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THE SYMBIOSIS OF BALI NYONGA-BASEL MISSION RELATIONSHIP: UNDERSTANDING THE INFLUENCE OF BALI NYONGA THROUGH THE PRISM OF BASEL MISSION VERNACULARIZATION IN THE WESTERN GRASSFIELDS OF CAMEROON, 1902-1963

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ABSTRACT

One of the main features of pre-colonial Cameroon history was the migration of different ethnic groups in search of eco-human friendly environments for settlement. During this period, the Western Grassfields became a hotspot for the settlement of different groups, one of which was Bali Nyonga. Their settlement was followed by attempts to spread their influence on proximate polities. The annexation of Cameroon by the Germans in 1884 added a new twist to the social influence of Bali Nyonga, as it became the base of the Basel Mission in the Western Grass fields. The Fon(ruler) of Bali supported the Basel Mission, which in turn made the Mungaka language of Bali its official medium of communication in the Western Grass fields. This article seeks to unveil how the said mission popularized Mungaka. But how exactly did the Basel Mission popularize Mungaka? What were the effects of vernacularization, and how did the two colonial regimes (Germany and Britain) and indigenous groups react? To address these issues, the paper summons and analyses data from primary and secondary sources. From the fertility of its thesis, the paper contends that the Bali Nyonga-Basel Mission enjoyed a symbiotic relationship; the Fon promoted the missionary enterprise which in turn helped spread Bali influence through its vernacularization programme. The programme gave birth to identity crisis, translated in the form of sporadic resistance.

Keywords: Western Grassfields, Bali Nyonga, Basel Mission, Vernacularization, Symbiosis, Resistance

Introduction

The Western Grassfields of Cameroon was a vast 'sea of grass' which stretched from the Bamileke country to the Bamum kingdom in present day West Region, and the Bamenda Grassfields, which is administratively known as the North West Region. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Western Grassfields was a hotspot for the settlement of kingdoms/*fondoms*[1] from different ethnic groups including the Tikar, Widekum, Mbembe, Tiv, Bamileke and Chamba, *inter alia.* Among all the above, *fondoms* belonging to the Chamba tag were among the last to find shelter in the coveted region; under *Fon* Fonyonga I, Bali Nyonga secured their space in the south western part of the Bamenda Grassfields as late as 1855.[2] She quickly subjugated several *Fondoms*, most of which belonged to the Widekum group. To these groups, the name Bali Nyonga was associated with warfare, terror and domination.

However, the region was replete with *fondoms* which had emerged in their own rights as powerful entities. In the Bamenda Grassfields, *fondoms* like Bafut, Mankon, Kom, Bum, and Nso were power houses, capable of mounting fierce resistance in the event of a Bali Nyonga onslaught. Nkwi posits that the arrival of Bali Nyonga to the region threatened the balance of power, leading to a power tussle with Mankon and Bafut.[3] On the eve of annexation, relations between these three *fondoms* were tense, but did not result to any violent confrontation by virtue of the merits of diplomacy.

[1] A *Fondom* is a political entity ruled by a *Fon*. Traditional rulers in the Western Grassfields were generally addressed as *Fons* or Chiefs. They ruled over *Fondoms* and Chiefdoms, just as Kings ruled over Kingdoms.
[2] Ndifontah B. Nyamndi, *The Bali Chamba of Cameroon: A Political History* (Paris: Editions CAPE, 1988), 61.
[3] Paul Nchoji Nkwi, *Traditional Diplomacy: A Study of Inter-Chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfields, North West Province of Cameroon* (University of Yaoundé: Department of Sociology, 1987), 93.

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Further from the Bamenda Grassfields, there existed the powerful kingdom of Bamum, and others of the Bamileke group. Bamum for instance had comprehensively defeated both the Chamba under Gawolbe and Bali Nyonga under Fonyonga I after the schism. It was therefore a force to reckon with. Apart from its military prowess, Bamum had developed one of the richest civilizations in Cameroon before colonial invasion. The civilization, among other aspects included the development of a script under king Njoya.[4]

By the time of German annexation therefore, the politics of influence in the Western Grassfields was probably as advanced and complex as anywhere else in Africa. Galega I of Bali saw the colonialists as a stepping stone to achieving what he could not by the barrel of the gun. He offered to be a comprador to Zintgraff, the harbinger of the new dispensation in the Bamenda Grassfields. He believed that collaboration with the colonial regime had the propensity to yield long lasting benefits. As such, he, and Fonyonga II after him made repeated appeals for the Basel Mission to be sent to the *fondom*. Their eventual arrival in 1902, and decision to make Bali Nyonga their headquarters, placed the *fondom* on a different pedestal in the Western Grassfields for decades to come.

