

# Highlights of population change in West Cameroon before 1961

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## Introduction

Demography as we know it today is a relatively new science. Although man, or a very close kin of man, has been on the face of the earth for perhaps two million years, the census of the whole world had never been systematically taken until the Modern era.<sup>9\*</sup> (Philip M. Hauser, 1964). However, curiosity about the number and character of inhabitants did arise with the first civilizations, but usually in response to some practical motivation. According to Ralph Thomlinson, the disinterested objective study of demographic variables, except for a few isolated instances, dates only from the seventeenth century. In his *Population Dynamics*, Thomlinson renders a beautiful resumé of early enumerations. I shall cite this authority extensively:

"Five thousand years ago the Sumerians counted their citizens for taxation purposes. At various later times the Egyptians conducted inquiries into the occupations of their people. The Chinese also took limited censuses at early dates. By the time of the Chou dynasty (circa 1050-247 B.C.) population censuses and registrations had become normal instruments of public administration. These first census-takers played a dual role; if a man were counted in a census, it meant that the census taker would also probably draft him into the army or levy a tax against him. No wonder enumeration was incomplete."

"In Biblical times censuses were taken by Moses in 1491 B.C. and David in 1017 B.C. When the Lord directed Moses to 'take

\*This number, and subsequent ones, refer to the Bibliography.

the sum of the children of Israel' (Number 1 : 1), the count was supposed to include only adult males—all that are able to go forth to war in Israel.' In honor of this census the Fourth Book of Moses is named Numbers. David's later census was neither well conceived nor well received: 'And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel... And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel.' (1 Chronicles 21 : 1,7)."<sup>16</sup>

The review mentions the Northern Hindustan King Asoka (c. 270-230 B.C.) and subsequent Akbar, Emperor of Hindustan from 1556 to 1605. The Athenians and other classical Greeks took censuses in times of stress, carefully counting the adult male citizens in wartime and the general populace when the food supply was endangered. Servius Tullius, who ruled as the sixth King of Rome from 578-534 B.C., is given credit for instituting the census.

Charlemagne's Breviary of 762 A.D. listed all the males of military age in the Empire. William the Conqueror is reported to have ordered a land and population inventory of England for 1085-1086. This was the Domesday Book—named after doom-day or judgement day, because it was the final authority.

In Central Europe in 1449, the first known counting of every man, woman and child occurred when Nuremberg feared depletion of a limited food supply under a state of siege.

The first complete periodic enumeration began in 1665 in New France (Canada) and continued until 1754 in Quebec. It was a remarkable accomplishment, especially as it included data on total population, sex, age, marital status and occupation.

Invariably the results of all these efforts were always treated as a secret. Even among the ecclesiastical bodies which developed a respectable system of registration of important events such as baptisms, burials, and weddings, the records were generally confined to numbers of the religious bodies concerned, irrespective of the fact that these registers sometimes contained almost a whole population of a given area. (Thomlinson).<sup>16</sup>

The modern census system—that is, a continuing complete count taken accurately at regular intervals—began in Sweden in 1749; in Denmark and Norway 1769; in the United States in 1790; in England 1801; in Belgium 1829; France 1835; Japan 1873; in India 1881; in Egypt 1897; in Russia 1897. Accord-

ing to the statistical office of the United Nations, "The 1960 World Population Census Programme" (*Population Bulletin of the United Nations*, No. 5, July 1956 p. 2), "between 1945 and 1954 about 80 % of the world's people were enumerated". Nigeria was included in 80 %, and West Cameroon was then a province of Nigeria.

Let us now turn to West Cameroon and trace its demographic trends. Naturally such a study would be impossible both to conduct and to understand without a firm knowledge of the History and Geography of West Cameroon.

## HISTORY OF WEST CAMEROON

West Cameroon was formerly part of the territory of German Kamerun which was annexed in 1884. (Ardener, S.G. 1968) After the first World War, West Cameroon, then known as Southern Cameroons, was mandated to the United Kingdom government by the League of Nations. For administrative convenience, the U.K. government governed it as part of its Protectorate of Nigeria, which had its Head Quarters at Lagos. When the United Nations succeeded the League of Nations in 1945, Southern Cameroons became a trust territory but still under the continued administration of the U.K. government. Between 1949 and 1954 it existed as two provinces: the Bamenda province of the grassland zone, and the Cameroons province of the forested zone, but all under the Commissioner of Southern Cameroons who was also responsible for Northern Cameroons (now Soudauna Province of Nigeria).

In 1954 the two provinces were abolished and the old entity of the Southern Cameroons was reconstituted, with a degree of internal autonomy within the Federation of Nigeria. This autonomy was later extended by the establishment of Southern Cameroons as a quasi-region of Nigeria with its full cabinet in 1958.

