



Economic Diversification among the Cattle Mbororo in the Bamenda Grasslands of Cameroon, 1916 -2021

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Abstract: Diversification has become one of the hallmarks towards development in different aspects of society. The Mbororowho migrated into the Bamenda Grasslands during the 20th century were often tagged as Fulani nomadists based on their cattle rearing activities which necessitated constant displacement in search of pasture. Certain exigencies had influenced a diversification by the Mbororo in the Bamenda Grasslands from cattle rearing to other alternative sources of income, especially in the domain of farming. This study aims at examining the bases, evolution and impact of economic diversification by the Mbororo in the domain of crop farming. Based on primary and secondary sources as well as informed by a qualitative approach to presentation, this paper argues that the Mbororo in a bid to enhance sustainability were posed on diversifying from cattle rearing to crop production. They were exclusively into cattle rearing activities and saw the need to multiply revenue generating sources. The paradigm shifts into different economic ventures within the agricultural sector was based on crops that had a high economic value. It was also revealed that farming served as the basis to economic socialization which was a nexus to integration. In essence, attributing the Mbororo to cattle rearing is gradually facing out and new avenues have been exploited by this people for their growth and development.

Keywords: Mbororo, economic diversification, agriculture, crop production, Bamenda Grasslands

1. INTRODUCTION

The Mbororo have often been tagged as Fulani nomadists based on their cattle rearing activities which led to a near absence of a sedentary lifestyle. Considering that their predominant activity was cattle rearing, they were bound by certain geographical constraints to migrate from place to place in search of pasture.¹ In essence, they constituted the second wave of migrants (late comers) within the Bamenda Grasslands whereby their primary aim was in search of suitable areas for grazing. Their arrival in Cameroon during the early 20th century influenced their settlement patterns within indigenous communities in the Bamenda Grasslands. A prominent period during the migration of these people was in 1916 which accounted for the arrival of Ardo Sabga Addulahi Bi Hoba (the place he settled was named after him called Sabga). According to Awasum, he was accompanied by approximately 2000 herds of cattle that eventually influenced their settlement in Babanki Tungo thanks to the hospitality of the recipient communities.²

Cattle rearing was the main activity that the Mbororo came with, which eventually helped in sustaining themselves. By the end of the 20th century, certain socio-economic circumstances enabled the Mbororo to embrace other alternative economic sources of livelihood notably in crop production. It is from this premise that food crop cultivation became popular among the Mbororo.³

¹Jabiru Muhammadou Amadou, "The Mbororo Problem in North West Cameroon a Historical Investigation", *American Scientific Research Journal for Engineering, Technology, and Sciences (ASRJETS)*, 2017,38-40.

²Nicodemus Fru "The Hausa and Fulani in the Bamenda Grasslands, 1903-1960"(PhD Thesis in History: The University of Yaounde,1984),40-60.

The study in this respect foregrounded by an analytical method examines the extent to which economic diversification constituted an alternative activity of the Mbororo within the Bamenda Grasslands. It is anchored on three dimensions, the bases, evolution and impact of economic diversification by the Mbororo within the Bamenda Grasslands. Before delving into the crux of the paper, key concepts, theories, empirical review and methodology employed in the study will be provided to situate the paper within its historical context. Concepts like Mbororo, Diversification, Agriculture, Alternative Economic Activity, and Bamenda Grasslands come to focus here.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study identified a conflation of two theories that suit the main argument of the study. These theories include the theory of evolution and the theory of diversification. According to Charles Darwin, the theory of evolution entails developing features or characteristics that make human beings to better adapt to their surrounding environment and or setting.⁴The theory argues that evolution determines the way life develops in all forms. In addition, Darwin proposed that evolution works on the theory of “survival of the fittest.” This entailed that individuals in a population or community are more likely to survive provided they adopted resilient strategies to cope with challenging economic conditions.⁵ This theory resonates with the Mbororo engaging in alternative economic activities primarily agriculture in an effort to cope with the evolving economic environment. Hence, the model agrees with the diversification drive among the Mbororo. Closely associated with the theory of evolution is the theory of diversification.