A Conspectus of the Establishment of Bali Nyonga *Fondom*

The origin of the Chamba ethnic group from which Bali Nyonga was born is shrouded in a lot of controversy. This is probably because of the paucity of data on the period due to the absence of documentation. Several authors however agree on Lamurde Jungum, being one of the earliest Chamba settlements. It was located in the right flank of river Faro, just before its confluence with the Pounko in present day northern Cameroon.[5] C.K. Meek posits that the Chamba were an agglomeration of different factions, which he linguistically classifies into Chamba-Donga, Chamba-Lekon, Wom, Mumbak and Kolbila.[6]Several other contemporary historians contend that the Chamba found at Lamurde Jungum consisted only of two factions, differentiated linguistically as Chamba Leko and Chamba Daka.[7]Meek appears to refer to these two linguistic groups as Chamba-Lekon and Chamba-Donga respectively. The Chamba Leko occupied the eastern region of the settlement, between the Atlantika Mountains and river Faro, while the Chamba Daka were found in the central and Western parts of the homeland.[8]

In the late 18th century, the Chamba were displaced from the settlement by an agglomeration of factors, including natural disasters, Bata supremacy, and the Fulani ascendancy. The diaspora was effected in different bands, with the Chamba Leko having five, among which were the Ndangambila. Under the leadership of Gawolbe, the Ndangambila migrated in a Southward trajectory.[9] The Chamba were generally warlike people, and some form of military training from a young age seemed to be a silent pre-requisite to social integration. According to W.E Hunt, the District Officer for Bamenda Division in the mid-1920s, the Chamba were "essentially a warrior caste; they knew how to fight, and loved to fight."[10] This trait therefore became handy especially at a time of survival of the fittest as Gawolbe led his group southwards.

The southward migration of the Ndangambila was characterized by a series of wars with other kingdoms along their paths. The wars were necessitated by the desire to secure supplies for subsistence, slaves for clandestine trade, and other spoils of war. In several cases, the wars culminated in the integration of several sub-groups into the Ndangambila throng.[11] In 1830, Gawolbe was killed in one of what had become his routine wars. In a war against the people of Bafu-Fundong, the Ndangambila leader was killed at the battle of Kolm.[12] This war had vast ramifications on the history of the Ndangambila, with the most indelible one being the Chamba Schism.

The death of Gawolbe led to a series of succession disputes, which have been explained differently by

[4] Victor Julius Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884-Present (2018):The History of a People* (Limbe: Design House, 2019), 14-15.
[5]Nyamndi, *Bali Chamba,* 10.
[6]C.K. Meek, *Tribal Sources in Northern Nigeria* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trubner, 1931), 329.
[7] See Nyamndi, *Bali Chamba*, 3.
[8] Ibid.
[9] EM Chilver and PM Kaberry, *Traditional Bamenda: the Pre-colonial History and Ethnography of the Bamenda Grasslands, Vol 1* (Buea: Government Printers, 1969), 16-17.
[10] File No. EP4929, Assessment Report on the Bali Clan, 1925, by WE Hunt, NAB, 10.
[11] EM Chilver, The Chamba of West Cameroon: report to the Bali History Committee, 1960, NAB, 70-71.
[12] Mathew Basung Gwanfogbe, "Geographical and Historical Introduction of Bali Nyonga" in Titanji *et alAn Introduction to the study of Bali Nyonga: A tribute to His Royal Highness Galega II, Traditional Ruler of Bali Nyonga, 1940-1985* (Yaoundé: Stardust Printers, 1988), 14.