In February 1961 a United Nations plebiscite was held so that the people of Southern Cameroons (and Northern Cameroons) might choose whether to join the independent Republic of Cameroon or the independent Federation of Nigeria. The Southern Cameroons chose the former while Northern Cameroons chose the latter. Since then Southern Cameroons became known as West Cameroon—one of the two federated states of the Federal Republic of Cameroon.

## GEOGRAPHY OF WEST CAMEROON

From the viewpoint of this study, West Cameroon appears to divide itself transversely into two vegetational and climatic zones.

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the northern grassy plateau, and the southern evergreen tropics and equatorial forest. This division is also roughly analogous to the rain-fall belts, the animal flora, the entomological pattern, the occupation of the people, the agricultural products, and most of all, the economic potentialities. Peculiar to the south is the rich coastal volcanic soil which rendered the extensive coastal plains the scene of the plantation industry which has been the economic mainstay of this territory for more than half a century. Further, the proximity of the south to the Atlantic Ocean—an international trade route—gave it greater socio-economic advantage over the north.

With this polarity, there was bound to be a flourishing trade in their economic products between the two zones. The north exported their cattle, goats, chickens, beans, tobacco, potatoes, to the south, while the latter in turn traded fish, palm-oil, and imported European wear such as clothes, salt, sugar, building materials. But what has always been by far the most important export of the north is the manpower—the vigorous youth much needed in the huge plantations of the Coast. It is this migration stream flowing against the economic gradient which has contributed very much to the peculiar population dynamics of Fako and Meme divisions in West Cameroons. This will be the main theme of our study.

#### OTHER CAUSES OF NORTHERN—SOUTHERN MIGRATION

Broadly, the reasons which cause Africans generally, and Cameroonian particularly, to leave their villages and go to new settlements are economic, sociological and psychological. Gelfand has observed similar reasons in South Africa among the indigenes of Zambia and Rhodesia (1964).<sup>10</sup> However, these reasons have had varying significance in African history through different epochs. Before the advent of the European, inter-tribal warfare, intra-tribal rivalry, slave-raiders and the fear of family or tribal extinction were the predominant reasons. Added to these were witchcraft and superstition; epidemic disease, such as small-pox;<sup>5</sup> endemic diseases such as sleeping sickness (trypanosomiasis) and river blindness (onchocerciasis); soil sterility (infertility); invasion by locusts; and nomadic existence.

During the colonial era, imperial governments reduced the incidence of inter-tribal warfare considerably, and also introduced new systems of justice, money economy, their own culture (more powerful), and especially a new system of values. The interaction of these variables brought about tremendous social change (though not without culture shock). New and larger social and political or administrative groupings beyond the tribe were created, such as: division, province, state, nation, race, even empires, international zones, and commonwealths. These shook the traditional allegiance from its very foundations and liberated the indigenous African. His dimensions of thought were now broadened, he was now more free to move about—a climate for migration had been created. And both individually or collectively the African deserted his village under normally tolerable provocations or psychological stimulations. However, where the traditional government and local culture were very strong, the reactions to external attractions were minimal and tribal integrity was sustained. The Nso, Bikom and Bafut groups are examples of this resistance in West Cameroon. There the Fonship retains its ancient splendour.

Within the last 50 years the economic reason has been by far the greatest trigger to migration in West Cameroon, and the entire Africa. Frank Lorimer, one of the foremost American demographers, saw the general African trend this way also. He wrote in 1954 as follows:

"Mining and other enterprises promoted with foreign capital are most important in the south and in parts of central Africa. It is these regions that the bi-polar movements of workers between subsistence farming in their native villages and wage-work in industrial and commercial centers or on plantations takes place on the largest scale. The same phenomenon is found in varying degrees through the whole continent."<sup>9</sup>

As a corollary to the economic factor, there are the social and western cultural institutions that accompany industrial development. These also attract rural populations to industrial centers. One can hardly talk traditionally of "rural-urban" migration as such in the Cameroon situation because there are no cities in West Cameroon, but the definite bi-polarity in modernity and amenities which has existed in the first half of this century certainly did contribute much to the forces that generated unilateral migration.

## DEMOGRAPHY OF WEST CAMEROON

The first striking thing about this subject is the want of data. This is not only the plight of West Cameroon but also the fate of the Federation of Nigeria to which West Cameroon was an appendage for 40 years. During this period, the British administrators and human scientists carried out ethnological and anthropological studies which were of little demographic value.

According to Etienne van de Valle, "the first real census was taken in 1952-53 (Nigeria and Cameroons), but it contained no direct information on mortality and fertility.<sup>4</sup> Kaberry noted that the 1953 census groupings were native authorities and Clan Council Areas. She proceeds, "The term clan in the census has no clear connotation: in some cases, such as Menemo, it refers to a group of villages with a common language; in others, such as Kom, to a district Chiefdom; in others again, as Ndop, to a mixed area. The ethnic categories shown in the 1953 census may be ignored. The figures given include resident strangers (not naturalized)."<sup>7</sup> See Table 1—Bamenda Division Census 1953.