Diversification can be defined as a technique that reduces risk by allocating investments across various financial instruments, industries and other categories. Wolfgang argues that diversification is the practice of spreading your investments around so that your exposure to any one type of asset is limited. This practice is designed to help reduce the volatility of your portfolio over time.⁶ Cheung argues that it is a risk management strategy where individuals and firms diversify their economic activities to check against economic shocks.⁷According to Ola Mahmoud, the paradigm aims to maximize returns by investing in different areas that would each react differently to the same event. He adds that most investment professionals agree that, although it does not guarantee against loss, diversification is the most important component of reaching long-range financial goals while minimizing risk.⁸This concept makes us to best understand the bases of alternative economic activities among the Mbororo communities in the Bamenda Grasslands.

3. BASES FOR DIVERSIFICATION

A plethora of reasons can justify the complement of cattle rearing as the main economic activity of the Mbororo with crop cultivation. The hallmarks of diversification were greatly felt by the end of the 20th century when this group of late comers had already occupied extensive areas within the Bamenda Grasslands. Enhanced by the tenets of hospitality, most indigenous people allowed the Mbororo to settle in further areas from their habitat considering their cattle rearing activities. Also motivated by their Islamic background, they found it difficult to cohabit with indigenous communities with ease which in most instances were Christians and African traditionalist.

During the end of the 20th century, cohabitation which for the greater part had been peaceful began experiencing certain difficulties that were bound. Lamido Issa Demnsa attests to the fact that early problems emanating from the Mbororo and indigenous people were in the domain of farmer-grazer conflicts. This growing tension particularly in areas like Wum, Nkambe and Bamenda divisions created a tense atmosphere in which most settlements ended in deadlocks.⁹In instances when this farmer grazer conflicts reached certain proportions, indigenous response from both communities often

⁴ Charles, Darwin, *Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, (London:Albemarle Street1859),37.

⁵ Browne Janet, *Charles Darwin: The Power of Place*,(London:Pimlico,2003),376-379.

⁶ Wolfgang, “Motives for Firm Diversification. A Survey on Theory and Empirical Evidence”,1.

⁷ Joe Cheung, “Diversification”. Available at <https://www.ifswf.org> ,accessed on December 18,2021.

⁸Ola Mahmoud, “The Origin of Diversification: An Evolutionary Theory”. Available at <https://papers.ssrn.com>, accessed on December 18,2021.

⁹Amadou, “The Mbororo Problem”,38-44.

affected co-relations. The indigenous people during market days prohibited the Mbororo from buying food. Most of the Mbororo had to resort to their traditional meal of milk accompanied some potatoes for survival (*dankere*).¹⁰

Furthermore, the reduction in household income came as a result of the farmer grazer conflicts that affected most communities of the Bamenda Grasslands. Some of these Mbororo disclosed that their household life and income had been affected by frequent farmer-grazer conflicts which were leveraged to cattle loss and inter-ethnic tensions. Hence, family heads encountered difficulties to provide healthcare, education and nutrition for their families. All this was because, it attributed to expenses leading to legal procedures and compensation for damages caused.¹¹ From the foregoing, it is evident that families who depended solely on cattle grazing as a source of income were the most affected.

