

REGIONAL BALANCE AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF MAFA INTEGRATION IN NATIONAL POLITICS: AN IMBALANCE ALONG RELIGIOUS LINES

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INTRODUCTION

It is the 20th of May and still quite early in the morning. I'm half awake and hear the noise of my son's friend making breakfast in the kitchen. He and another friend stayed over for the night as they often do. I hear the others slowly getting up. Then they wake me up, the friend telling me 'Here is your breakfast Mama, your tea we left on the table'. And then to my son 'hurry up, we need to get dressed'. They get into their school suit to participate in the march pass, which will be held in honour of the national celebration. My son looks like one of Mokolo's 'locals' and as a 'real' mother I am proud and feel touched. I wave them good-bye as they leave, adding worriedly 'Did you take some water along? and please keep your hat on', as he has been recently ill and I don't want the sun to hit him all day.

I leave afterwards with a friend and some neighbouring children. There is this special atmosphere in town as many people are on their way to participate in the celebration. Women baking cakes and 'beignets' so that their children can sell them and they can make some extra money, Islamic men well dressed, who do the shopping early - so their wives can cook a nice dinner this day, and still have enough time left to watch the march pass, many more children in their costumes and suits. The march pass will be held on the local sports ground. Already the tribune is full with people. There are the *lamido*, local chiefs, from the whole region, impressively dressed in beautiful garments with rich 'broderie' and headbands, the local elite in their Islamic garments, the 'strangers' from the south in western suits - who have been transferred to Far North and are always complaining about the heat, the lack of proper food and the backwardness of the local population, the *nasaara'en*, 'whites' priests, nuns, vicars from the different missions, and the westerners working for the local 'aid agencies'. They are all there and have left a place for me on the grand stand - because I am white. They thereafter want to chase my friend and the children. I announce that in that case I will leave as well and thereupon they are allowed to stay. Everybody waits for the senior divisional officer (SDO) - also a 'southerner' who will arrive in his chauffeur driven car notoriously late, the Divisional officer - a Fulbe from the North, and the mayor - a Christian Mafa, and many more people who are important enough to stand in the '*prefets*' shadow. After their arrival, the national anthem is sung and the flag is hoisted. When the 'big shots' are seated the march pass starts. All the school children from the five primary schools in town and the schools in the rural area march pass. Many, many, many children. I have but eyes for my own child - the 'real' mother again, and it is not hard to recognize him in the crowd. Not only is he the only white blond guy, but also the only one wearing shoes. As not all the children can afford them, the headmaster ordered all of them to take them off, the only exception - so I learned afterwards, being my son.

Some schools have been chosen to prepare performances dances with songs. A Mafa school in the near surroundings of Mokolo imitate the wars they used to have in former periods with 'newly home made' spears and weapons, with a wink at the audience. Those were the days, when we were still 'primitive', had no schools, and were no part of the overall national government of Cameroon. Another class of Mafa children sing a song in which they express the fact that they are Mafa, and have their own ways of doing things. Brave self-irony is expressed when they take as an example the special way they wave at strangers passing by, arms above their heads, which the whole audience

recognizes with big laughter. But the message in their song leaves no doubt: we were all Mafa, but fortunately we now are all Cameroonians. The primary schools are followed by the secondary schools. Especially, the endless boring line of blue and white dressed pupils of the 'lycée', singing. The *lycée* is passing - a superfluous text, gives hope concerning the scolarisation of this 'backward' northern area. In the first grade the number of women equals that of men: the higher the classes get the less female students we find. The march passes the cultural associations, the women from the '*maisons des femmes*', the workers from the companies based in the area (refusing to take part in the march pass a report at the local police station), the women from the only political party, CPDM - dressed in blue cloth with the party initials and the portrait of the president, expressing their loyalty to the party as well as the men representing the party, who wear the same cloth in brown. Finally we get to the most exciting part for (neo-colonial) whites, the local *lamibe* from the region on horseback surrounded by their *maccube*, servants (litt. slaves) also on horseback in colourful clothes. The horses are beautifully dressed too and the men spur on their horses to go at full gallop and brandish their weapons threateningly at the audience. They are accompanied by the '*chefs de quartier*' on foot and many other people from regions that are headed by particular *lamibe*. They are dancing, waving and shouting. It lasts quite a while, as there are quite some *lamibe* in the region and they all look impressive, very impressive. As I head home, slowly because of the crowd, I have a clear theoretical concept in my head: 'What an ideal-typical demonstration of 'nation-building' I have witnessed.

The impression I just have given dates back to 1987. The concept of nation-building was self-evident in those days of national pride, and at first sight it looked like a balanced situation in which people from various ethnic background and different religions lived peacefully in the same town celebrating the national festivities. I would be the last to argue that the contrary was the case, yet if we deny the fact that for the Far North the much admired regional balance during the Ahidjo-period (1960-1982) has been farce, due to the socio-political inequalities that have developed in the Far North since Fulbe supremacy in the early 19th century - an inequalities that persisted during the colonial period, we also deny the suppression many non-islamic people went through. Recent nationalist movements and outbursts of ethnic violence in Europe and elsewhere have taught us that a denial, and in many cases even suppression of differences between different peoples, thereby forcing the course of history, far more easily leads to new chaotic situations than acceptance and joint efforts to avoid a resurgence of past repression. For the Mafa the cruel invasion of the Islamic politically dominant Fulbe is still quite fresh in people's minds. Some people can narrate their own experiences (see van Santen 1993: 58, 75, 79) but stories about the first cruel Fulbe *lamido* also became legends, that could easily be used for obscure purposes. Instead of taking Fulbe supremacy in the region as a matter of fact that could not be avoided, I want to pay attention in this paper to the cultural context of the historical developments which led to political and other inequalities between the Mafa and the Fulbe, in order to better understand the present situation in the new political constellation. Until recently, these inequalities led to the fact that - to use Schilder's words (see Schilder's contribution to this volume) non-Fulbe politicians were subtly pushed to conform to Fulbe political culture, which was coloured by Islamic symbolisms and by fulfulde as the main spoken language. I will describe the dissimilar socio-political backgrounds of the two peoples involved, how did a hierarchical situation develop in which the Fulbe became the rulers, and the Mafa the overruled? Why did this situation continue during the colonial period and after independence? I will thereafter appraise the question if we can speak of a new balance in the post-Ahidjo period, when the dominance of the Islamic population in the North slowly diminished.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXTS OF MAFA AND FULBE SOCIETY

Until the end of last century the Mafa, as one of the ethnic groups that inhabited the North of Cameroon, refused to be dominated by the (Islamic) kingdoms around them, be they Mandara or Fulbe. There is a large gap between the Islamic centralized societies that had come into existence in preceding centuries, and Mafa society which can be described as a rural segmented society (also Martin 1970: 32). Though the Fulbe *lamidats* (provinces) and Mafa society have both been part of the Cameroonian state since independence, this gap still remains. The encounters between the two people at the beginning of this century were not too friendly. The following quotation serves as an example:

March 17, 1913. On Monday the 8th of Banjaru Awwal (by the Muslim calendar) I sent Mahawonga to hunt slaves for me amid the Pagans called Dugupahi and he found 11 slave girls and one cow.