The gross inadequacy of the 1953 census, mixed with the confusion arising from procedure and too much inclusion, leaves us with no basis for real scientific study of the demographic picture of the period in West Cameroon. Neither do the figures help us very much to answer many questions in subsequent periods. Nevertheless, adding the available information to the extant historical evidence and local legend, we have some material for useful speculation. For instance, there is no doubt that we have a fair impression of the gross population size which adds more meaning to the more accurate data collected in the same area 12 years later (1964-65). But it is absolutely sad that we cannot say how many true Cameroonian citizens there were in contradiction to stranger elements who were quite many. For instance, in the Cameroon Development Corporation Estates, there were 24,970 workers in 1953, 36 % of which were either Nigerians (28 %) or East Cameroonians (8 %) (Bederman).<sup>3</sup> This means a false inclusion of 7380 men. Such exercise could reveal startling figures, computed for the entire territory. See Table 2.

## POPULATION CHANGE IN WEST CAMEROON BEFORE 1961

TABLE 1. — Bamenda Division: 1953 Census

	TRIBE	COMPOSITION	POPULATION
1	Mogamo	(Linguistic term) 28 village Chiefdoms	23,765
2	Menemo	(Linguistic term) 28 village Chiefdoms	
3	Ngie	(Ethnic group) 19 villages	15,721
4	Ngwo-Ngonu	(Main Chiefdom) 8 villages	13,876
5	Ngemba	(Linguistic term for group) 14 Chiefdoms	9,612
6	Bafut	(Name of largest Chiefdom) 6 Chiefdoms	34,233
7	Bali	(Group) 5 Chiefdoms	33,998
8	Ndop	(Dynastic legendary term) 11 Chiefdoms	30,533
9	Oku	1 Chiefdom	36,782
10	Nso	(Single Chiefdom) 27 villages	9,173
11	Beba-Befang	(Two Chiefdoms) 6 villages	50,291
12	Esimbi	(Name of village Chiefdom and native court site) 21 villages	9,888
13	Aghem	(Village federation)	21,702
14	Bum	(Main Chiefdom and Sub-chiefdoms)	9,710
15	Kom	10 Subchiefdoms 25 villages	5,155
16	Tang	10 village Chiefdoms	26,623
17	War	12 village Chiefdoms	12,734
18	Wiya	10 villages with subchiefs, etc.	13,375
19	Misaje	12 villages	9,875
20	Mbembe	17 villages	7,965
21	Mfumte	13 small villages	11,154
22	Kaka	18 villages	6,245
23	Mbaw	11 villages	17,167
			3,238
		TOTAL	402,803

Note: These data are extracted from "Traditional Bamenda. The pre-colonial History and Ethnography of the Bamenda Grassfields." by E.M. Chilver and P.M. Kaberry. London, June 1967. Published by Ministry of Primary Education and Social Welfare and West Cameroon Antiquities Commission.

TABLE 2. — Age Distribution in percentages for each sex in West Cameroon, 1952-53 Census

Provinces	Under 2 yrs	2-6 yrs	7-14 yrs	15-49 yrs	50 yrs and over	Total
Males	%	%	%	%	%	%
Bamenda	10.5	18.5	19.0	47.4	4.6	100.0
Cameroons	6.9	12.3	15.8	61.7	3.3	100.0
Females						
Bamenda	9.9	17.1	14.3	53.6	5.2	100.0
Cameroons	9.3	14.4	12.8	58.9	4.6	100.0

Note: Extract from Nigerian Census 1952-53. *The Demography of Tropical Africa* by William Brass et. al. Princetown New Jersey, P. U. P. 1968.

Table 2 shows the classification of population by age. Ages, unfortunately, the classification is unconventional, and because of this, the value of the information is limited. Had the conventional class intervals been used, it would be possible to compare the breakdown values with those of other countries or the same country for previous or subsequent census data. This peculiarity, added to the fact that 'age estimation presents almost insuperable difficulties' (Etienne van de Valle), the scientific evaluation of these data is further obscured. Coming home to apply these figures and to compare them with those compiled in the West Cameroon Demographic Survey in 1964, comparative studies are rendered impossible.

However, there is a lot of information in Table 2 for the purposes of this paper.

The most shocking observation is that in both Bamenda and Cameroons provinces, the percentage of people over 50 years is incredibly low for both sexes: 3.3 % Male and 4.6 % Female in Cameroons, compared to 4.6 % Male and 5.2 % Female in Bamenda. It means that a West Cameroonian child born in 1953 had a life expectancy of only about 50 years; that there was scarcely an old man in the Cameroons and Bamenda provinces in 1953; that 95 % of the population was young—less than 50 years of age.