These difficulties acted as boost to the Mbororo in which they gradually began to involve themselves in some form of food cropping to survive. Their survival in food cropping was influenced by their connections with indigenous populations. Raymatou posits that they were conversant with the farming carried out the indigenous people of Mbot through observations.¹² This constant cohabitation prompted by the observational trend that was hitherto witnessed in aspects where the host communities were involved in farming. It was in this context that the Mbororo progressively diversified from cattle rearing to crop production initially for subsistence and later on for commercialization.¹³

Aside from the conflict-oriented issue was the influence of demographic and environmental considerations. The population of the Mbororo in the Bamenda Grasslands kept increasing on yearly bases from their arrival in the 20th century. The factors that accounted for this increase were high birth rates, early marriages, the prevalence of polygamous marriages and the influence of Islam. Young ladies between the ages of 10-15 and males above 18 years were considered ready for marriage. High birth rates became prevalent considering their early marriages. This aspect equally corroborates their Islamic religion which was not in adherence to contraceptives and sterilization in favour of birth control. By 2020, the Mbororo population was estimated at 80,000 people within the Bamenda Grasslands.¹⁴ This exponential population growth created environmental concerns. Environmental issues in the light of inadequate pasture and degradation negatively affected pastoral activities. This was further accentuated by the high dependency rate on land for grazing.

This was one of the key environmental reasons which pushed the Mbororo of the Bamenda Grasslands to seek alternative economic openings, especially crop production and commercialization. The increase in cattle had caused their Ardorates to have difficulties in accommodating them. Consequently, the Ardos were forced to sell out some of the cattle for other business opportunities. Lamido Issa Demnsa further posits that he was obliged to send his grown-up kids to go and learn other things such as taxi driving, bike riding, mechanic and training to the police forces or army all this because he was afraid that his cows could die of hunger, thirst or suffocation.

Certain Mbororos attest to the misfortunes they recounted in the course of grazing. Abdu Jalil recounted how he lost all his cattle during the Lake Nyos disaster in 1986, all his cattle died while he survived alongside two of his children. This rendered him helpless and forced him to abandon cattle rearing. His herds of cattle amounting to 165 cows all perished. According to him, he could only look for other sources of income that were readily available to him, he saw farming as the immediate avenue to survive. He later on got into the transport sector and embraced driving as a source of livelihood.

Adamu Ali on his part rather attributed his geographical adversity to climatic conditions that often prevailed. He posits that, while carrying out his cattle rearing activities, the dry season always negatively affected the sector in terms of pasture as earlier highlighted. The rainy season on its part

¹⁰Idem.

¹¹Ahmadou Mustapha, 41 years, Farmer, interviewed by Bertha Nyah, Mesaje, April 28, 2021.

¹² Interview with Ahmadou Mustapha,

¹³Idem.

¹⁴Frank Fout, "The Africa Report, Cameroon: The Tense Relationship between Fulani and Anglophones", *Yaoundé Poste*, 21 July 2020.

was another impediment. The thunderstorm that often affected cows usually kills them at times. He recounted to have lost 23 cows in 2002 due to lightening. These greatly discouraged him and cause his shift towards crop production which according to him never had such a risk. Certain families grouped up among areas that were settled by the Mbororo in realizing the different avenues of obtaining revenue that was not attributed to cattle rearing alone. According to Lamido Issa Demnsanot all families were involved in the cattle rearing sector¹⁵. The disparity in ownership of cattle had often made it such that those who had little needed some external sources of income for sustainability.

From the foregoing, it became apparent that the paradigm shift witnessed by the Mbororo from cattle rearing to crop production was based on certain exigencies. The subsequent analysis probes into the evolutionary trends in the farming sector.

4. EVOLUTIONS IN CROP PRODUCTION

Mbororo contact with the indigenous population gradually reduced the exigencies of religious pressure on the woman within the household. In this connection, the melting point was an observance and practical application. The context within which this aspect strived was the ease with which the Mbororo appropriated such skills in farming. In an adaptable method, they did not form ridges like the others but rather made use of cow dung. They simply dug trenches areas and planted crops such as maize, pepper and potatoes. The dung was used to enhance the fertility and moisture of the soil and greatly improved their yields. The habitat of these cattles constituted fertile areas to which farming was done. They did farming for two to three years in this particular spot and moved to other areas. The Mbororo changed their farming positions especially when the yields were getting poor. They practiced a system of shifting cultivation while following the areas where cattle move from place to place. They were not so much into hard labour and did very little tilting of soil. These activities were first begun by the Mbororo men, followed by their women and youths who joined later on.