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different authors. Nyamndi for instance holds that the Chamba leader died intestate, paving the way for a battle for succession.[13] On the other hand, Gwanfogbe opines that Gangsin was the heir-apparent, but was weak and unpopular, and hence unable to command the allegiance of his co-princes.[14]The uniting fact between these two paradigms is that shortly after the death of Gawolbe, the Ndangambila were plunged into a dispute over succession, which culminated in the split of the band into seven principalities, namely Bali Gangsin, Bali Gham, Bali Gasho, Bali Kumbat, Bali Kontan, Bali Muti and Bali Nyonga. While all the others were founded by princes, Bali Nyonga was the brainchild of princess Nyonga, who later ceded the position to her son Nyongpasi, since Ndangambila was a patriarchal society.[15]

On his accession, Nyongpasi took the regnal name Fonyonga I. His immediate project was to establish a home for Bali Nyonga in an eco-human friendly environment. In 1855, he successfully achieved this task when Bali Nyonga took over the Bali Konntan settlement in the south western part of the Bamenda Grasslands. Bali Konntan was incorporated into Bali Nyonga under Fonyonga I, and this union was immortalized with the use of two flags, known as *Tutuwan*.[16] The new Bali Nyonga settlement was flanked in all directions by different chiefdoms belonging to the Widekum ethnic group: on the north-east, east and south east were the Ngemba; on the west, the Moghamo and on the north, the Menemo.[17]

The settlement of Bali Nyonga was followed by a series of wars of expansion, as *Fon* Fonyonga I sought to extend the influence of his *fondom* on his proximate environment. In 1856, he died shortly after a disastrous war with Pinyin in which his soldiers were comprehensively defeated. The mantle of power passed on to Galega I, who, after avenging the defeat which they thought was ignominious, continued with expansionism.[18] It was during his reign that Germany annexed Cameroon, paving the way for the arrival of the Basel Missionary society to Bali Nyonga.

Towards Establishing the Basel Mission Base in Bali Nyonga

The groundwork for the eventual establishment of the Basel Mission (BM) at Bali can be traced to the early contact between the *fondom* and Dr Eugen Zintgraff. The German explorer's search for an overland route to Adamawa from the coast brought him to Bali Nyonga in 1889.[19] Impressed by the bearings of the *fondom*, its healthiness and fertility, as well as its nearness to perceived sources of ivory, Zintgraff began to see Bali Nyonga as potential German allies. The idea of a German station was quickly hatched, and with the assistance of Galega I and his subjects, *Baliburg* was built.[20]

The friendship that ensued between the two states men was cemented with a blood pact. During the said pact, Galega articulated his desire to create friendly ties with the white man so as to reap protracted benefits, rather than to rob him for meager ephemeral benefits as some of his counselors were suggesting.[21] One of such arrears of potential benefits was Christianity. On the subject, Galega in his philosophical pragmatism is quoted to have said;

> Man only knows what he sees, knowledge is the only right basis of belief, and everything else is useless speculation; but if the missionaries came to my land I would, if I could see the advantages of it, be willingly baptized, but would not exclude other beliefs since those of men are only good if they do not rely on one particular belief; but I wish to be a good friend of the whites and take the good from wherever it is to be found.[22]

Galega's somewhat jumbled philosophy suggests that the Bali monarch was more interested in nurturing his newfound alliance with the Germans, than in a genuine attempt to understand and embrace Christianity. Whatever the case, Galega I implored the German explorer to plead his case for missionaries when he

[13]Nyamndi *Bali Chamba*, 29.
[14]Gwanfogbe "Historical Introduction," 15.
[15] Ibid, 15-16.
[16] Nyamndi, *Bali Chamba*, 61.
[17] PM Kaberry and EM Chilver, "An Outline of the Traditional Political System of Bali Nyonga, Southern Cameroons" in *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute, Vol. 31, No. 4* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, October 1961), 357.
[18] Nyamndi, *Bali Chamba*, 62-63.
[19] EM Chilver, *Zintgraff's Explorations in Bamenda, Adamawa and the Benue Lands, 1889-1892* (Buea: Government Printers, 1966), 2.
[20] Ibid, 5-6.
[21]Ibid, 6.
[22] Chilver, *Zintgraff's Explorations,* 10.

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returned to Germany. In 1896, another opportunity presented itself when Max Esser paid a brief visit to Bali Nyonga, in the company of Zintgraff and Hesch.