April 8, 1913. On Tuesday the 30th of Banjaru Awwal, Ahmadu and Jaure Abba went off with my people to Mokolo and captured 23 and killed three.

March 15, 1916. On Wednesday the 10th of Banjaru Turbindu, I made a raid and captured cattle from Mokolo, and on Friday I captured cattle from Lawan and Dubur. The total number of cattle was 167.

Thus wrote Hamman Yadjî, then *lamido* (chief) of the *lamidat* (province) of Madagali, a town that lies just across the border in present-day Nigeria and which in those days was part of the large Sokoto Empire, that extended from North Nigeria to North Cameroon. His diary leaves little doubt about the relation, which the Fulbe sustained with the Mafa. They used the mountains as a slave reservoir, and regularly took Mafa women and men into slavery (van Santen 1993, see also Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1993: 266). We will hereafter first describe Mafa social and political organisation.

MAFA SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORGANISATION

The Mafa are a caste-society, divided in the blacksmith and the non-blacksmith castes, an essential division running through the whole social structure. Blacksmiths occupy a special place within society: the men work the iron and bury the dead, the women make the pottery and used to be, or still are, midwives. On the one hand, they are considered inferior to non-blacksmith people. Yet at the same time they are indispensable, occupying a place at the center of society because of their irreplaceable tasks (Martin 1970: 78 ff, Boisseau et Soula 1974, Podlewski 1966, van Santen 1993: 228-244, 1995). The Mafa do not live in villages but are scattered around the countryside. Their social organization is very complex. The household, *gay*, is the fundamental social unit. They distinguish clans, and are strictly clan exogamous and caste endogamous. For members of the blacksmith caste, it is strictly forbidden to marry members from the non-blacksmith caste. Women always remain important for the patrilineage of their fathers and the bridewealth for the first-born girl is received by her paternal grandfather.

Although Martin was of the opinion that the only power women have in Mafa society is to change husbands and that they are only free to choose '*la sauce a laquelle elles seront mangées, c'est le seul piment de leur existence*' (Martin 1970: 173), I found that women act very independently and easily leave their husbands and their menfolk. Besides, in the past, many clan wars were started through misunderstandings or difficulties involving women. As a matter of fact, women can be placed at the centre of interclan relations, solidarity, factions, peace, unity and balance. Yet a woman remains dependent on the authority of the elders and men in general, as the society is organized around the 'survival' of the patriarch, the father of the house, *bab-gay* ((see also Boisseau and Soula 1974: 159). Children always belong to their father's clan and they have important functions upon the death of the latter and during certain rituals (van Santen 1993: 177 ff).

The Mafa have a very decentralized political structure. The father of the house, *bab-gay*, has often been considered the highest political authority. As Martin remarked

Chez les Foulbe, avec leur système centralisé, il suffisait de tuer un chef pour devenir maître de tout son territoire. Chez les 'Matakam'(Mafa) on peut tuer un chef sans pour autant réduire la communauté politique qu'il faudrait conquérir par la guerre, jusqu'au dernier. Il n'en resterait qu'un seul que le clan, le village et la société seraient toujours vivants et aptes à se perpétuer (Martin 1970 180)

Sons become head of households as soon as they are married, except for the youngest, who will always have land to work. He remains in the house of the father but also remains dependent on him. The father will eventually move out. Mothers remain in the household of their last-born son. The first-born son will have a say over the land his father owned after the death of the latter, he can either keep it to himself or divide it between the wives of his father and his brothers. Yet the rules are not very strict.

If a younger son is very clever he leaves for his father's brother or an elderly person, so that it will be him who inherits and has a say over the land.

In short we can say that clans of different status and power settled in different waves over the mountains. They succeeded in living together, then built up a common existence, and finally made themselves indispensable to each other. In their complementarity they became a community. However, until recently for those who never left their area, clan membership is more important than ethnic identity. Only when one becomes part of a larger ethnic community surrounded by other ethnic groups, and conscious of the fact that one is also a member of the Cameroonian state, does 'Mafaness' become meaningful to the people.

Yet there are certainly people with authority and power in the community. A region or a village consists of several groups with different kinship ties. Individuals from other regions may have joined them. Their life together is not organized by kinship. Instead, those people who are recognized as authorities resolve the conflicts that may arise on the level of the village, the clan or the lineage. This social order is kept independent from the outside world. Intervention by the outside world in former days meant war. The society in which one lives is recognized by its inhabitants as the political unit, independent of one's descent. So if two regions started fighting each other, people from the same clan could also become opponents, while in other situations clans fought each other, as we mentioned before.

Political authority can depend on age, sex, birth, etc., but it is not a gerontocratic society. Age comes after genealogical proximity and after ritual and conciliatory power (Martin 1970 171 ff.). Within every region there is one clan - mostly comprising those who first settled and cleaned the land - that is the 'chief-clan', *bi-gwalibay*. The other clans, who in most cases arrived later, came by intermediary of this clan. The elders of the chief clan have more power than the members of the other clans. They select by mutual agreement the chief of the region, *bi-udam*. The task of the latter is to direct the agricultural cycle (when to start sowing and harvesting), the large communal festivities, like the harvest festivals and the feast of the bull, and to organize required sacrifices in the interest of the community. Beside this chief of the region there is also a rainmaker, a locust chief and a chief of the panthers. These specialists can exercise power in the community by their abilities to make rain, keep away the crickets, or chase the panthers. New in the political organisation is the *Ndosak*, the chief of a quarter, a new function in the post-independent political constellation. The Women's role in these political activities seems to be reduced to nothing, but they have their own strategies. Within the rituals and on a symbolic level, they need to be taken into account, otherwise society would be struck by chaos. Many clan wars started around conflicts about women, and they also remain important for their father and his patrilineal clan and need to be present during rituals and sacrifices. Besides that as a wise contemplative Mafa man said:

Fathers very much like and appreciate their daughters even in former days. They can always count on them. If my wives are giving birth I always hope it will be a girl. It's the mother who prefers sons as they will go and live with them afterwards.

Though new developments such as Islamisation, Christianisation, scolarisation, urbanization, and overpopulation (which led to a growing scarcity of land) had its impact on Mafa society, this system still persists in the rural areas among those who remained faithful to their original religion, and also within newer Christian communities. Only the Islamised Mafa who nearly all have settled in town, have adopted the political constellation of the Fulbe.

Colonial reports consider societies like the Mafa to be anarchic, the reason why Fulbe *lamibe*, chiefs were propped up to rule these societies. The impact of this colonial attitude has been far-reaching. In order to get an articulated view of the contradictions of the two people concerned, I will proceed to describe the Fulbe social and political system of organisation.