Some Mbororo outrightly sought orientation from their indigenous communities and in some instances attended capacity building seminars whereby they obtained skills in improving their crop cultivation. MBOSCUA (Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association)¹⁶ played a prominent role in this perspective. This strategy was tested or piloted in Donga Mantung, Ngoketunjia, and Menchum divisions in 2002 with remarkable success. The strategy had been reinforced and extended to 14 communities within the four remaining divisions of the Region. These are Boyo, Momo, Bui, and Mezam. By solving these problems, the organization was directly and indirectly promoting Alternative Economic Activities among the Mbororo leaving in each of these communities. To achieve these goals, MBOSCUA adopted several strategies to sustain their programmes while ensuring that sustainability was guaranteed. These strategies included the use of certain practical realities among the people as an advance mechanism to accelerate growth within the Mbororo communities. While upholding their cattle rearing tradition, certain funds were readily made available through donations in a bid to finance and follow up projects like small holder businesses, farming groups and education. MBOSCUA through the Civil Society Organization (CSO) played a vibrant role towards promoting economic leaving and development of the Mbororo in the Bamenda Grasslands. The CSO plays a very important function towards sustainable rural development.¹⁷ Also, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are neutral closer to the people at the grassroots and are veritable tools for rural development. They enjoy perfect and cordial relationship trustworthiness and create more impact especially in the masses.¹⁸

¹⁵Fout, "The Africa Report".

¹⁶MBOSCUA is an umbrella association of the Mbororo people, working towards the demarginalization of the Mbororo people in Cameroon especially in the North West Region. The organization aims at helping the Mbororo to fight against poverty, through diversification of sources of their livelihood needs. Despite its socio cultural aspects, they equally took delight in helping themselves economically.

¹⁷MBOSCUA, "Transforming Conflicts over Agro-pastoral Resources", 1-2.

¹⁸Ibid.,11-12.

5. DIVERSIFICATION OF CROP PRODUCTION

In crop production, the Mbororo took special interest in cereals production, tubers and to a lesser extent vegetables (market gardening crops). Maize took centre stage as it was a staple meal by both most indigenous communities and Mbororo at large. Equally, it was less labour-intensive and took from four to five months before it matured for consumption.¹⁹ Equally, maize had an important commercial value for the Mbororo community in Misaje. Some by-products from maize produced by the Mbororo include: *ntakar*, *masa*, and *gari*. This activity was practiced by most Mbororo families who cultivated food crops primarily maize alongside cattle rearing.²⁰

Another cereal which was closely associated with the cultivation of maize in the study area was beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*). This cereal was extensively cultivated by most communities in the Bamenda Grasslands area. Beans was the second most important grain crop next to maize in terms of production and consumption in the study area which the Mbororo people gradually learned how to cultivate. In most cases, it was cultivated alongside maize during the farming season. Sirri and Ngantu disclose that nutritional-wise, beans was rich in protein and provided a good source of iron and zinc (both of which are key elements for mental development).

It was observed that increasing trends in demand for the crop provided an opportunity for farmers to increase bean production as well as participate in its supply chain for income generation.²¹ This inspired some Mbororo to engage in its cultivation not only for subsistence purposes but also to benefit from the aforementioned economic value of the crop. This was the case of Yaya Buldi who was based in Santa and cultivated the cereal alongside maize on the same piece of farmland primarily for family consumption though he posits that during a period of good harvest, the excess was commercialized to yield additional income for the family.²² He adds that he participated in seminars organized by IRAD in partnership with the Pan African Bean Research Alliance in 2014. The seminar was aimed at drilling farmers on modern techniques for producing quality bean seeds. Buldi intimates that the seminar also provided an opportunity for the farmers to be drilled on the recent pest and insects affecting the production of beans, and to provide the farmers and producers with quality and high yielding varieties of bean seeds.²³ Rugayatou Ladi contends that Mbororo in some communities including Dabo Hilltop in Ndop, Bamunka and Babanki were inclined to the cultivated beans for sale. The price of a fifteen-litre bucket of the cereals ranged from 6000fcfa to 8000fcfa in 2020.²⁴