Table 2 also shows that in 1952-53, of all the males in Bamenda province there were 48 % below and up to the age of 14 years. Compare this with 35 % in Cameroon (South) for the same age and time. This sector of the population (South) for the same age and time. This sector of the population is economically unproductive; besides, they are consumers and complete dependents. It is a pity we lack the absolute numbers which will give the actual manpower strength. These percentages also suggest higher fertility rate in Bamenda than in the forested zone. The survival rate of children under 2 years was more favourable in the Bamenda province than in the Cameroons province (ratio is 10.5/6.9). Malaria might be one of the chief factors causing the difference because the pattern of Malaria in the colder and higher altitudes of the grassland plateaux is different from that in the hot humid forested south with more available water for mosquito breeding.

Very significantly, there is a dramatic reversion in ratios during the working years of 15-49. There is a sudden rise to 61 % of the population as opposed to 47.4 % in the south and north respectively. The trend is generally the same for both sexes, but more for males. One most likely explanation is that between 15 and 49 years, there is massive migration with a predominant male element, to the southern plantations where there is great labour demand. By 50 years the very few survivors return home to kick up the population ratio once more. See Table 3.

TABLE 3. — Sex-Ratios (Males per Female) by age in Cameroons 1952-53 Census

PROVINCE	AGES					Total
	Under 2	2-6	7-14	15-49	50 and over	
Bamenda	0.96	0.98	1.20	0.80	0.81	0.91
Cameroons	0.94	1.07	1.54	1.31	0.89	1.25

Note: Adapted extracts from *The Demography of Tropical Africa* by William Brass et. al. New Jersey, P. U. P. 1968, page 518.

Table 3 shows that there are more men in Cameroon than in Bamenda province, the ratio of males per females being 1.25 in Cameroons and 0.91 in Bamenda. Note is to be taken of the fact that between the years of 0-6 the male/female ratio is the

same in both areas (approximately). But during the working years of 15-49 years, the ratio is 0.80 males per female in Bamenda and 1.31 males per female in Cameroons. We might expect marriage problems in the south considering the acute female shortage! Noticeably there appears to be a balance at 50 years and over—a uniform shortage of males or an abundance of females (0.81-0.89 males per female). What has happened to the males? Have they emigrated out of the two areas? No. They are probably dead in their adventure. Note the drop in the Cameroons—from 1.31 to 0.89 males per females. Some have returned to Bamenda evidently. One must be curious at this stage to find out the sickness and death-rates among the plantation workers who form the main stream of the Bamenda-Cameroons migration! We will discuss this elsewhere. Also during the school age of 7-14 there are more males per female in Cameroons (1.54) than in Bamenda (1.20). This also suggests northern-southern migration of school children, especially the boys. But there is no doubt that the peak age of migration is somewhere beyond 15 years (probably 21 years) when boys attain maturity, become independent and move away from their parents to satisfy their own economic urge.

TABLE 4. — Gross reproduction rates derived from ratios of children under specified ages to adults aged over 15, by sex in Cameroon according to the 1953-55 Census

Province	Males			Females		
	Under 2 yrs	Under 7 yrs	Under 15 yrs	Under 2 yrs	Under 7 yrs	Under 15 yrs
Bamenda	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.5	3.5	3.3
Cameroons	2.4	2.3	2.4	3.1	3.0	2.5

Note: Extracts from *The Demography of Tropical Africa* by William Brass et. al., New Jersey, P. U. P. 1968.

In Table 4 we see that there are more children per adult man and adult woman (over 15 years) in Bamenda than there are in Cameroons. Since we consider any person under 15 years as a child, it means that this table reflects the reproductive performance

over a 15 year period. Bamenda shows a higher fertility rate than Cameroon. Might this trend suggest a compensation phenomenon—a reaction to the mass exodus of productive males to their Waterloo in the plantations? Or might it be that in 1953 Bamenda was more rural than Cameroons, and that whereas Bamenda was still demonstrating the fertility of the countryside, Cameroons was already performing in the second stage of the demographic transition theory! There is no evidence of marked difference in infant mortality rates in the two areas. There is, however, evidence that low fertility is the practice in Cameroon. This is an off-shoot of sociologic interaction of variables, with demographic consequences. Edwin Ardener has discussed this in detail in his booklet *Plantation and Village in Cameroons*.<sup>1</sup> It is also a wellknown fact that with improved economy and education, industrialization and urbanization, there tends to be reduced fertility. Cicely Williams has demonstrated that with improved standards of living and better Maternal and Child care services fertility tends to drop. This was shown of Italy. Now that the coffee crop has improved the economy of the Bamenda grassland dramatically, we will in the future like to follow up fertility trends in the area. Of course, the influence of medical services and recent public health measures in the control of measles and small-pox are significant co-operant factors.