FULBE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORGANISATION

Contrary to the Mafa, The Fulbe have a pastoral past. According to their tradition, they raised and herded cattle as their main occupation and strongly disliked agriculture (Azarya 1976:9). Though many of them have become sedentary, have their fields and need to work their plots, they still maintain special ties with cattle. The pastoral Fulbe are organized in descent groups. Their marriage rules favour endogamy. But in order to maintain a superior economic, as well as political position, a combination of exogamous and endogamous rules were in practice. It allowed them to compete with social units or equivalent lineage segments (Dupire 1970, Dupire 1972 and Dupire 1981). These facts elucidate how they managed to incorporate members of other ethnic groups while holding on their own specific identity. This identity can be approached through analysis of the image they have of themselves and, further, through the stereotypes by which their Neighbours characterise them (Dupire 1981:168). In their own view, the social distance between them and the local population was, apart from the language, stressed in terms of a special Fulbe way of life, called *pulaaku*. In North Cameroon the nomadic Fulbe - called *M'bororo* by other ethnic groups, nowadays still move with their cattle to the fertile soil in search of pasture. They are very much marginalised in north Cameroonian society (van Santen in press, Moritz 1995).

The Fulbe had arrived in North Cameroon about two and a half centuries ago in search of pastures. By the end of the eighteenth, beginning of the nineteenth century they were well settled in the province of Adamawa. From the eighteenth century onwards the Fulbe were Islamised. For the Fulbe groups who settled in the Adamawa, Islam became a unifying element. In those days, the Fulbe still had to pay tribute to other ethnic groups for their grazing rights and their cattle was often stolen (Mouctar Bah 1993, note 2). The formation of a political hierarchical centre in Adamawa by the Fulbe was directly related to the victories of Uthman dan Fodio, who since 1804 replaced Hausa and Borneo leaders by new chiefs who submitted to him, and this expansion was the beginning of the Sokoto empire. Inspired by him, the Islamic Fulbe, who lived in the Bornou, region, also became partisans for Uthman dan Fodio when the latter gave the flag of the jihad to Modibbo Adama of Yola (Nigeria) to spread Islam in the Fombina and to establish Fulbe hegemony (Mouctar Bah 1993:62, Njeuma 1993:90, van Santen 1993). In the words of Mouctar Bah:

Sous sa conduite ces pacifiques bergers se transformaient en impétueux guerriers, s'inspirant de la tactique, de la stratégie et de l'armement des Hausa et des Bornouan. Sous sa conduite et celle de ses successeurs et d'autres ardo'en (local leaders), une série de campagnes militaires permettaient le contrôle d'un vaste espace géographique qui, érigé en émirat, fut appelé, Adamawa, avec pour capitale Yola dans la vallée Bénoué. Un lamidat qui à son tour acceptait la souveraineté de Sokoto (Mouctar Bah 1993:69).

However, Azarya (1978) and van Raay (1971, and Moritz (1995) question whether the Fulbe clans who participated in the Jihads were motivated by religious conviction or

by frustration with certain intolerable conditions. The sedentary ethnic groups made them suffer. As they said themselves '*Min yari bone*', (litt. *on boit le malheur*), which meant that the Fulbe had to pay excessive taxes in order to get access to fodder resources and taxes, and that their cattle was often stolen. So these intolerable conditions included interference with what the Fulbe considered good animal husbandry (van Raay 1971: 7). More serious was the fact that the Fulbe were sometimes obliged to abide by local customs that conflicted with the foreign customs.

Les chefs locaux exerçaient souvent le jus primae noctis sur les jeunes filles foulbe, ce qui heurta, au plus haut point, leur code moral (Pulaaku) (Mouctar Bah 1993: note 2)

Kirk Greene (1958) describes a case in which Fulbe took up arms against pagan rulers because of demands for Fulbe daughters by pagan rulers. Such a demand in about 1805 by the chief of Bandung was, according to legend, occasion for the first direct step towards the establishment of the Fulbe supremacy in Adamawa. Ardo Jobbi, head of the Wolarbe around Song, slew his daughter rather than yield her up, then turned and killed the chieftain lest he demanded again what had been refused beyond recall. His deed was the signal for war (Kirk Greene 1958, in Moritz 1995: 19).

Ardo'en, who were successful in warfare, were recognized by the Emir of Yola and the Sokoto empire, as legitimized leaders of different *lamidats*, (see also Schilder 1994: 101). Slave raids and military operations caused new migration movements. Quite some societies withdrew to inaccessible areas to which the Fulbe cavalry had no access, like the Mandara mountains. Others submitted to the Fulbe leaders, Islamised and intermarried with the Fulbe (see also Schilder 1994), and in due time regarded themselves as Fulbe. A situation that Schultz describes for Guider and its surroundings (Schultz 1984). The aristocratic Fulbe also had an intentional policy to transfer population for economic exploitation. As real pastoralists, the Fulbe loathed agriculture. However, when they settled and became sedentary, they needed workers for the land they had conquered, hence the need for slaves (van Santen 1993, Azarya 1976, Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1993). The Fulbe who had violently taken over political power, found themselves in a favourable economic situation before the arrival of the colonial powers. Thus the power of the Fulbe was clearly related to their Islamic identity and the private costs and benefits were optimal for the Fulbe aristocracy. The sedentarised Fulbe and the nomads - also those who had not taken part in the Fulbe conquests - profited from this favourable situation thanks to their common identity, that was expressed in the concept of *pulaaku*.

So we can conclude that as a result of the political organisation of the Sokoto Empire in the last century, the sedentarised Fulbe in North Cameroon had a centralized political organisation, contrary to the Mafa (and many other ethnic groups). Every district was governed by a chief, *lamido* and the district paid taxes to his court. In Islamised Fulbe society women played no role in the official political organisation. However, Uthman dan Fodio clearly stressed that Fulbe women were entitled to get education. Many Islamic Fulbe women were literate, had definite opinions about the political situation and undoubtedly played their role behind the scenes (see also Boyd and Shagari 1978, 1986). Female Marabouts do exist and may exercise power in the community. Sedentarised Fulbe women never work the land, but in economically low strata they hold on to their independent economic activities, which especially concern the selling of milk. Thus was the situation the Germans met, when they started to conquer the North of Cameroon in January 1899, when an expedition started out from Douala. In the same period the British invaded the Sokoto Empire. For the Mafa, the centralized political structure of first the Fulbe rulers, then the colonial rulers, and finally the centralized government of Cameroon after independence has been much more shocking and strange to them than to some of the other ethnic groups.