In the same light, groundnut was also cultivated by the Mbororo for consumption and commercial purposes. The cultivation of groundnut was common among the Mbororo in the Sabga, Babanki, Ako, Misaje and Nkambe though on a small scale given that the yields was mainly for subsistence. The crop was an important complement for diet and also some bi-products including: '*bakuru*', '*ntakare*' and groundnut sweets. Samira Hamidou disclosed that these bi-products from groundnuts were sold along streets, schools, popular junctions, hospitals and market squares both urban and rural in the Bamenda Grasslands.²⁵ All of these helped them to generate household income.²⁶

The various domains where crop production thrive was by adapting to their economic dynamics it established a ground for personal and economic growth. For example, in Bui division with a surface area of 2.297 km² the Mbororo people cultivated in a year 1ton of maize, 0.5 tons of beans, 0.25 tons of vegetables, 0.25 tons of cocoyam, 0.10 tons of Irish potatoes, 0.15 tons of yellow yams and 0.15 tons of groundnuts. The Mbororo in the Menchum division also cultivated same crops as those in Bui division. But from the findings, it was observed that their outputs were slightly higher when compared to those in the Bui division because the Mbororo population in Menchum was higher than those of Bui division. In a year, they produced 2tons of maize, 1ton of beans, 0.5ton of vegetables, 0.25 tons of cocoyam, 0.25 tons of Irish potatoes, 0.25 tons of yellow yams, and 0.25 ton of groundnuts. As for

¹⁹Salamatou Kaka, 70 years, farmer, interviewed by Bertha Nyah, Binjeng, May 10, 2021.

²⁰Nafisatou Gidado, 23 years, farmer, interviewed by Bertha Nyah, Misaje, May 8, 2021.

²¹ Interview with Nafisatou Gidado, .

²²Yaya Buldi, 38 years, farmer, interviewed by Bertha Nyah, Santa, August 12 2020.

²³Interview with Yaya Buldi,

²⁴Rugayatou Ladi, 20 years, farmer, interviewed by Bertha Nyah, Babanki, June 5th 2021.

²⁵Samira Hamidou, 38 years, farmer, interviewed by Bertha Nyah, Santa, March 14, 2021.

²⁶ Interview with Samira Hamidou,

Ngoketunjia and Momo divisions both the same outputs with respect to maize, beans, vegetables and cocoyam production. In a year, the Mbororo in these divisions produced 1ton of maize, 0.5ton of beans, 0.25tons of vegetables, and 0.25 tons of cocoyam.

Table1. *Income Generated from the Sale of food crop products by the Mbororo*

Crops cultivated	Tons	Income/year (CFA)
Maize	13	2,600,000
Beans	4.5	630,000
Irish Potatoes	1.2	96,000
Vegetable	3.5	560,000
Cocoyam	2	120,000
Yellow Yam	0.9	700,000
Groundnuts	1.23	295,200
Total	67.33	5,001,200

Source: *Bertha Nyah's fieldwork collection, (2022)*

The findings in table 2 establish the income generated as a result of the crops produced and sold by the Mbororo. In a year the Mbororo from the different areas in the Bamenda Grasslands produced 13tons of maize and made a total income of 2,600,000 CFA. A sum of 630,000 was made from the sales of 4.5 tons of beans on average, a total of 1.2+ tons of Irish potatoes produced and a profit of 960,000 is made. With regards to the cultivation of vegetables, it was realized that a profit of 560,000 was made from the sales of 3.5 tons of vegetables. Meanwhile 1.23 tons of groundnuts were produced in a year and an annual income of 295,200 was realized. With the yellow yam cultivated a total sum of 700,000 was made from the sales of 0.9 tons of yellow yams, 2 tons of cocoyam was produced and a profit of 120,000 was realized annually.