The 1953 Census report for Nigeria and Cameroons also shows that other areas of Nigeria experienced the same kind of low fertility as did the Cameroons (forest zone). Lagos Colony and Bornu province are cited as examples in this report. For Bornu we cannot be surprised considering that many of its inhabitants are nomadic—always chasing the green grass. This type of occupation naturally forbids large families and the fertility rates of more settled urban populations. William Brass (1968) studying the demography of Northern Cameroon across the Nigerian frontier in the Bornu region, with similar tribal occupations and economic geographic patterns, also found low fertility among some mountain nomadic moslem groups. He entertained a suspicion, however, that his findings might be attributable to statistical error.<sup>2</sup> Independent sources have confirmed this observation on the Adamawa messif and for the Mousgoum ethnic group.<sup>3,4</sup>

## SOME SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL EVIDENCE ON WEST CAMEROON

Edwin Ardener, an eminent anthropologist has worked in West Cameroon within the last two decades. He also observed a fertility depression of (Victoria) Fako Division of "Cameroon" which was much intrigued by it. He says:

"In a fertility survey we conducted in 1957 the data suggested that the net reproduction rate has in the last thirty years been below replacement level, although it may very recently have risen to just above unity."

Ardener further picks on the indigenous tribe of the division and dwells at length on the fertility. He continues:

"The sex ratio in the plantation area being what it is the temptation has existed for sixty years for indigenous women to leave to avoid married life in the village in order to live as concubines or immigrants or as prostitutes. The 'stranger quarters' and the immigrant settlements contain numbers of these women, but they are also found in the villages themselves. The frequency of divorce is high. From our recent figures 63 % of all legitimate unions ever completed by a sample of 1,062 village women, and 40 % of all legitimate unions contracted, had ended in divorce. There are 683 divorces per 1,000 women. This ignores separations which, at the time of the survey had not resulted in the repayment of bridewealth, the criterion of divorce. Among Bakweri women, frequent divorces, interspersed with periods of concubinage and prostitution, have become as much a habit of life as labour migration has become to the men of other tribes. One out of six of women in extant unions in our sample were illegitimate unions, about equally divided between concubines and prostitutes. 26 % of those of this group of women who were aged between 30 and 34 years were in illegitimate unions and 11 % in prostitution alone. The peaks of the incidence of concubinage, prostitution, divorce, and childlessness broadly coincided among the women of this age-group, and it seems very likely that the low fertility of previous years is directly related to marital instability."<sup>1</sup>

These findings partially confirm my gynaecological impressions. The author working at Tiko between 1966 and 1968 found such a high prevalence of subfertility and sterility that he had to devote a good fraction of his clinical hour to these problems. Our

published work *Bottom-Belly Syndrome* is a report of an investigation of 50 cases each presenting with this symptom voluntarily in her history. Childlessness (infertility or sterility) ranked highest in frequency. However, most of the patients with this complaint were not of the Bakweri group contrary to expectation, but were immigrants from Manyu division who had dwelt in Tiko for varying periods.<sup>13</sup> This may suggest that the findings of Ardener might be repeated in other tribal groups of West Cameroon with parallel social stability and motivation to birth control.

The incidence of marital instability and childlessness are often associated with a similar incidence of venereal disease. Hemps-ton (1961), a roving American Journalist, in his book *Africa, Angry Young Giant* puts it crudely that in the coastal towns of Cameroon gonorrhoea is as cheap to buy as postal stamps.<sup>12</sup> This is a painful pill to swallow but Cameroon towns have a problem there like all cosmopolitan port towns.

To fully understand why there was such a low birth rate in Cameroons province in 1953, we might need to probe into such socio-cultural variables as: moral ethics, traditional norms about sex, love-making; breastfeeding and weaning practices, knowledge of reproductive physiology, use of contraceptive methods, attitudes towards marriage and children; sources of income to the unemployed women, commitment to religious teaching (religiosity), and more fuzzy ones.

## POPULATION PROBLEMS IN WEST CAMEROON BETWEEN 1950-1962

While Northern-Southern migration was a strong factor in the overcrowding in the labour plantations, this internal migration alone would never have caused the acute population problems of the semi-urban towns of Fako and Meme divisions. Waves of immigrants from Nigeria, especially of the Ibo group continually inundated the area, not only in the plantation settlements but also in the native villages and hamlets. Their main occupation was business, and they quickly seized and dominated the trade of West Cameroon in all aspects of merchandise. Even in regular plantation employment, they were attempting similar seizure. Cameroonianization policy had to be applied to encourage the indige-

nes and maintain the balance, at least in industry. From the demographic and social stand-point, Cameroon society was seriously affected. The natives could not compete successfully in any field of endeavour with the immigrants who came in armed with capital and technical know-how. As they increased their labour strength in absolute numbers and percentage in the Cameroons plantations, so did the aborigines of Victoria (Fako) and Kumba (Meme, Ndiassi) lose their place and decrease in their own numbers. The positive Cameroonization policy was implemented in about 1961 thinning Nigerian from 25 % to 4 % by 1966.<sup>3</sup> See Table 5.