COLONIAL POLICY

The Mafa, unlike many ethnic groups in the plains, had resisted integration within the Sokoto Empire in the pre-colonial period. During the colonial period their integration did not meet with great success either, as will become evident in the course of this paragraph. When the colonial powers invaded the area, the Fulbe rulers had a choice between peaceful submission, emigration or being killed. The Germans systematically broke down the authority of the Fulbe rulers in the whole district. Some of these rulers thought it was futile and suicidal to fight against guns. They came to an agreement and accepted German authority. Notwithstanding the regular slave raids in the Mafa area, there had not been a *lamidat* that exercised absolute authority over the region. Through the interference of the Germans, this situation changed. The Germans had enthroned *lamido* Hamman Yajji in Madagali, after having chopped off the head of his father because of the latter's subversive activities (Eldridge 1988:282, handwritten manuscript in Mokolo archives). Due to his promise to be loyal to the colonial authorities, they enlarged the borders of his *lamidat* onto the Matakam plateau, so part of the Mafa region, which from then on fell under his reign. Hamman Yajji founded a post, which was to become a town, named Mokolo. He sent servants he could trust - former slaves who had become islamised, to this place and it developed into an Islamic centre in the Mafa area. Raids into the area could more easily be launched. Hamman Yajji kept account of them, as well as of how many slaves he captured, the amount of cattle he took, the number of women and men he killed, and he described his contacts with the colonizers, or as he called them, the Christians, *Nasaara'en*. A short impression:

April 23, 1913: On Saturday, the 20th of Ramadan, the Oberlieutenant arrived in Madagali and spent five days there.

Aug. 28, 1913: On Thursday, the 25th of Ramadan, he left Madagali and went to Duhu. In the month of Julandu, the Governor and the Oberlieutenant departed and I took leave of them safely. He sent Kobavin and Riskou to Gour, and God be praised for that.

During the First World War, the French and English fought the Germans; Hamman Yajji briefly mentioned:

Dec. 12, 1914: On Saturday, the 24th of Kubarran Awwal, the French Christians arrived in Madagali and the people of Madagali all ran away. There were four white men.

Dec. 16, 1914: On Wednesday, the 28th of Haram Awwal, I sent the Frenchman 77 shillings. Febr. 2, 1915: On Tuesday, the 18th of Haram Akhir, we raided Kurang and got 100 cattle. Governor 'Diri' (Duhring) fought with the English and killed two white men of the English. I raided Hurumzi and captured four slave girls and 20 cattle.

Nov. 1st, 1918: On Friday the 25th of Haram Awwal at night, news about the tax arrived from the Lieutenant. In the morning, I sent off Kobo and Buba to Maroua followings allegations that fighting had erupted between the French and the Germans.

Lavergne remarks that those military operations did not affect the Mafa population, who remained subjected to the same *lamido* (Lavergne 1949, 1990). It was only after the delimitation of 1920, whereby the French and the English split up the territory, that Madagali was attached to Nigeria, while Mokolo was assigned to Cameroon. Hamman Yajji wrote:

August 8, 1920: On Monday, the 16th of Siutorandu, a letter arrived from the Captain saying that the English were coming. Then on Wednesday, another letter arrived saying that my land has been transferred from the French to the English. Let us hope that the French are telling lies.

Sept.10, 1920: On Friday, the 26th of Laihaji, between the two hours of prayer in the evening and the sunset, I received two letters, one from the Emir of Yola and the other from the Captain. They concerned the coming of the English, and said that an Englishman from Yerma and the Captain of Maroua were to meet on my land between Waha and Habada in order to fix the boundary of my land.

June 16, 1921: On Thursday, the 10th of Juldandu, two Christians went out to mark the boundary of my land, and they cut off a very large part of it on the Maroua side.

So Mafa territory was split in two halves, one to be administered from the English side and the other one from the French side. However, the clans continued to live as before and resisted the new authority. The written accounts of Hamman Yadjî emphasize another distinction between the two peoples: the Islamic Fulbe were a literate people, while the Mafa (and many other ethnic groups) were not.

In January 1922, a military post was founded by the French. It was officially named *subdivision du Mandara, chef lieu Mokolo*. Mokolo was designated as an administrative centre by the French colonial government. According to Martin (1970), the French were aware of the difficulty of governing the non-centralized Mafa people. They were conscious of the fact that to place them under Fulbe government could only produce results of short duration. But the directives from the central government in Yaounde remained the same and favoured indirect rule. The French administrators were unstable, inadequate, and too few in number. From 1922 to 1939, 18 sub-divisional officers subsequently served in only 17 years. An officer had only his militia to assist him in his subdivision. So the French made use of the existing political Fulbe structure. Due to language problems and the fact that they depended on Fulbe-oriented interpreters, they only looked at Mafa affairs through Fulbe eyes. The fact that they called the Mafa '*Matakam*' a Fulbe nickname, derived from the Fulbe word *Mettayamen*, a self-concocted term, reserved for those creatures that Mother nature did not favour too much (Lavergne 1949, also Martin 1970: 16), may serve as one indication for this fact. It goes without saying that the opinion of the Fulbe towards these 'Pagan' people, those '*haabe*' (infidels) was not very favourable and they certainly had no eyes for the political and social structure or the cultural values of the Mafa.

Lawan Riskou, a former slave from the area, was invited to install himself in Mokolo. His function as 'chief of the indigenous people', i.e. the Mafa, consisted in helping the administrators with construction work and accompanying, as guide and helper, the French troops who were charged with pacification (put an end to clan wars and slave raids) and tax collection in the Mafa territories. Thus the French ignored the fact that most former slaves had become Islamized and that Islamisation in the area meant a new identity and a total adaptation to and acceptance of the Fulbe way of life (as described in detail elsewhere, see van Santen 1993) including the Fulbe political hierarchy. Centralized authority and hierarchy was difficult to accept for the Mafa. Captain Vallin, sub-district officer of Mokolo wrote in 1924:

dans toutes ces affaires ce n'est pas l'impôt plus ou moins abondant qui est en jeu, mais le principe. Le versement de l'impôt est le signe de soumission des Matakam (Mafa) et eux-mêmes ne s'y trompent pas. Tant que le Matakam (Mafa) n'a pas ce geste de soumission, il se considère indépendant de notre autorité (Mokolo archives, also in Martin 1970: 181)

Yet the Mafa did not see the necessity of these taxes and kept resisting them. As a result and regardless of the fact that he was originally Mafa, Lawan Riskou was killed (in 1924) by the Mafa in Ladamsay near Mokolo during one of his tours. Underscores the resistance and the contempt of the Mafa for the Fulbe, the Fulbe hierarchy and those who had become Islamised, which for the Mafa meant a collaboration with the Fulbe, even if they came from their own region. Those who resisted, held on to their own values and political system but it is self-evident that they had no influence whatsoever in the administration of the colonial government and that the colonial rulers in turn kept bothering them.