6. IMPACT OF MBORORO ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

Mbororo involvement in alternative economic activities had far-reaching implications in socio-economic and political domains. The following sub-themes elucidates the effects of diversification of the Mbororo in the Bamenda grasslands.

7. INCREASED NUMBER OF MBORORO FARMERS

Farming activities will become one of the prominent activities of the Mbororo aside from cattle rearing. Bamenda grasslands Mbororo engaged in agriculture to diversify their income. This led to an increase in production processes which positively affected their income.²⁷ At first, the majority of these Mbororo bought food stuffs from the indigenous people in the communities such as maize, beans, groundnuts, Irish potatoes and vegetables. This was so because according to the Muslim culture, their women were not allowed to go out of their hurts to do other activities. These women were to sit and wait for their husbands who were also cattle grazers, to supply everything for them, while theirs was only to give birth to children and cater for their homes. Thus, these Mbororo saw the importance of agriculture, thereby leading to an improvement in agriculture since the Mbororo community became involved.²⁸

Most important was the fact that, the yields produced by the Mbororo turned out to be more fruitful, organic and healthy. This was because; the Mbororo cultivated their crops with the use of cow dung which they collected from the paddocks. While some of them have become specialized in doing business with the local population by selling them cow dung. A land rover of cow dung was sold for 20.000 CFA. Consequently, alliance farming has been promoted as a way to improve crop yields, cattle health, and collaboration between farmers and grazers. Also, this led to an increase in household income as one of the economic impact of Mbororo diversification. In fact, their involvement in several economic ventures acted as a bonus to their households as it provided additional income that did not necessarily come out of the sale of cattle as a whole. This additional income helped them provide for their basic needs. This has reduced poverty and hardship as it has reduced unemployment.

²⁷ Allen Consulting Group 2012, "The Economic, Social and Environmental impacts of the Cooperative Research Centres Program", Report to the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research, and Tertiary Education, Canberra, (September 2012):59.

²⁸ Adamou Ousmanu 40 years, farmer, interviewed by Bertha Nyah, Binshua, August 3, 2020.

The settlement pattern of Mbororo automatically changed. They were enlightened as they adopted a more modern lifestyle. Since the Mbororo took permanent residence in the various communities, when they started doing other businesses and socializing, it changed their nomadic lifestyle. The construction of permanent homes made them engage into crop production as another way of life which they had copied from the indigenous communities. They learned how to farm crops such as maize, cocoyam, beans, groundnuts, spices, yams and potatoes like the indigenous farmers. This integration into crop cultivation was carried out both by Mbororo who owned cattle and those who did not. During the transhumance period from November to April annually, cattle were taken to the forested areas and valleys where there in search of green pasture by the herdsmen. While their wives and children were left or remained home permanently with some few cattle around the house.²⁹

As such, these women started developing the spirit to cultivate small gardens around the compound where they planted maize, beans, huckleberry, pumpkin leaves, and bitter leaf amongst others. This was how they gradually started being interested in agriculture and by the early 2000s, their men joined them to cultivate large hectares of land, this time around not only for home consumption but also for commercial purposes. This was a positive remark because the Mbororo couldn't be seen idling around without having even a small garden from where they feed their families. Agriculture served the Mbororo as a source of livelihood. In addition, their engagement in agriculture helped to reduce Poverty and hunger as they could now cultivate their food crops and sustain themselves without a major issue.