Max Esser was initially a merchant banker before he interested himself in overseas development. He was largely responsible for putting together a financial consortium with interest in plantation agriculture.[23]His interest in plantation agriculture necessitated a steady reliable source of indigenous labour, and it was believed that the *Fon* of Bali Nyonga could be a panacea in that line of thought. Discussion on the supply of labour did not unfold independent of missionary prospects. Esser, who brought up the subject, took time to explain the merits of embracing missionaries. This must have had the desired effect as the *Fon* was all too willing to accept Christianity. He stated that "if you sent brothers, I would listen to their words… believe and be baptized with all my people."[24] The prospect of missionaries in Bali to pacify the land was a perfect panacea to ensure a non-violent atmosphere for labour recruitment. Such a phenomenon was common across Africa during the period of colonial administration. Walter Rodney corroborates this paradigm categorically by stating that "missionaries were agents of colonialism in the practical sense, whether or not they saw themselves in that light."[25] Evidence from the brief stay of Max Esser suggests that by the time of his departure the Bali Nyonga *Fon* echoed the initial demand for missionaries to be quickly sent to his *fondom*.[26]

In 1897, Galega sent a petition to the German Foreign Office, asking them to encourage the Basel Mission to begin work in Bali Nyonga. This petition was conveyed by Zintgraff who had remained in Bali as a private citizen since the departure of Esser the year before.[27] It is not clear if the petition was the brainchild of the *Fon* of Bali, or he was convinced and assisted by Zintgraff to do so. The fact that Galega I knew the appropriate authority to address his petition to, suggests that the latter opinion is highly probable. Whatever the case, Galega I did not see his cravings for missionaries materialize, as he died in 1901 and was succeeded by Fonyonga II. The new *Fon* renewed the request for missionaries.[28]

In 1902, the committee of the Basel Mission gave permission for feasibility studies to be carried out in Bali. Revs E. Schuler, Jacob Keller, and G. Spellenberg left Bombe on October 31st, 1902 on a reconnoitering mission and arrived at Bali in November of the same year. After their studies, the three missionaries unanimously agreed that Bali Nyonga would be a suitable springboard for the eventual dissemination of the glad tidings in the Western Grassfields.[29]

In the light of the foregone, the first resident missionaries in Bali were received in the *fondom* by Fonyonga II on Sunday March 17th 1903.They were Revs Ferdinand Ernst and Rudolf Leimbacher. The latter doubled as a builder. They were later joined by Rev. J. Keller alongside his wife and child.[30] These missionaries were therefore the pioneers, who faced the daunting task of converting to Christianity, a people who were largely attached to their culture, and this was compounded by their inability to read and write. Yet, the *Fon* of Bali Nyonga saw this as a new chapter with glorious prospects for his realm. As such, he was determined to be a catalyst in the success of the Basel Mission in Bali Nyonga.

How Bali Nyonga Promoted the Basel Mission (BM)

The enthusiasm portrayed by Galega I and Fonyonga II after him towards the implantation of the BM in Bali was matched by even more explosive excitement when the dream came to fruition. This was first displayed when Fonyonga II treated Schuler, Keller, and Spellenberg to a royal welcome during the reconnaissance visit in 1902. They were each given a royal traditional regalia bearing the Bali insignia. The *Fon* asked Schuler to wear the robe each time he sought royal audience.[31] To show appreciation and paint an image of integration, Schuler wore his regalia on 17th November 1902 when he delivered the first sermon to an

[23]Max Esser, "An Expedition to Bali Nyonga, June 1896" in "Some Materials for the Study of Bali Nyonga," NAB, 1.
[24]Ibid, 13.
[25]Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London: Boyle L'ouverture, 1972), 81.
[26]Esser, "Ecpedition,"17.
[27] Werner Keller, *The History of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon* (Victoria: Pressbook, 1969), 26.
[28] "Dossier Bali K*amerun*: A Letter Sent to the Basel Mission" by Rev. Spellenberg, 1903, BMCA.
[29] Ibid.
[30] George Babila Fochang "An Exploration of the Concept of God among the Bali Nyonga and its impact upon the contemporary Christian practice with particular reference to Hymnody and prayer" (University of Kwazulu Natal: MA dissertation in Theology, December 2004), 84.
[31] Jonas N. Dah, "The Planting of Christianity in the Grassland" in Jonas N. Dah (ed), *A Century of Christianity in the Grassland of Cameroon, 1903-2003* (Bamenda: Unique Printers, 2003), 23.