In town, the Muslim community slowly grew, as many Mafa - women as well as men, moved to town to live with relatives or in search for jobs and consequently were converted to Islam. Islamisation meant, as we said before, a change of identity and the Muslim townspeople in those days more or less looked down upon their non-Islamic relatives, as the latter were considered to be 'infidels', heathens', '*haabe*', illiterates and uncivilised people who went around in their goat-skins and their 'cache-sex'. After the

death of Lawan Riskou other Fulbe *lamibe*, from the Madagali-court were appointed by the French and the Muslim community in town slowly grew. The unequal balance between Islamised people and the Mafa continued during the whole colonial period, but as more and more dignitaries were Islamised Mafa they were tolerated by the Mafa who slowly started to get used to the fact that they had to pay taxes instead of killing the tax-collector with bow and arrow. They also learned to settle their disputes at the *lamido's* place, though their own social and political system continued to be the major point of reference to them. On the fourth of April 1930 captain Vallin made the following remarks:

La tournée de Mr le Sous lieutenant Chabal sera fructueuse. Les Kirdis (heathen) Matakam (Mafa) visités ont accepté le contact en 1927. Chaque année, permet d'enregistrer chez eux des progrès sensibles.

But not all the missions proceeded smoothly. The same sub-lieutenant Chabal wrote that he 'had to' burn down whole quarters with houses in 1930, and that he encountered severe aggression in 1931 in Djou, near Ziver. Lieutenant Laroussinie mentions in his report of the tax-collecting mission in Ziver in 1937 that this particular region is till very undisciplined:

Le village de Ziver (near Magoumaz, about 10 km from Mokolo) par lequel nous débutames, est le plus indiscipliné et même le plus agressif. Des 22 villages de Mokolo, c'est le seul qui a toujours refusé de s'acquitter de son impôt et ses habitants vivent en mauvais termes avec leurs voisins (Mokolo archives Rapport de tournée 1937)

'Incidents' continued to occur. The administrators also had problems with the censuses they took. By 1940 the French were aware that only an indigenous government could control the people. Nonetheless this was only put into practice when Mokolo became a civil administration. Then they started to recognize the jurisdictions, modify the divisions of the cantons and regroup as many Mafa people as possible under the direct administration of Mokolo subdivision. The French then wanted a decentralized homogeneous power structure in which they could use clan leaders. Six direct administration groups were formed reflecting the ethnic differences of the Daba, Goude Bana Mofu Kapsiki and Mafa. But the majority of the Mafa still resorted under the two large cantons of Mokolo and Mozogo (north of Koza), which were under the command of a Fulbe chief (Martin 1970: 43). It was only that in 1957 Mokolo was divided officially into a Fulbe canton with a Fulbe *lamido* (Idrissou) and a Mafa canton with another *lamido* for the Mafa (Magadji Djamare). However, this Mafa *lamido*, was an Islamised Mafa, who had accepted the Fulbe political system. Though in this period it was somewhat more acceptable, it still meant that the rural Mafa had to accept a different political structure. The Islamised Mafa in town all lived in the Muslim quarters and fell under the reign of the Fulbe *lamido* - a fact they totally agreed upon. The French had also installed an administrative system, including a customary law tribunal - where these had previously resorted under the 'village' chiefs and clan elders. The organisation of canton chiefdoms and 'quarter' chiefdoms was another political change with a great impact for the Mafa. This entailed a change from local politics to regional politics. The Mafa did not know this level before. As mentioned above the French had taken Fulbe political organisation as an example. In this system, the *lamido* of Mokolo gives orders to the 'quarter chiefs', who command the villagers. Obviously, these chiefs do not have the same authority as the 'traditional' Mafa 'mountain' chiefs. Order within the area was no longer maintained exclusively by the latter, as the armed government forces intervened more frequently as had been possible before. As wrote Jourdain, *chef de la subdivision* of Mokolo in 1957, about another clan clash that was about to start due to

une coutume que nous comprenons difficilement. Ce conflit, fréquent en saison sèche, période de déoeuvrement n'a pas été provoqué par des rivalités de familles ou de villages, mais bien par une coutume caractéristique des populations

encore primitives, ne venant que lentement a la civilisation (M Jourdain, Archives de Mokolo No 132/L/SMK, 1957)

Whereas the Mafa were considered as primitive, the French have always had great admiration for the Fulbe 'colourful' customs, thereby favouring the Islamic community Christianisation and (secular) scolarisation started relatively late in the area. The first official 'western' school in the area was opened on May 1, 1934. In 1937 Laroussinie noticed the first 'fruits of progress'. He wrote

D'ailleurs la cadence de leur evolution, pour un esprit observateur est tres rapide en raison de leurs facilité d'imitation (sic!) Un exemple nous en est donne par l'école, ou les Kirdis tout aussi primitifs que leurs camarades de jeux de la montagne, en trois ans apprennent a comprendre et a parler le français, a lire, écrire, compter et sont capables de rédiger une petite lettre (Rapport de la Tournée du Lieutenant Laroussinie, March 1937, Mokolo Archives)

The first mission school (of the Oblates of Mary) was established in 1945 and another in 1951. A Catholic mission was established in Djinglya in 1953 (15 km south of Mokolo). The mission of the Seventh Day Adventist Church was established at the foot of the massifs of Koza in 1946 and has an affiliate in Mokolo. The Sudan United Mission asked permission to settle first in Sulede and afterwards in Mokolo (Mokolo archives, Le probleme du commandement a Mokolo, without date, also in Martin 1970). In the North these mission activities and the scolarisation efforts in particular started to bear fruit relatively late. For a long time, the decisive role of Islam kept up the suspicion towards European education, which had to compete with the Qu'ran schools among the Islamic population. The latter considered religious education far more important than secular education. As an Islamised informant narrated recalling those days

We were Mafa and had lost our parents. We stayed at the lamido's court, where captain Lavergne had brought us. They asked if we wanted to attend primary school. In those days nobody wanted to go to school. It was only the children of slaves who went and children whose father and mother had died, like me and my brother. Sometimes they took children to make them go to school by force and then the parents gave a goat to the master and they let the children go again. That was because they did not know what a school was. There was only one primary school in those days. There was one headmaster, his name was Gokla, which means pipe, because he always used to smoke a pipe. There were only two classes, not six like nowadays. And there was another school in Koza.