Moreover, their involvement in other economic activities has led to a change even in their housing style.³⁰ Mbororo housing over time had to change as they saw and learned how to be modern even in house construction. Most of the houses which the Mbororo used to stay there in the 1970s and 1980s evolved from thatched homes to well-concreted houses. Some of them who were well-to-do even went to the extent of plastering and painting their homes.³¹ Some of them are now landlords renting houses and shops to the general community in the Bamenda Grasslands.³²

Diversification led to economic enlargement and this resulted in economic socialization, making interaction between the Mbororo and their communities increase in all domains. Involvement in agriculture, trading with different items, commercial activities especially in the transport sector, coupled with other services like teaching, journalism, musicians, volunteers, administrators, traditional medicines, councillors, politicians and landlords is a clear indication that a new economy was growing in the Bamenda Grasslands. This economic diversification gave birth to economic adaptation and economic socialization between the Mbororo in their communities.

8. IMPROVED LIVELIHOOD AND SELF ESTEEM

Mbororo economic diversification helped to increase their livelihood thereby boasting self-esteem among the Mbororo people of the Bamenda Grasslands. Self-esteem which is the belief and confidence in an individual's ability and value, has now become part and parcel of the lives of many Mbororo, who at first were considered as nothing else but pastoral nomads. Their diversification has helped especially the Mbororo youths to pursue their goals without any major challenges. Consequently, their input into the society at large and the Bamenda Grasslands in particular, has also contributed to socio-economic and political development, thus cannot be underestimated.³³

9. HELPED FIGHT AGAINST GENDER DISPARITY

According to the Mbororo people and culture, the place of the girl child and women was limited to the kitchen and in her husband's house. She was raised to be a good wife material when she gets married and bear children. She was never trained to be a worker, nor go to school, nor being a trader in order to also bring back income home, like the males usually do. But the story today is different, some of these Mbororo women now go to school to obtain knowledge, while others are shop owners

²⁹Nkambe Council Development Plan (CDP) Report, March 2012, 22.

³⁰RelindisNfor, 35years, Teacher, Interviewed by Bertha Nyah, Bamenda, April 13, 2021.

³¹Ali Sanjo, 38 years, Businessman, Interviewed by Bertha Nyah, Binjeng, August 3, 2020.

³²Bello SandaBuoba, 54years, Landlord, Interviewed by Bertha Nyah, July 3, 2020.

³³Haruna Gede, 30years, engineer, Interviewed by Bertha Nyah, Up Station (Bamenda), January 10, 2021.

established to them either by their parents or husbands, where they too can be earning a living as well as support their siblings, parents, and children. As such, their quest for Alternative Economic Activities is developing daily as these women can best manage their shops without any major challenges. This has made their men to discover that it was a mistake keeping them at home for the past decades doing nothing aside from child bearing and milking cow products only.³⁴

Diversification led to economic enlargement and this resulted to economic socialization, making interaction between the Mbororo and their communities to increase in all the domains. By doing agriculture, trading with different items, commercial activities especially at the transport sector, coupled with other services like, teaching, journalism, volunteers, administrators, herbalists, councillors, politicians and landlords is a clear manifestation of how a new economy is growing in the Bamenda Grassland. This economic diversification is what has given birth to economic adaptation and economic socialization. It is no doubt today, that the Mbororo people have become part and parcel of the society in their various communities because they are no longer stigmatized or regarded as being reserved, conservative, dirty and untidy set of people. The communities' mentality about the Mbororo has changed positively as a result of their evolution as they now socialize with everybody. Consequently, some communities now consume their type of food, especially their corn *fufu*, which is composed out of corn and rice, as a delicacy.³⁵

10. SOCIAL ADAPTATION

It led to social adaptation, which is one of the most important issues directly linked to human behaviour which in turn is a reaction of an individual trying to achieve harmonization of his motives and needs as required by the environment. This was the case for the Mbororo who lived in the Bamenda Grasslands and got involved in other economic ventures, as another solution to raise income for their livelihoods besides cattle grazing. We can see that the Mbororo are rapidly adapting due to the changes happening in their communities, to better fit and adjust themselves into the society in which they live. This is seen especially in the field of education where Mbororo pupils and students attend the same schools and institutions, sitting every day in one classroom and writing the same examinations. These interactions have played a key role as far as their social adaptation is concerned.³⁶

