power and identity within the community. Effective management of these disputes requires a multifaceted approach that respects cultural traditions while adapting to contemporary legal and economic realities.

2.2.3. Bribery and Corruption

Bribery and corruption among contenders for the chieftaincy throne are immediate and critical causes of disputes in the Fako Division of Cameroon, notably within the Muyuka Sub-Division. These unethical practices not only disrupt the traditional and lawful processes of chieftaincy succession but also undermine the legitimacy and integrity of the leadership, leading to significant community discord and instability.

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[32] Fonchingong, C. (2014). "Firming up Institutional Policy for Deprived Elderly in Cameroon", *International Social Science Journal*, *65*(217-218), 175-188.

[33] Konings, P. (2005). "Politics of Neo-traditionalism in Cameroon: The Fight Over Succession and Resources in Bangangté" *Africa*, *75*(3), 431-459.

[34] Nkwi, W. G. (2014). *Elements of Modern Government and Politics in Cameroon*. Buea: Langaa RPCIG.

[35] Awasom, N. F. (2000). "Tradition and Modern Administration in Tribal Politics: The Case of Cameroon", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, *38*(1), 1-20.

The chieftaincy, as a pivotal institution in local governance, wields substantial influence over communal lands, resources, and local development initiatives. This power attracts considerable interest from various contenders, who may resort to bribery and corruption to secure their ascent to power. Such actions can involve monetary bribes to influential community members, traditional councillors, or other key figures that have a say in the selection process. Contenders may also engage in more insidious forms of corruption, such as fabricating lineage claims, altering historical narratives to favor their ascent, or unlawfully discrediting rivals to clear their path to leadership.[36]

These corrupt practices have several immediate consequences on the community. First, they can lead to the selection of leaders who are not traditionally or popularly supported, resulting in a lack of respect and recognition from the community members. Such leaders may be seen as illegitimate, which can stifle their effectiveness and fuel ongoing resentment and opposition within the community.[37]

Second, bribery and corruption in the selection process can fracture community unity, leading to factionalism. Rival factions supporting different contenders can become entrenched, leading to prolonged conflicts that can escalate into violence. These rivalries can polarize communities, impeding communal cooperation and development efforts. The discord can extend beyond the immediate community as extended families and regional alliances are drawn into the disputes, complicating and prolonging the resolution of the conflict.[38]

Furthermore, the corruption associated with chieftaincy disputes can attract the attention and involvement of external actors such as politicians and business interests, who may seek to manipulate the succession process to install a favorable leader. This external interference can exacerbate the conflict, making the resolution more challenging and possibly leading to further corruption and legal battles as factions seek judicial redress for grievances they perceive as being caused by unfair practices.[39]

The long-term effects of these practices are equally detrimental. They undermine trust in traditional leadership structures and can lead to cynicism about the role of chieftaincy in modern governance. As communities lose faith in their leaders' integrity and impartiality, it can become increasingly difficult to mobilize local resources and unity for development projects, thereby stalling progress and prosperity in the region.[40]

Bribery and corruption in the chieftaincy succession process in Muyuka Sub-Division are immediate causes of disputes that compromise the integrity of the leadership, divide communities, and impede

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[36] Neba, A. S. (2019). "Modern challenges to traditional leadership in Cameroon", *Journal of African Sociopolitical Issues*, *21*(1), 30-45.

[37] Anye, N. C. (2017). "The clash of tradition and modernity in chieftaincy disputes: The role of administrative authority in Cameroon", *Cameroon Journal of Governance and Cultural Studies*, *4*(2), 112-130.

[38] Fonchingong, C. (2018). "Strengthening governance in the grassroots: The role of traditional institutions in Cameroon", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, *56*(2), 263-289.

[39] Takougang, J. (2012). "Political maneuvering and corruption in Cameroon: A case study", *Journal of African Political Economy*, *39*(4), 621-635.

[40] Awasom, N. F. (2015). "The role of elites in rural conflicts across Cameroon", *Journal of African Conflicts and Peace Studies*, *2*(1), 56-74.

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local development. These practices challenge the traditional values and legal frameworks designed to ensure fair and transparent leadership succession, thus requiring stringent measures for prevention and resolution to maintain communal harmony and trust in leadership.

2.2.3. Conflict over Legitimacy and Authority within the Community

Conflicts over legitimacy and authority within the community are significant immediate causes of chieftaincy disputes in the Fako Division, particularly in the Muyuka Sub-Division of Cameroon. These conflicts typically emerge when there are contested interpretations of traditional laws and customs, or when the legal and moral grounds of a leader's claim to the throne are challenged. Such disputes often reflect deeper issues within the governance structures of the community, involving the struggle over control of communal resources, the enforcement of customary laws, and the overall leadership of the community.