AFTER INDEPENDENCE

After independence, which was instituted on the 1st of January 1960, the indirect administrative system of the French remained fairly intact in the North and has been functioning ever since. It incorporated the district chiefs (*chefs de subdivision*), who in pre-colonial Fulbe society had been so important. In their papers of appointment, they are referred to as traditional chiefs. The local (especially Islamic) population still very much honour these chiefs. Mokolo remained a division named Mayo Tsanaga, ruled by a *préfet*. In 1967 it was subdivided into four homogeneous Subdivision: Koza, Moskola and Gabua (replacement of the old canton of Mozogo afterwards called Matakam Nord) and Matakam South, which corresponds to the former Mokolo canton. The *lamibe*, now canton chiefs, answer directly to the head of the subdepartment (*sous-préfet*) of Mokolo. They form the administrative link between the subdepartment and the 'village chiefs'. They have to maintain the order and uphold the rules of traditional law. They collect taxes and intervene in local disputes when men complain that their women ran away and when women complain about their menfolk, when difficulties arise between the cultivators and the pastoralists, or when the cattle of the latter destroys farmers crops, when smuggling activities get out of hand, they further construct schools and recruit pupils. However, also after independence the non-Islamic population had limited access to state institutions and

the different ethnic groups were represented by their Islamised members, who, as we said before had changed identity and taken over Fulbe cultural elements and had adjusted to Fulbe political hierarchy, though in our area - contrary to other regions in the North, they never claimed to be ethnically Fulbe. In the Mafa canton in Mokolo, reigned Magadji Djamare, and Islamised Mafa, who was succeeded by his son Mohammadou Magadji. During the reign of Ahidjo 1960 - 1982 - and also afterwards, these clan leaders were loyal to the only political party, the U N C (*Union Nationale Camerounaise*), called R D P C (*Rassemblement Democratique du Peuple Camerounais*) under Bya. The political party tried to establish itself in the various regions so also in the region under concern. The Muslims in the area had no arguments with that as long as Ahidjo, a Muslim from Garoua, was president. Whether the non-Muslims in the area agreed is hard to say, as no opposition was allowed. During my first fieldwork period, nobody ever talked politics. Even my carefully composed questions, asked between the four walls of my house were hardly answered. The quarter chiefs in the Mafa regions - newly created post, had to be members of the political party. Their relation with the local 'traditional' leaders in the area could be tense, due to different interests and loyalties.

During the reign of Ahidjo the North was represented in the state institutions by Islamic Northerners. Though independence may have led to a decrease in traditional Fulbe hierarchy and a decline in the power of the Fulbe elite and Fulbe cultural exportation, the social groups that profited from this decline, - the chiefs from originally different ethnic groups like the Mafa chief Magadji, notables of Islamic non-Fulbe groups and the Fulbe of non-aristocratic background - were nearly all Islamic, since Ahidjo's regional politics in the North favoured the Islamic population (also Bayart 1979: 191).

During this period, the non-Islamic members of the numerous ethnic groups in the North hardly participated in the Northern supremacy of the Ahidjo regime (Bayart 1989: 231 footnote). The party president for Mokolo region, Boubakary Tchoude, who represented the population in the National Assembly (The House of Commons) was a sincere Muslim and I presume of Fulbe background. It may seem that the different ethnic groups are not the only ones to unequally share in the political power, but they share this unfavourable position with women in general. However, within the different institutions in Mokolo a good number of women could be found, who occupied public positions. These were often Islamic or Islamised women from Mafa or other ethnic backgrounds. In Guider (80 km south of Mokolo) one of the two party deputies was an Islamised woman, from Giziga background.

NEW POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The balance changed somewhat when Cameroon got a Christian president from the South, Paul Biya, in 1982. Many Muslim divisional heads, sub-divisional heads and other administrative officers in the North were replaced by Christian Southerners. It then became easier for non-Muslim Mafas to get a job in the administration, so these changes worked to their advantage.

Cameroon had always been considered as a relatively wealthy - due to the oil, and thus successful African country by the Western powers. The economic decline started in the Biya period. After the Structural Adjustment Programme of the I M F, Cameroon got into an even more precarious economic position. The call for democracy and a National Conference got louder. Demonstrations were held, and the opposition parties organized strikes throughout the country, called 'villes mortes' 'ghost towns'. This meant that for a whole week, no shops should be open or commercial activities be undertaken, except on Sundays. In Mokolo, the quarter chiefs were intimidated by CPDM officials got the following message:

We have orders not to shoot in case of riots, but we are not sure ourselves, if we will follow those orders. So the quarter chiefs, knowing their population, tried to keep the discontented people, especially the youth, off the streets. Things got out of hand only once when an angry crowd headed for the customs office and burnt it down. Legislative

elections were held of in March 1992 In Mokolo several political parties took part in the elections

However, only three are important in our story the existing political party (the C P D M) and the opposition parties M D R (Mouvement pour la Defence de la Republique) and U N D P (Union Nationale Pour le Developpement et le Progres) The old rivalries between the Islamic community and the Mafa population, surfaced in the voting behaviour Many non-Muslim Mafas voted C P D M , the Muslim quarters voted U N D P , which was led by a Muslim (Fulbe) Northerner The M D R did not get enough votes, so these votes went to the C P D M and the U N D P Consequently these parties could each send three deputies to the National Assembly

Asked about their voting behaviour, the Mafa, men as well as women, said that they did not want the old times back They associate Bouba Bello, the leader of the N U D P who had returned from a long exile, with the court of Madagali, the town which had played such an important role in the suppression of the Mafa people at the beginning of this century At the same time, the N U D P repeatedly tried to show that their party should not be associated with the old regime from the time of Ahidjo, and that they are a totally new party The Mafa population does not seem convinced yet An informant said One vote for C P D M is not a vote for Paul Biya, but we do not want back the old times of Muslim domination The M D R 's political pamphlets in particular referred to the Fulbe political domination

Les KIRDIS sont a nouveau écartés de la prise des décisions sur la gestion des affaires politiques administratives du pays sous prétexte qu'ils n'ont aucun poids économique et ne constituent pas un groupe de pression politique Sinon, comment expliquer l'absence totale et flagrante des Kirdis dans le gouvernement actuel, alors que tous les Ministres Nordistes qui s'y trouvent sont Musulmans? Comment expliquer encore que sur les dix gouverneurs en poste, il y a deux Nordistes et tous les deux sont comme par hasard Musulmans? Tout récemment, lorsque le Premier Ministre a invité les Lamibe du Nord pour consultation, ceux des Kirdis ont été exclus! Nos parents et nous-mêmes avons souffert atrocement et souffrons encore de tout cela il n'est plus question que nos enfants en souffrent encore!