Population problems arise when there is increase in the number of people without an equivalent increase in the resources to provide for these people. Cicely Williams epitomises the idea of overpopulation most aptly thus: "Overpopulation is the condition that exists when the numbers increase, without a corresponding improvement in education, health and economic progress, in fact, an increase in quality without an improvement in quality."

By any definition there was overpopulation in Victoria and Tiko, and these towns developed slum characteristics. Food was scarce. In the camp houses where space allocation is proportionate to the workers rank (not family size), men lived in one room with multiple wives, children and sometimes illegitimate grand children. They slept like sardines.

Land shortage is a well-known problem in Fako division. Although the traditional tendency (which has political overtones) is to blame the alienation of land by the huge plantation owners, the pricking problems are created by further encroachment by the immigrant who does not settle in the plantation. Corruption in land business mounted high. Recently a historic Commission of Inquiry was set up by the West Cameroon government to probe into the activities of the Department of Lands and Surveys. The atrocious findings resulted in the dismissal of the departmental director as well as withdrawal of certificates of occupancy obtained by methods outside standard government regulations. (1968).

Even in the customary courts the number of cases connected with land disputes has been mounting (Papa Essaso 1968). There is thieving of property, encroachment into others' land, double selling of land by brother land-lords. The price of land has risen, and so is the cost of rents. Building houses for rent is now a flourishing industry in Fako division and elsewhere. Edwin Arde-

ner has noted that in this area "social problems (with demographic consequences) sometimes frequently labelled as 'urban' may arise, even in acute form, in what may be considered a largely 'rural' area."<sup>1</sup> However, we must recognize that although Buea, Muea, Tiko, and Victoria and Mutengene are little settlements with no classic urban characteristic, they function economically as the trade areas of one large city. Victoria is the regular shopping center, Tiko is the supermarket and fish market, Muea has the grocery stores, while Buea is the residential area. With improved transport these towns will function even more effectively as intimate members of one body—the Buea-Victoria-Tiko-Muea Complex. Life here is urban in many forms.

TABLE 5. Source of Labour —C.D.C. Estates (1947-66)  
Per cent of Labour Force

Year	Total Number	Nigeria	Victoria Kumba South	Mamfe Bamenda Wum Nkambe North	East Cameroon
1947	16,262	%	%	%	%
1948	17,910	19	24	44	14
1949	19,456	23	17	47	13
1950	19,005	23	17	47	13
1951	22,698	21	16	50	12
1952	25,569	21	15	54	9
1953	24,970	28	16	50	8
1954	25,030	25	16	49	10
1955	21,664	27	14	49	8
1956	17,793	29	13	50	7
1957	17,809	30	12	50	7
1958	18,501	32	13	49	7
1959	16,285	30	13	51	6
1960	17,622	27	12	56	5
1961	17,236	25	13	57	5
1962	15,575	20	14	61	6
1963	12,498	7	18	70	5
1964	12,841	6	19	69	6
1965	12,785	5	19	71	5
1966	11,698	4	19	71	6

Note: Above Table extracted from The Cameroon Development Corporation Partner in National Growth; by Sanford Bederman, Bots, West Cameroon 1968.

We have already mentioned the social instability which probably affects the fertility rates of the Division more than any other variable. In this complex, and more so in the plantations, there is a severe destruction of cultural values, there is a loss of identity, and the struggle to survive manifests, *inter alia*, in the shape of prostitution, high illegitimacy rate, and mobility. Unemployment is also rampant. There are no job opportunities for all the immigrants who abandon their farms in the villages and the young school leavers who seek white-collar occupation. This population dynamics is quite different from what one finds in Dongsamantung (Nkambe) and Bui divisions where the traditional loyalty is still strong, and where much youthful time is spent on cultural participation with less craze for economic pursuits.

One problem of migration is the loss of manpower in the land of origin. The urge to migrate is the economic attraction for the land of destination. Putting it in other words, migration is caused by the unresourcefulness of the land of origin. But with the denudation of manpower, the possibility of developing even the small existing resources is further diminished, and so the vicious polarity which sustains emigration is perpetuated. It would be expected that where there are more men than women polyandry (prostitution) tends to establish, but where there are more women than men, polygyny (having multiple wives)—sometimes called polygamy—might flourish. This in fact, has been observed in West Cameroon. In Bamenda, polygamy, or polygyny, is part of the culture, whereas in Fako division, for instance, monogamy (one man, one woman union) is the norm, with a high incidence and prevalence of polyandrous relations and the uncommitted group given to free living who service the supernumerary undated male bonds in rotation.

Naturally culture migrates with the migrants, for they carry along their culture with them, although they loose a lot by the simple fact of being away from their traditional milieu. In many instances they have reformed teams and troupes that really put up good cultural shows in the plantations. And in fair competition, they have so often outclassed indigenous competitors that they were being technically eliminated from enrollment in public competition in order to encourage the local culture. "Outlook" reports that on August 8, 1969, "Mr. O.S. Ebanja, President of Fako Division Tourism Board, issued a press release expanding on the

forthcoming dancing, choir, wrestling, football and gastronomy competition".