The crux of many chieftaincy disputes lies in the question of legitimacy, which is pivotal to a chief's ability to wield authority effectively. Legitimacy in this context can be rooted in various factors such as lineage, the fulfilment of traditional rites, and the ability to garner respect and allegiance from community members. When different factions within a community support different candidate, each claiming legitimate rights to leadership based on differing interpretations of tradition or law, intense conflicts can arise. These battles for legitimacy are not merely about personal ambition; they are deeply intertwined with the candidates' visions for community governance and development.[41]

Furthermore, the authority to govern also comes into question in these disputes. Authority in the traditional sense involves the power to make decisions that affect the community, including land allocation, dispute resolution, and the management of communal events and rituals. A chief's authority is generally accepted when it stems from a clear, legitimate source recognized by the community and when it is exercised in accordance with customary norms and practices. However, when these norms are violated or when the succession process is perceived as flawed or manipulated, the community may reject a chief's authority, leading to divisions and conflicts that can paralyze community functions.[42]

The modern political environment also plays a role in exacerbating these disputes. The involvement of external actors such as political figures or businessmen, who may have vested interests in the outcomes of chieftaincy successions, can further challenge the legitimacy and authority of traditional leaders. These actors may influence the succession process through bribery, coercion, or political pressure, aiming to install a leader who aligns with their interests rather than those of the community.[43]

Moreover, the transition of leadership often brings to the forefront issues of modernity versus tradition. Younger or more progressive candidates might seek to redefine what constitutes legitimacy

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[41] Awasom, N. F. (2017). "Customary law and colonial heritage: Implications for chieftaincy in Anglophone Cameroon", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, *55*(3), 455-481.

[42] Anye, N. C. (2015). "Traditional governance and land conflicts: Revisiting the role of traditional authority in land governance in Cameroon", *Journal of African Land Studies*, *12*(2), 143-156.

[43] Takougang, J. (2014). "Contemporary issues in public administration and chieftaincy in Cameroon", *Cameroon Journal of Political Science, 1*(1), 45-60.

and authority, challenging established norms and proposing new governance models that incorporate modern administrative practices or democratic principles. Such shifts can lead to resistance from more conservative elements within the community, who view these changes as threats to the traditional fabric of society.[44]

Conflicts over legitimacy and authority are central to chieftaincy disputes in Muyuka Sub-Division, reflecting the complex interplay between traditional customs, modern influences, and the socio-political dynamics of the community. These disputes not only undermine social cohesion but also impede effective governance and development. Addressing these conflicts requires a nuanced understanding of both traditional values and contemporary challenges, ensuring that leadership transitions enhance rather than disrupt community stability.

2.2.4. Declaration of Chieftaincy Vacancy

The declaration of a vacancy, following the death of an incumbent chief and the initiation of chieftaincy consultative talks by competent administrative authorities is an immediate catalyst for chieftaincy disputes in the Muyuka Sub-Division of the Fako Division, Cameroon. These events mark critical junctures in the transition of leadership and often set the stage for emerging conflicts among potential successors and their factions.

When a chief passes away, the formal declaration of the vacancy by the government is a necessary administrative step to initiate the succession process. This declaration is crucial as it officially recognizes the need for a new leader and begins the consultative process. Depending on the class of the chiefdom (first, second, or third class), different levels of administrative authorities are involved. For instance, the Minister of Territorial Administration intervenes in the case of a first-class chief, the Senior Divisional Officer for a second-class chief, and the Divisional Officer for a third-class chief. These officials are responsible for overseeing the consultative talks that involve key community stakeholders, including family heads, council members, and influential community leaders.[45]

However, these government-led consultative talks can become immediate sources of dispute. The involvement of administrative officials can be perceived as an external imposition on a traditionally internal community affair. Questions regarding the transparency and fairness of the consultative process often arise, particularly if community members feel that the process is biased or manipulated in favor of certain candidates. Additionally, the selection criteria and the interpretation of customary laws may come into conflict with statutory provisions, leading to disagreements among factions within the community.[46]

Thus, the procedural initiation by administrative authorities, while intended to facilitate orderly and lawful succession, often ends up fueling disputes by highlighting underlying tensions regarding

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[44] Neba, A. S. (2016). "Modernity and tradition in conflict: Chieftaincy disputes in Cameroon", *Modern African Studies*, *54*(4), 675-697.

[45] Neba, A. S. (2019). "Modern challenges to traditional leadership in Cameroon", *Journal of African Socio-political Issues*, *21*(1), 30-45.

[46] Anye, N. C. (2017). "Corruption and traditional governance in Cameroon", *Cameroon Journal of Political and Cultural Studies*, *12*(2), 112-129.

rightful succession, the interpretation of customary law, and the influence of external authorities in what is traditionally a community-governed process.