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estimated population of two thousand people.[32]According to Bali Nyonga tradition, the gifting of traditional regalia by the *Fon* to an individual symbolized induction into a cycle of esteemed notables.[33]By a-posteriori, Fonyonga was informing the pioneers that missionaries were to be given the latitude and privileges accorded to traditional ministers in the *fondom*.

The chieftain's support for the BM also came in the form of accommodation to the first resident missionaries. Fonyonga made arrangements for them to live in the palace with their families (for those who had), until a structure was erected exclusively for them. Shortly after their arrival on March 17th 1903, Laimbacher launched a building programme for a temporary church, which was completed within a month. A temporal mission house was equally set up to give the missionaries a suitable working environment. Both projects were supervised by Fonyonga II and Leimbacher. The provision of local building materials and labour fell on the indigenous population, and they did that with alacrity.[34]The missionaries hoped to have more permanent structures at a later date. To make this happen, Fonyonga donated a piece of land to them in 1906. It had a surface area of approximately 35 hectares. The BM was represented during this display of the *Fon*'s magnanimity by Rev. Keller, with Revs Gohring and Ernst as witnesses.[35]The construction of structures on the mission land was entrusted to the architect, Leimbacher. The *Fon* of Bali was however one of the most relished resource person during any construction because he ensured the supply of labour and local raw materials from the indigenous population. When Leimbacher decided to construct more permanent structures with European materials like corrugated iron sheets, the local population was still required to supply labour for porterage from the coast.[36]

One of the major challenges faced by the missionaries was that of nutrition. The absence of German factories in the Western Grassfields in the first decade of colonization meant that missionaries were not assured of steady supplies of basic food without the assistance of the indigenous population. In a report to the Home Board of the BM in 1904, Keller lamented the fact that they often ran short of basic commodities like meat, potatoes, oil, milk and fat. Under such circumstances, they often turned to the *Fon*, who supplied what was obtainable within the confines of his realm.[37] In some instances, porters were sent to the coast to secure supplies. However, as Keller observed, the roads were very perilous, owing to the numerous rivers along the way, with unreliable bridges. The precarious state of the trip to and from the coast accounted for the deaths of scores of porters. Keller reported that one firm lost sixteen of its porters while another lost four, all due to floods. Such death tolls discouraged movement especially during heavy rains. Only the very brave defied the odds and made the trip. Keller's report recounted the tale of a Bali Nyonga man who went to Victoria to bring a supply of 39 cutlasses. On his way back, he almost drowned in a river found in the outskirts of the *fondom*. The porter successfully redeemed himself, but not the goods he went to carry.[38] This chilling narrative reveals that porterage labour was life-threatening, but when it was absolutely necessary, some porters were ready to brave the odds and put their lives on the line to foster the missionary enterprise in Bali Nyonga.

Apart from challenges associated with hardware and subsistence, the missionaries faced difficulties in fulfilling very essence of their establishment at Bali Nyonga-evangelization. The conversion of the indigenous population to Christianity was a helluva task, especially because of the people's attachment to traditional religion, and the sacrifices which they needed to make if they elected to become Christians. Missionaries believed that their proselytizing mission would be more successful if they taught the indigenous population in their vernacular. As such, they devoted time to learn the *Mungaka* language of Bali Nyonga. The local population was all too willing to spend hours teaching the missionaries, especially as that was the only avenue for them to learn, with the total lack of documentation. Lutz opines that by 1905, the missionaries were fairly fluent in *Mungaka*.[39] Also, in order to promote church service on Sunday Fonyonga II declared Sunday a mandatory day of rest in June 1906 throughout his *fondom*. This was to help attach

[32]Fochang, "concept of God," 81-82.
[33] Interview with Clement Ndango Titalanga, 78 Years, Traditional Notable, 10th January 2021.
[34] Dah, "The Planting of Christianity,"24-25.
[35] File No. Sd/b (1916)2, Deed of Land Donation to the Basel Mission on 5th February 1906, NAB.
[36] Mathias Azang Adig, "The Dynamics of Colonial Labour in the Bamenda Grassfields, 1889-1961" (University of Yaoundé I: PhD Thesis in History, October 2012), 146-148.
[37]See Dah, "The Planting of Christianity," 24.
[38] Ibid.
[39]Fr Lutz, Excerpts from *Im Hinterland von Kamerun Uber Bali nach Bamum*: *Basel Missionsbuchhandlung,* 1907, NAB.