Nationally, the M D R formed a coalition with the ruling party and appointed an Islamized Mafa Minister of Town Planning and Housing One may wonder if the revelation of the old days will fall on fertile ground in Mokolo In most families, one has Pagan as well as Islamized family members and as I have shown elsewhere, people keep in touch (van Santen 1993) During recent meetings in which political parties met, I could observe that the members of different political parties were obviously present, as they wore the garments, boubou's with the text of their political parties They intermixed and discussed with one another in a friendly way During my visit in 1992, there certainly was much more political openness and discussion in town When I entered the post-office, people were discussing the latest development in loud voices I looked at them and expressed my feelings

'Who could have thought a couple of years ago that you would have these discussions , I am so surprised ' They laughed and answered ' Then it was in our minds, now it is in our mouth ' I even heard children in the streets singing the following song, an event that would have been impossible up to 1990 Paul Biya, he may still be president but soon he will be no more than an ordinary merchant at the market, and his wife she will soon be nothing more than a seller of fish at the fish market (this was a few days before her sudden death) As we all know soon afterwards Paul Biya was (claimed to have been) re-elected as president

At weddings in the Muslim quarter, where only women are present, the song of the U N D P opposition party was the most popular music to dance to in 1992 Now weddings in the Muslim quarter are a women's affair so this is only one expression of the fact that

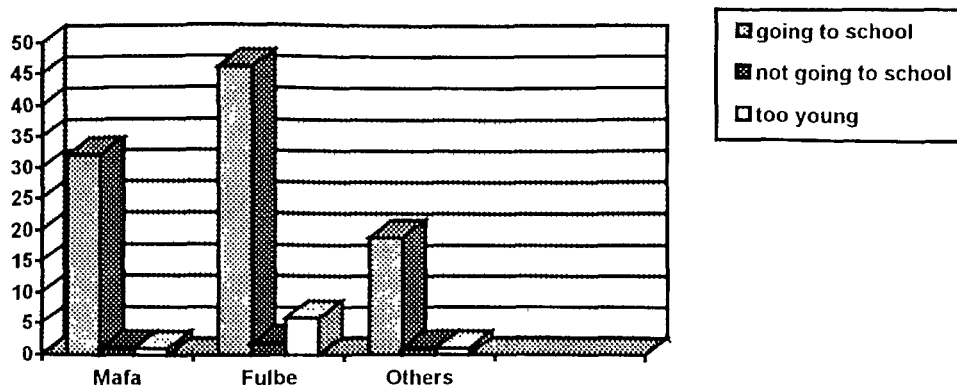
women are politically-minded and have as much an opinion on the new political situation as their husbands, brothers or sons have. In 1992, when I stayed with friends in the Islamic as well as in the Mafa quarters of town, many Muslim women vote for the U N D P, while Mafa women are inclined to vote for either M D R, or C P D M. I noticed that women whose families Islamized one or two generations ago, were then in support of U N D P.

In 1995 this attitude seemed to have changed again. Following the continuing economic decline, voting behaviour was very much attached to economic advantages. Rumours went around that the C P D M was buying people's membership. However, my stay was too short to verify these rumours. I have also observed that the developments of the recent period still had other consequences. In 1986, Mokolo as a town still had an Islamic character, though there existed non-Muslim quarters in town. To my greatest surprise ~~Fulfulde~~ and not Mafa was the lingua franca, even at the market place. These days, so it seems, Mokolo is becoming more and more a Mafa town. The political openness has led to a larger ethnic consciousness. Mokolo has become an urban centre for Mafa people from the different clans who, till independence, still occasionally fought each other in clan wars. Before, such an ethnic consciousness was present among those people who moved far away. For the Mafa in the rural areas till recently, the only alternative was to be a Muslim. Non-Muslims were by definition Mafa.

The new ethnic consciousness may also be a result of the difference in formal education. In the area of education the North is still backward to the rest of Cameroon. In 1976, the school enrollment rate in the North in general was still rather low compared to the South of Cameroon. In 1976 the percentage of the two sexes in the North were 21,9% while it was 64,8% in other parts of Cameroon. For males the percentages were respectively 28,7% against 68,3%, while for females they were 14,4% against 61%. In the North, the literacy rate was 82,6% for men and 94,2% for women (Bureau Central du Recensement, 1980 p 17,40 & 87 in Gubry 1995). The percentages given are for the rural as well as the urban areas.

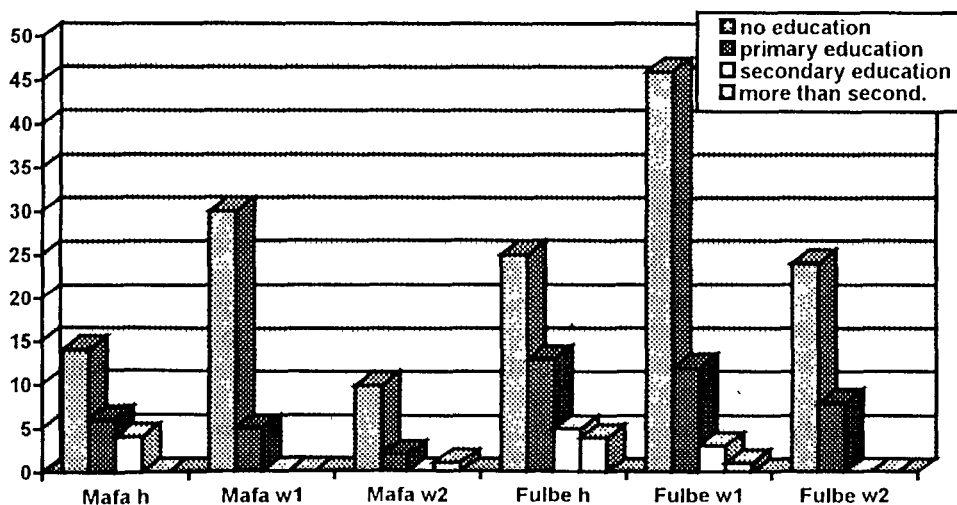
Nevertheless, it should be noted that these figures do not include Islamic education. As said before, many Fulbe (women as well as men) were literate and went to Qu'ranic schools. Islamised Mafa would also send their children (girls as well as boys) to Qu'ranic schools, as in Fulbe society learned scholars may accomplish high status, but secular education was associated with those white people, who were '*Nasaara'en*', infidels, *Haabe*, and thus inferior. Many women and men not included in the official statistics may not be able to speak French but they read and write Arabic as well as Fulfulde in Arabic script. In former days, the Muslims were in power, though few of them had had a Western education. For them status was based on a 'profound' Islamic education. As we mentioned earlier, the Mafa started to attend secular education much sooner than the Islamic population, and also the percentage of Mafa who finished secondary school seems to be higher. Following my own data for Mokolo, gathered in 1987 and 1988 the level of education of the new generation in town is much higher as shown in the following diagrams.

Graph 1: Level of education of children in Mokolo



Compared with the level of education of the former generation - divided by the level of men and first wives -, the change is enormous.

Graph 2: Level of education of husbands, first wives and second wives in Mokolo



h = husband; w1 = first wife; w2 = second wife.

The new self-awareness of the Mafa also expresses itself in the following events. In 1991 elections were held among the population of both cantons to choose the new *lamibe*, as the Islamised Mafa *lamido* Mohammadou Magadji, as well as the Fulbe *lamido* Idrissou - who had reigned since 1948, died in 1990. In principle everyone could be candidate, but of course one needed money to have a dossier made. There were eight candidates for the Mafa position. A remarkable sign of the new ethnic consciousness was the fact that two of them were Mafa who still practised their own religion (from Mandaka and Mendezje), members of a *bi-gwali*, chief clan, and one a Christian (from Soulédé), also a member of a *bi-gwali* (chief clan). The newly chosen Mafa *lamido* was a Muslim though not related to the former Mafa *lamido* (only the patri-clan on mother's side, the *kuyuk*, was the same). His name was Oumarou Tjamaka; he came from Ladamzay (the

place where in history Iwan Riskou had been killed) and also descended from a *bi-gwali* (chief clan). He only reigned for two years and died in 1994. Asked if there had been any female candidates, my informants laughed. They said that such was not possible, as a woman within Mafa society can never be 'bigger' than her husband.