"On Traditional Dances, Mr. Ebanja cautioned that if dances indigenous to other divisions are selected in Faro Division, then there will likely be duplication in the West Cameroon finals as people from other divisions may put up the same dances and probably in a much better manner". (Cameroon Outlook, Vol. 1, n° 26. Monday, August 4, 1969, page 4. Beauty contest not only for free girls.—Ebanja).<sup>5</sup>

This is an instance of a search for identity against odds in the land of destination. Definitely this is also evidence of natural friction in intercultural diffusion, and despite such measures, the cosmopolitan character of Faro Division cannot now be denied. But what probably holds good for the future, as trends indicate, is not the maintenance of either these rival cultures in their ancient purity, but an evolution of a multicultural amalgam, blended with western touch seeking expression, no longer in one of the 63 native languages of West Cameroon, but probably in Creole (pigin), English or French. In pursuance of this ultimate goal all political leaders of West Cameroon always plead with followership to eschew tribalism and work towards nation building.

Another offshoot of labour migration to the plantations is the collateral migration of the female population of Manyu Division especially to the same destination (although they did not succeed in balancing the male/female ratio in 1953). This current of movement was further aggravated by acute economic depression caused by the diversion of the trade route from Kumba to Bamenda via East Cameroon. Even before then the lay press had intermittently carried reports of attempts by the Mamfe (Manyu) local councils to forcibly repatriate the vagrants who originate in the area of their jurisdiction. But as "customary marriage" with its ill-defined procedures received legal sanctions in the territory, they were so easy to contract that it was a formidable task to detect the offenders. Some of these libertines took up to popular occupations such as tailoring apprentices, bar-maids, palm-wine sellers, club-dancers, etc.—all of which are directed by brothel matrons who promote the alcohol industry. In multiparty days, they made their impact and received the euphemistic slang of "Egbe's Soldiers". A similar group in Mezam Division (but of Bui origin) was accorded the appellation "Sakah's troops".

We have already mentioned the social instability which probably affects the fertility rates of the Division more than any other variable. In this complex, and more so in the plantations, there is a severe destruction of cultural values, there is a loss of identity and the struggle to survive manifests, inter alia, in the shape of prostitution, high illegitimacy rate, and mobility. Unemployment is also rampant. There are no job opportunities for all the immigrants who abandon their farms in the villages and the young school leavers who seek white-collar occupation. This population dynamics is quite different from what one finds in Dongue, Mantung (Nkambe) and Bui divisions where the traditional loyalty is still strong, and where much youthful time is spent on cultural participation with less craze for economic pursuits.

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It is interesting that the phenomenon of matriarchal family head common among the American negro female is now appearing in the South of West Cameroon among the free elements and other career women who earn a regular wage in respectable industry. It has been explained that with such careerism economic independence is realized and the strong impulse for stable marriage appears to diminish (Croft Long, 1965). There is yet no evidence in Southern Cameroons that female libidinal and emotional energy can be diverted to industry to the extent of inhibiting her procreation. The ideal family size for working-class women appears to be above four which is no different from the completely full-time housewife. It might therefore be significant that what is observed of the American negro family is not a negro sub-culture as such, but as Margaret Mead (1968) asserts, a peculiar reaction to a situation of selective male economic deprivation in the life-surroundings of a capitalist economy. Hence the female who is more resourceful than her male counterpart prefers to avoid the economic illogicality of keeping a poor husband and male head of the family. As this behaviour is new in the Cameroon setting, the grandmothers who actually do the babysitting, have been known to be in dilemma despite their unreserved cooperation with their daughters who bring in wealth and "bastards".

The immigration of Nigerians into West Cameroon within the past two decades has been discussed elsewhere, but some further mention is needed here to complete the picture of population problems aggravated by their influx. They, in fact, rendered the already complex situation more confused. While they dominated the economy of the territory, their business vanguards took to vandalism and chaos in towns and villages. In certain quarters this was interpreted (with much political advantage) as a display of imperialism. While local women fell easy prey to their sterling baits, some Cameroonian nationalists organized counter-resistance against foreign immorality and corruption. One memorable among these was led in Tiko by Johny Satan, a veteran wizard of Wimbom (Nkambe) extraction who periodically terrorized the Ibo elements and threatened them with devastating plagues. The Ibo morality was picturesquely put by Barragh (1954) in the following local idiom: "The Ibomen are he-goats who never permit a daughter to fruit before she was plucked", meaning that they were even sexually involved with minors. Tension grew high, and so grew better

organized resistance. The Fon of Nso reacted with vigilant militancy and refused Ibo traders land-tenure privileges, while his boys collaborated appropriately with retaliatory counter-vandalism. Yet the formidable Ibos took their latitude without much perturbation; they maintained their economic domination and imposed social change and new ethical values.