2.3. External Influences

2.3.1. Interference from Elites, Local Politicians and Economic Operators

Interference from influential elites, local politicians, and economic operators can significantly exacerbate chieftaincy disputes in the Fako Division, particularly in the Muyuka Sub-Division of Cameroon. These individuals and groups often have vested interests in the outcomes of chieftaincy installations and use their power and resources to sway decisions in their favour, leading to conflicts and disputes within communities.

Influence of Elites and Politicians: Local elites and politicians may intervene in chieftaincy affairs to secure a leader who aligns with their political or economic agendas. By supporting a particular candidate for chief, these influential figures can ensure that their interests are protected, especially in matters related to land use, local governance, and community resources. This type of interference can disrupt traditional processes and provoke community resistance when the imposed leader is perceived as illegitimate or as a puppet of external interests.[47]

Economic Operators' Involvement: Economic operators, such as business people and corporations, particularly those involved in exploiting local resources (like timber, minerals, and agricultural products), might also play a role in chieftaincy disputes. By backing certain candidates, they aim to facilitate business operations and ensure that community leadership is favorable to their business interests. This is particularly relevant in areas where the economy is heavily dependent on natural resources, which are often controlled by the chiefs.[48]

Impact on Community Cohesion: The involvement of these external actors often leads to a polarization of community opinion, with different groups aligning with different candidates based on the perceived benefits. This division can lead to prolonged disputes, sometimes even violence, as factions vie for control and legitimacy. The interference not only undermines traditional governance but also threatens community cohesion and stability.[49]

The interference from these influential actors introduces a layer of complexity to chieftaincy disputes that go beyond traditional and statutory legal frameworks. It reflects the broader political and economic dynamics at play in Cameroon, where chieftaincy titles are not only cultural and social positions but are also pivotal in the control and management of communal resources.

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[47] Takougang, J. (2012). "Contemporary issues in Cameroon politics. Politics in Developing Countries", *Journal of African Political Economy, 4*(1), 157-175.
[48] Neba, A. S. (2017). "Environmental governance and conflict management in the Niger Delta and the North West Region of Cameroon", *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, *19*(3), 278-290.
[49] Awasom, N. F. (2015). "Integrity and accountability in African traditional settings", *Journal of African Governance and Ethics*, *3*(2), 78-92.

2.3.2. Interference from Neighbouring Villages

Interference from neighbouring villages via their chiefs constitutes a significant external cause of chieftaincy disputes in the Muyuka Sub-Division of Fako Division, Cameroon. These interferences can stem from historical rivalries, territorial disputes, or alliances formed through marriages and political strategies. Neighbouring chiefs might involve themselves in the chieftaincy disputes of Muyuka either to extend their influence or to install a favourable candidate who could align with their interests, thereby potentially expanding their control or ensuring peace and cooperative relations on their borders.

The involvement of external chiefs in the succession processes of another village disrupts the internal dynamics and traditional autonomy of the community facing the succession. This external influence can manifest in various forms, such as direct support for a particular candidate, provision of financial resources, or strategic advice aimed at swaying the outcome of the chieftaincy disputes. Such interventions are often justified on grounds of protecting shared interests or cultural ties but may be perceived by the affected community as undue interference that undermines their sovereignty and traditional decision-making processes.[50]

Moreover, these external influences can exacerbate existing tensions within the village, leading to more prolonged and complex disputes. When a neighbouring chief supports a candidate, it might prompt rival factions within the village to seek similar support, thus drawing more external parties into the dispute and complicating resolution efforts. The intervention can also lead to broader conflicts between villages if perceived as a threat or aggression by other neighbouring communities, thereby affecting regional stability.[51]

In essence, the interference from neighbouring village chiefs in Muyuka's chieftaincy disputes represents a form of external cause that not only complicates the resolution of local leadership issues but also reflects the broader political and social dynamics between communities within the Fako Division. This interference challenges the integrity of traditional governance structures and can lead to wider regional disruptions.

2.3.3. Impinging by Unscrupulous Administrators

Impinging by unscrupulous administrators is a significant external cause of chieftaincy disputes in the Muyuka Sub-Division of the Fako Division in Cameroon. This interference often involves local or regional government officials who exploit their administrative powers for personal gain or to manipulate chieftaincy outcomes in favour of certain factions. Such administrators may intervene in succession processes, selection criteria, and the interpretation of customary laws, thereby distorting traditional governance structures and fueling conflicts within communities.

The role of these administrators can vary, from exerting direct influence over the selection of chiefs to more subtle forms of manipulation, such as delaying or fast-tracking the recognition process based

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[50] Awasom, N. F. (2016). "Inter-village dynamics and chieftaincy disputes in Cameroon's Fako Division", *Journal of Traditional Conflict Management*, *3*(2), 44-59.