11. REDUCED FARMER- GRAZER CONFLICT

The process of diversification of the Mbororo from cattle rearers to other alternative economic activities reduced the farmer-grazer conflicts to a greater extent. This was so because those Mbororo who lost their cattle either through theft or selling, found themselves doing other businesses such as motorcycle riders, taxi and bus drivers, provisional store owners, farmers and teachers. As such, the clash between the two communities was reduced as they no longer owned cattle which could enter into people's farms for crop destruction. On the other hand, tension was reduced as the indigenous people themselves entered into the cattle rearing business. So in the case where an indigenous cattle owner destroyed his fellow man's farm, it became more of a family problem as both parties could understand themselves better.³⁷

12. IMPROVED LIFESTYLE

A change in household income was one of the economic impacts of the Mbororo diversification. This had reduced poverty and hardship as it has reduced unemployment. In this domain, the Mbororo got involved in alternative economic activities that led to a positive change in their household income and food security, where there is a change in food prices and also the fact that, the risk of hunger is reduced. This is so due to their farming activity which supplied them with food for consumption and surpluses for sale. Consequently, this led to high living standards. Furthermore, their involvement in other economic activities has led to a change even in their housing style.³⁸ Mbororo housing over time had to change as they saw and learned how to be modern even in house construction.

³⁴LailaAlima, 20 years, Trader, interviewed by Bertha Nyah, Bambui, August 6, 2020.

³⁵SuleAbdulahiIssa, 38years, journalist, interviewed by Bertha Nyah,Nkambe, May 5,2021.

³⁶MallamKarimou, 36years, Entrepreneur, interviewed by Bertha Nyah,Bambili, March 3,2021.

³⁷Soubajou Samba, 43years, Farmer, interviewed by Bertha Nyah, Binshua, August 23, 2020.

³⁸RelindisNfor, 35years, Teacher, interviewed by Bertha Nyah, Bamenda, April 13, 2020.

Most of the houses which the Mbororo used to stay there in the 1970s and 1980s are no longer the same houses in which they now live in as of the year 2000. As a result of this, most of the Mbororo in the sub-division no longer stayed in thatched houses, but have learnt to mould sun-dry blocks and used them along with cement to construct their houses also. Some of them who are well to do even go to the extent of plastering and painting their homes.³⁹ Some of them are now landlords renting houses and shops to the general community in the Bamenda Grasslands.⁴⁰

13. MBORORO BECAME MORE PERMANENT

As a result of evolution, their unsteady nature has automatically changed. They are now enlightened into a more modern lifestyle. Since the Mbororo took permanent residence in various communities it changed their nomadic life style. Unlike in the past when they constructed huts made of grass, they now construct durable houses. The construction of permanent homes had made them to be engaged in crop production. They farmed crops such as maize, cocoyam, beans and potatoes like the indigenous farmers. This integration into crop cultivation is carried out both by Mbororo who have cattle and those who do not. During the Trans-human period from November to April annually, a great number of cattle are taken to the forested areas where there is green pasture by the herdsman. Their family remained permanent with some few cattle around.⁴¹

14. CONCLUSION

This paper examined the basis, dynamics and transmutation of diversification by the Mbororo in the Bamenda grasslands. It explained the complex realities that created the need for diversification by this minority group of people within various indigenous communities in the North West region of Cameroon. The investigation exposed the conditions that made diversification inevitable for the Mbororo. It however contends that, the diversification of these people from a predominant cattle rearing activity into different sectors particularly crop production was based on certain exigencies. The Mbororo through various initiatives and organizations greatly assisted themselves in enhancing diversification schemes. Impediments based on cultural and religious perceptions were surmounted in a bid to better their living standards. In effect, the diversification in different economic ventures had far reaching consequences.

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