For the Fulbe canton there were several candidates as well. But the seven quarters formerly ruled by Idrissou chose the son of Yacoube (Fulbe *lamido* in Mokolo from 1928 to 1946), called Yacouba Mohammadou Mourtalla. As said, partly due to the new political situation and the growing self-confidence of the Mafa population, the old division between the Mafa and the Fulbe re-emerged. The two *lamibe* did not keep as good a relation with each other as the former *lamibe*. In 1992, they refused to gather together to pray for the festivities at the end of the Ramadan. Among the Mafa, one may hear the argument that they have enough of these '*Madagali* Nigerian princes who raided them in the past, reigning in Mokolo'. However, the father of the present Fulbe *lamido* (son of Yacouba) as well as the *lamido* himself were born and raised in Mokolo.

A phenomenon I discovered during my stay in 1992, is the fact that several women's groups had come into existence (a single group could number about fifty women). They undertook all sorts of activities, among which the cultivation of a plot of land of their own. The members of these groups are women of Mafa background, who are Islamic, Pagan or Christian. But women of other ethnic backgrounds who have settled in town for various reasons are also members. As it looks now, women of different political backgrounds discuss their problems within these groups. These problems may be on a household level but often include politics. Women are highly aware of the current political situation. Within these groups, Mafa women also question the issue of their access to land. This is regulated by customary laws as well as the new legislative system and - in the case of converted women - by an Islamic ideology.

Though not all the women's groups turn out the way the women expected, these interesting developments within the lives of women as well as the effects on their political behaviour need to be researched further, as they may have an impact on the public political arena.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this article, I described the origin of the Fulbe domination over the Mafa people in the mountainous Mandara-mountains. I started off with my personal impression of the National Celebrations Day in 1987, which I called - not without cynicism - an ideal-typical demonstration of 'nation-building'. The celebration made it evident that the suppression of the religious and cultural differences of the Mafa-people as one of the many ethnic groups of the North had not succeeded. However, in order to get access to public and private resources, or to play one's role on a regional level the Mafa, like the members of many other ethnic groups until recently, needed to adapt to the Fulbe identity, which translated itself in this particular region in the process of Islamisation and urbanization.

Nevertheless, some major differences can be observed between the Mafa and the ethnic groups in the plains. The Mafa had never known a centralized hierarchical political system nor had they lived in villages, they were scattered over the country-side. They were a caste-society, and until recently as a consequence of their decentralized political system, clan membership was far more important than ethnically Mafa. Those who became part of a larger community, and came to be surrounded by other ethnic groups became conscious of the fact that every person is also a member of the Cameroonian state. For those individuals being Mafa became a new identity. Consequently the process of 'nation-building' -to use the term again - enhanced rather than diminished the ethnic consciousness of the Mafa. A centralized political structure like the one of the Fulbe rulers, and thereafter the colonial authorities and, after independence, the centralized government of Cameroon had been unknown to the Mafa and has therefore been much more of a shock to them than for to some other groups.

Secondly, compared to other regions few Fulbe sedentarised villagers have settled in the Mafa rural area. There has been no competition for access to land between Mafa and Fulbe (unlike in other areas, see v d Berg this volume), as a consequence of the overpopulation, the inaccessibility of the mountains for large herds, the structure of the soil and the terraced fields which are totally unsuitable for pastures.

The colonial government regarded Mafa society as anarchic - there were no chiefs one could address oneself to - and this led to the established domination of the Mafa by the Fulbe political structure, while the Mafa had been able to resist this domination in pre-colonial periods. The colonial authorities used former Mafa slaves who had Islamised (see van Santen 1993: 86 ff., Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1993).

In due time and as a consequence of push-and-pull factors, and chain-migration more Mafa women and men moved to Mokolo, the town that was created in the colonial period. These migrants later became Islamised, thereby accepting the Fulbe identity and political structure, though they never claimed to be ethnically Fulbe. Until Paul Biya's accession to power, non-Islamic Mafa hardly played a political or economic role within the region nor on a national level. During the Biya-period, non-Islamic Mafa (at least those living in town) became better secularly educated than the Islamic population, who valued Islamic education more. This turned out to be to their advantage and they are better educated nowadays. Nevertheless, the role they are allowed to play on a regional or national level is growing only gradually.

During recent political and social developments, a rift emerged in the voting behaviour between the non-Islamic and the Islamic population. The latter voted UNDP while the non-Islamic people voted CPDM thereby emphasising that their vote was not a vote for Paul Biya, but that they just did not want back the old times of Fulbe domination. In their propaganda of 1992, the MDR used the division in the North between non-Muslims and Muslims and the dominating behaviour of the latter in the past. In my opinion this is a dangerous and unfruitful development.

In conclusion, I think that a consciousness of the historical past, in which one group dominated the other does not necessarily need to provoke old feelings of rivalry or suppression. On the contrary, in this article I deliberately paid attention to the historical fact that before the Fulbe dominated the North, - then they were still pastoralists - the sedentary ethnic populations sometimes treated the Fulbe very badly. In the same way the nomadic Fulbe (called M'bororo by non-Fulbe) are nowadays in a very unfavourable position. We ought to stress the fact that domination of one ethnic group over another works as a pendulum, groups dominating each other in turn. But a dominating position in the past does not need to involve a continuation of such dominating attitudes in the future. Awareness of the differences of other groups may lead to acceptance and co-operation. In that respect Cameroon could learn from the Northern area or the Mafa area especially, all families have Islamic and Christian members as well as members who hold on to their own religion. These people with different religious backgrounds still keep in contact as I mentioned in my book (1993: 217). They live together peacefully and have intermixed with Fulbe people living in the area for generations. In many respects the common (so I mean the non-aristocratic) Fulbe and people from other ethnic groups depend on each other. As long as political parties like the MDR do not try to get votes by deliberately using old sentiments I think there is hope for the Northern regions. But 'Northerners' also need to be accepted by the Southerners as 'complete' citizens and the Southern metropolis should stop referring to the Northerners as 'backward' people and treating as such.

Finally, in this article I also briefly mention women's role in the different political constellations. Briefly, not because I consider them as unimportant, but because their role in all political constellations were limited. However, it should be noted that women who do play their role in the local institutions and beyond, are nearly all Islamic women and the number of Islamic girls attending school in an urban area is nearly 100 %, while in the Mafa rural area far more boys than girls attend school. Another encouraging aspect is the formation of women groups at local levels. Within these groups women with different

ethnic and religious backgrounds participate. These initiatives may serve as an example for their menfolk.

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