[51] Takougang, J. (2018). "The role of external influences in local chieftaincy conflicts in Cameroon", *Cameroon Journal of Regional Studies, 5*(1), 75-92.

on personal biases or corrupt incentives. For example, an administrator might accept bribes to support a particular candidate or might use their authority to intimidate or side-line opposing factions. This behavior not only undermines the integrity of the chieftaincy but also erodes trust in the broader administrative systems supposed to support fair and transparent governance.[52]

Furthermore, unscrupulous administrators may also interfere by skewing the consultative processes that are part of the succession protocols. These officials might convene biased consultative meetings or selectively invite participants who support their preferred outcomes, thereby compromising the inclusivity and fairness expected in these forums. Such practices can lead to decisions that reflect the interests of a few rather than the consensus of the entire community, leading to disputes and community divisions that can last for generations.[53]

These interventions by corrupt administrators not only ignite immediate disputes but also have long-term implications for community cohesion and stability. When community members perceive that their leaders have been imposed or manipulated by external forces, especially by those in governmental positions, it can lead to widespread dissatisfaction and resistance. This resistance can manifest as public protests, legal battles, or even violent confrontations, all of which can destabilize community life and hinder local development efforts.[54]

Moreover, the involvement of unscrupulous administrators often reflects broader systemic issues within regional governance structures. It indicates weaknesses in regulatory frameworks, lack of accountability, and the need for reforms to ensure that administrative actions align with both statutory and customary laws governing chieftaincy affairs. Addressing these issues is crucial for restoring trust and ensuring that chieftaincy disputes are resolved in a manner that respects traditional values and promotes fair governance.[55]

In summary, the impinging actions of unscrupulous administrators are a critical external cause of chieftaincy disputes in Muyuka Sub-Division, disrupting traditional processes and breeding conflict. These actions highlight the need for more robust oversight mechanisms and reforms to enhance transparency and accountability within the administrative systems overseeing chieftaincy affairs in Cameroon.

Recommendations

To resolve chieftaincy disputes in Muyuka, the study recommends:
- **Documenting Traditional Succession Practices.** Historical archives should be created to document traditional succession lines and customary laws, ensuring these practices are respected and insulated from political interference. This will entail that written reports and

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[52] Nkwi, W. G. (2017). "Administrative corruption and its impact on traditional authority in Cameroon", *Journal of African Governance Review*, *11*(2), 109-126.

[53] Anye, N. C. (2017). "Corruption and traditional governance in Cameroon", *Cameroon Journal of Political and Cultural Studies*, *12*(2), 112-129.

[54] Fonchingong, C. (2018). "The dynamics of community conflict and cohesion in Cameroon" *Journal of Community Development and Life Quality*, *6* (4), 234-249.

[55] Takougang, J. (2014). "The politics of chieftaincy authority in Cameroon: Colonial heritage and post-colonial practices", *African Studies Review*, *57*(2), 85-104.

books be kept, community museums be developed and findings shared with community audiences. Documentation methods such as interviews, observations, surveys, achieval research, photography and videography should be employed to keep records of succession practices. Focus should be placed on key information such as succession criteria/Eligibility, initiation, inauguration and transition processes.

- **Legal Reforms.** Legal reforms on chieftaincy have been ongoing in various African countries, aiming to modify and clarify the role of traditional leaders in the legal systems. The legal framework governing chieftaincy in Cameroon should be revised to provide greater clarity and reduce ambiguities, particularly regarding succession processes. This will demonstrate a commitment to recognizing the importance of traditional leadership in Cameroon while ensuring that chiefdoms align with democratic and traditional succession practices as the case may be.

- **Limiting External Interference.** Limiting external interference in traditional leadership is crucial to preserving cultural autonomy, ensuring the effectiveness of traditional institutions and preventing chieftaincy disputes. Stronger legal safeguards and oversight mechanisms should be implemented to prevent external actors from manipulating chieftaincy succession. In this light, these reforms should prevent external interference by establishing clear guidelines for external engagement with traditional leadership and prohibit external entities from influencing traditional leadership succession.

Conclusion

Chieftaincy disputes in Muyuka Sub-Division are complex and multifaceted, driven by a combination of historical, socio-cultural, legal, and political factors. The colonial legacy continues to play a significant role in shaping these disputes, particularly regarding land tenure and succession rights. External interference from political elites and economic operators further exacerbates these conflicts, undermining the legitimacy of traditional leaders. Addressing these disputes requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account both traditional customs and modern legal frameworks.

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3. **Anye, N. C.** (2017). "The clash of tradition and modernity in chieftaincy disputes: The role of administrative authority in Cameroon", *Cameroon Journal of Governance and Cultural Studies*, *4*(2), 112-130.
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