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some added significance to the Christian day of prayer.[40]Equally as an agrarian society, the royal edict meant people were no longer permitted to go to their farms on Sunday. This made them more available for any attempt at conversion to Christianity.

Besides evangelization, the introduction of formal (classroom) learning was a preoccupation of the BM at Bali Nyonga, and other parts of the Western Grassfields. According to Gwanfogbe, missionaries believed that schools were the best way of influencing the population and winning converts to Christianity. They sought to carry out evangelization and conversion in schools, hence targeting the heathen parents of pupils at home. Equally they wanted to produce educated African assistants of Christian leaders and state servants.[41]In a similar vein, Che-Mfombong opines that the first step in Basel Missionaries' activities in Cameroon was the conversion of the indigenous population to Christianity, which was closely followed by the establishment of schools with two fold aims; to train native teachers and catechists who would serve as proselytizing agents and to provide the colonial administration with a semi-literate class to serve as interpreters, clerks, messengers, and dressers, among others.[42] Education was therefore an invaluable component of missionary activities throughout Africa, and equally had vast benefits to the indigenous people who went through it. Yet, in Bali Nyonga and other communities in the Western Grassfields, the local population did not share the enthusiasm of the missionaries. In fact, the attitude of the indigenous population towards formal learning ranged from a lukewarm inclination to outright skepticism and even rejection. It was therefore a daunting task to recruit people into any school, and even more complicated to make sure they went through the course without abandoning.[43] Such a bleak atmosphere necessitated the intervention of the Bali monarch. According to Elisa Ndifon, who was among the first batch of pupils in the Bali vernacular school, Fonyonga literally forced parents to send their children to school. He often sent his servants to the quarters to threaten parents who elected to keep their children at home. Sometimes, the *Fon* organized traditional dances in the palace piazza, and towards evening, boys of school-going age were captured and compelled to go to school.[44] In some situations, he used intrigues to beguile parents to succumb to education for their children. Fohtung recounts how he and other boys were caught and taken to the palace, where a certain powder was applied on their foreheads. The *Fon* then declared that anyone who ran away from school risked sudden death from the spiritual potency of the powder.[45] The *Fon* equally enrolled in school out of a genuine desire to read and write. This encouraged several prospective learners to enroll. His zeal for learning was a subject of constant praise by missionary Ernst. He even went as far as assisting the missionaries with 200 marks for the purchase of slates. Fonyonga frowned at situations of school drop-outs. In 1904, Keller reported that two of Rev. Ernst's pupils escaped to Victoria to work in a plantation for fast cash. The *Fon* wrote to the governor who used his influence to bring them back to school. He equally encouraged those who took learning seriously. Dah reports that from time, Fonyonga invited school pupils to the palace, offered them palm wine, and discussed with the merits of becoming literate.[46]

Fonyonga II therefore was of enormous influence in the success of the Basel Mission, both in evangelization and the Western education. Bali Nyonga soon became the BM base in the entire Western Grassfields, and this promoted the influence of the *fondom* in the domains of Christianity and formal learning. Perhaps, the influence of the *fondom* was most felt in the domain of communication as the Basel Mission chose to use the *Mungaka* language as the official church and school medium of communication.

The Basel Mission Vernacularization Programme

The BM recognized the centrality of indigenous languages in their work, and made efforts to develop them. This language policy was influenced by the works of Johann Gottfried Herder and Gustav Wernerk. Both authors propounded theories on the fundamental value of language to the shaping of people's culture and

[40] Keller, *Presbyterian Church*, 28.
[41] Mathew Basung Gwanfogbe, *Basel Mission Education in Cameroon, 1886-1968* (Bamenda: Quality Printers, 2018), 28-29.
[42] Walters Che-Mfombong, "Bamenda Division Under British Administration, 1916-1961: From Native Administration to Local Government" (University of Yaounde: MA Dissertation in History, 1980), 125.
[43]Fochang, "Concept of God,"84.
[44] See Fochang, "Concept of God,"84.
[45] Maxwell GabanaFohtung, "Self Portrait of a Cameroonian" in *Paideuma: MitteilungenZurKulturkunde Bd. 38, 1992*, 221.
[46] Dah, "The Planting of Christianity," 26.