But their action was ill-timed, because at that time the West Cameroonians were whipping up national consciousness towards independence. This intolerable Nigerian "colonialism" militated against their nationalism and contributed much to Cameroonian determination to extricate themselves from Nigerian ties and to re-unite with their brothers of East Cameroon. Once this epochal action took place, there came an end to foreign domination, vandalism and all Nigerian incivility. There was mass Ibo self-repatriation and peace was restored to West Cameroon. The remainder became law-abiding.

#### HAZARDS OF MIGRATION

Earlier in this paper we reviewed the shocking figures which reflected a very short life expectancy in the entire state of West Cameroon around 1953. Unfortunately no figures are extant for the contemporaneous mortality rates. But there can be no doubt that mortality was generally high throughout the entire population since, by 50 years of age, 95 % of the people were dead. Even allowing for the error of the enumerators in age estimation—a very common error (Etienne van de Valle, 1968) in Africa, especially when enumerators are semi-illiterates or white men with little familiarity with the features of the aging process of the inhabitants of this area—we could not possibly be out by up to 5 %. It was a very young population, perishing young.

The extra burden of hard labour in the plantations must have rendered the labour forces unusually vulnerable, especially the immigrant population from Bamenda with no immunity to the local bugs. According to Gwan-Nulla (1967) reviewing the sickness and death of workers in an earlier period:

"The plantations were developed at a considerable cost of lives. Official mortality figures with regard to plantation labourers are given for the first time only for the year 1905-06. Even in subsequent years, the figures were not regularly forthcoming.

Mortality is estimated to have averaged about 25 % and is claimed in some plantations to have been as high as 50-75 %. The lowest figure ever reached was 7.9 % in 1913.<sup>11</sup>

The same review mentions that the main causes of death were endemic dysentery which periodically assumed epidemic proportions. With overcrowding in the camps typhus took its toll. More related to our present study is the factor which affected immigrants differentially. Their exposure to new strains of *Plasmodium falciparum* (Malaria germ) was a death trap. This phenomenal mortality crystallized itself into the concept of "Racial Biology" an observation marking the differential tribal survival and mortality rates under plantation conditions. It was Darwin's law of natural selection at work and some tribes showed evidence of definite herd immunity to local pathogens. The introduction of DDT and better medical care have, however, put a check on this human wastage, but by far the most effective weapon against these epidemics has been education, economic progress and improved standards of living.

It is worthwhile to drop in a word about the differences in disease pattern between the grassland and forest zones. In my experience in the two areas I found remarkable differences. Certain diseases do not seem to exist in both areas, while others are very common in both. Generally, the northern climate seems to support less of parasitic diseases and their vectors than the south, hence the following diseases are more prevalent in the forest zone: all forms of human filariasis; Onchocerciasis, Loa loa, Wuchereria bancrofti, and benign Acanthocheilonema streptocerca; Sleeping sickness, Bilharziasis (in Kumba). These add to the morbidity picture of the area, although these are not the greatest killers.

The following appear confined to the North: rabies; meningococcal meningitis. Humidity, temperature and rainfall are lower in the north. In both areas there is tetanus but paradoxically there is greater incidence in the south where there is little cow dung. Malaria, measles, infections and dysenteries are common killers in both areas. Overt malnutrition is rare among adults but hunger and hidden malnutrition are in the background. In my study of general health status among adults, workers with ages ranging from 21 to 45 years, I found that 95 % had a haemoglobin below 90 % (Sahli Method). The anaemia was of the hypochromic microcytic type (suggesting iron deficiency). Round worms and hookworms are common.

## Conclusion

For a satisfactory treatment of population change one needs to consider the usual primary demographic variables, then the secondary and intermediate variables. But where data are so sketchy or confused as in this study, one is very restricted in one's conclusions and generalizations. But this does not diminish the value of the study as a review and documentation of an experience which could serve as a foundation for research or call the attention of authorities to some important change in the community, if not for control, at least for organized investigation. It is in this light that I have conducted this paper—to ignite discussion on the problems of our country at a given period, as a basis for future studies of modern demographic trends.

However, certain aspects of population change, such as the growth of educational and medical services, economic progress of the territory and other variables have not been treated in great depth in order that the subject of migration and its sequelae in certain localities might be brought to greater focus.

## IN SUMMARY

This paper reviews world fragmentary attempts to use numbers in administration right up to the modern census in developed countries. We then examined some demographic data of the Census 1952-53—of which West Cameroon was a part. Sociological, anthropological and historical evidence was adduced to establish population problems suggested by sketchy data with special reference to labour migration from Bamenda province. Collateral migrations streams from Nigeria and Manyu Division were considered in order to build a more clear picture of the social complex in Fako Division.

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