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identity,[47]which fitted into the BM vision to build a Christian village culture. As such, throughout their missionary history, the Basel Missionaries had a considerable number of linguists who worked in different parts of the world, including China, India, the Gold Coast, and Cameroon, *inter alia*.

In the Gold Coast, Johannes Gottlieb and Johannes Zimmermann pioneered the development of Twi and Ga into official BM church vernaculars in the 1850s. Zimmermann operated mainly at Osu and Abokobi which were Ga-speaking communities. He produced a Ga grammar book and a dictionary, and translated portions of the Bible into the language. Gottlieb on the other hand operated in Akwapem where he translated the entire Bible to Twi in 1871, and later published another book on Twi grammar.[48]

At about the same time, Alfred Saker of the London Baptist Missionary Society (LBMS) set out to establish the first set of conventions for written *Duala*.[49]Inspector Theodor held the view that indigenous languages should be at the core of evangelization across all communities in Cameroon. He believed that "the mission should have the right to use the local native language (because) if German Christianity was imported without modification, stamped by the German language and thinking, the result…in this respect could only be the culture-caricature and pseudo education."[50]

As such, Saker's work with the LBMS later became beneficial to the BM after German annexation of Cameroon, as they adopted the *Duala* language as the official church vernacular in the forest region of Cameroon. In the Western Grassfields, the *Mungaka* language of Bali Nyonga enjoyed the same privilege in evangelization and education.[51]

The Development of *Mungaka* Language

The word Mungaka literally means "I say" This is a characteristic feature in the onomastics of many indigenous languages in the Bamenda Grasslands. For instance, the Moghamo and Menemo languages of Moghamo and Meta groups were named along the same linguistic rule. In the specific case of *Mungaka*, it is germane to examine its morphemic synthesis. *Mu* means me; *nga* means "I say" (conjugated) and *ka* is affirmative.[52]

During the period of Chamba migration, the entire band spoke the *Mubako* language. After the scission occasioned by the death of Gawolbe, the seven Chamba off-shoots which left Bafu-Fundong used the *Mubako* language. However, it was not long before Bali Nyonga shed the indigenous Chamba language and adopted *Mungaka*. It is therefore the only existing Bali polity in contemporary times which does not speak any form of *Mubako.* When Zintgraff arrived Bali Nyonga in 1889, he observed that "*Mubako* survived only as a court language"[53]as Mungaka had become the popular language of the entire *fondom*. This transmutation probably needs attention.

The change in the language of Bali Nyonga from *Mubako* after the Chamba schism to *Mungaka* when they eventually settled has attracted the attention of several linguists, historians and anthropologists. They have propounded different theories to explain the origin of *Mungaka*. One of the most popular paradigms is what Lima calls the "Historical and Evolutionary Theory."According to it, *Mungaka* was born out of an interaction between Bali Nyonga and the Bati and Bamum. Lima holds that after failing in their alliance with the Bati to subjugate Bamum, the Chamba migrated southwards, taking along a sizeable chunk of their Bati allies. After the Chamba split, Fonyonga I tried one more time to defeat Bamum, but the result was not different from the first. Like the first time, more Bati people joined Bali Nyonga. Hence the years of cohabitation in the Bamum/Bati neighbourhood laid the foundation for the new language. The bulk of Bati who became part of Bali Nyonga also made the Bati language a component of the new language. Also, in the course of their migration to the Bamenda Grasslands, Bali Nyonga got in touch with other smaller groups,

[47] See Genevoix Nana, "Language Ideology and the Colonial Legacy in Cameroon Schools: A Historical Perspective" in *Journal of Education and Training Studies, Vol 4*, April 2016, 173.
[48] Joseph Yaw Aboagye, "An Evaluation of the Contribution of the Basel Mission and Presbyterian Church of Ghana to the Socio-Economic Development of the Agogo traditional Area" (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi: MA Dissertation in Religious Studies, July 2013), 89-90.
[49]Jaap Van Slageren, *Les Origines de L'Eglise Evangelique du Cameroun : Missions Europeennes et Christanisme Autochtone* (Yaoundé : CLE, 1972), 23-34.
[50] Erik Hallden, *The Culture Policy of the Basel Mission in Cameroon, 1886-1905* (Lund: University of Uppsala Press, 1968), 52.
[51] Gwanfogbe, *Basel Mission Education*, 32-33.
[52] Lima Adolf Sema, "The Mungaka Language-Its Development, Spread and Use" in Titanji *et al*, *Bali Nyonga*, 112.
[53]Cited in Lima, "Mungaka Language,"118.

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and some elements of their languages were adopted. Lima therefore, concludes that *Mungaka* was born out of a mixture of several indigenous languages, with the main ones being Bati and Bamum.[54] In his assessment report on the Bali clan, W.E. Hunt corroborated this paradigm, but held that *Mungaka* came strictly from a fusion of Bati and Bamum.[55] By the time of colonialism, *Mungaka* was almost exclusively the medium of communication in Bali Nyonga. This was instrumental in influencing the BM to adopt it as its official language in the Western Grassfields.

How the Basel Mission Popularized *Mungaka*

The decisions to make Bali Nyonga the BM base in the Western Grassfields was informed by a handful of reasons; the pioneers were impressed with the exceedingly friendly reception from the highly respected *Fon* Fonyonga II; the *Fon* had a longing for education, the missionaries were pleased with the large population from the heartland of Bali and its vassals. Also, they figured out that Fonyonga II wielded enormous power and influence, and was ready to employ it in facilitating missionary activities. Equally, Bali Nyonga had a favourable climate with fertile soils which could support some basic crops. It was also hoped that the able-bodied youths would serve as porters for loads from Bombey. Finally, Schuler felt it would be easy to build temporary houses with local materials like mud and thatches which the indigenous population was willing to supply.[56]

Having made the decision to establish in Bali Nyonga, it was only logical to adopt the vernacular of the people who hosted them. Rev. Keller was the first to begin studies on *Mungaka*. To achieve this, he created friendly ties, especially with elderly people, who were capable of taking time to explain basic language rules to him.[57]Before long, all the other missionaries took to learning the language. As earlier stated, Lutz intimated that by 1905, all missionaries at Bali Nyonga were fairly fluent in *Mungaka*. It was only after this milestone assessment that missionaries began the process of evangelization, and regular Sunday service. To facilitate this task, Rev Gohring installed a hand press with which he printed a collection of stories from the Old Testament, and a *Mungaka* primer. Some hymns for Divine services on Sundays were also printed.[58] These early missionaries were instrumental in popularizing *Mungaka* in the Western Grassfields.

Shortly after Fonyonga made Sunday a compulsory day of rest, the construction of the first permanent church house was completed. It had a sitting capacity of 450.[59]Church service was carried out in *Mungaka*, and this was facilitated by the translated materials which Rev Gohring printed. Those in attendance, whether from the heartland of Bali, or from its vassals, or from other proximate communities, were obliged to follow all proceedings in *Mungaka*. To quickly become integrated, most of them began making efforts to learn the language. The greatest center for learning *Mungaka*, however, remained the vernacular school which was established in 1903.[60]

The Bali Vernacular School was the first institution for formal learning in the entire Western Grassfields. It opened its doors on 1st December 1903 to 63 boys. The second batch had an enrolment of 90 boys. By 1905, the school had registered 450 pupils, including 30 girls.[61] Teaching in the early years of the school was done exclusively by Basel Missionaries, who had devoted time to study and master *Mungaka*. In 1907, Lutz reported that teaching was in the hands of Keller, Ernst and Hohner. Each of them was assigned one classroom in which they taught all subjects. Ernst and Keller taught the two oldest classes, which composed almost entirely of children from Bali Nyonga. The third batch had a bulk of pupils from nearby and distant chiefdoms. Hohner was in charge of this highly heterogeneous classroom.[62]

As earlier revealed, the vernacular school became one of the main avenues in the proselytizing assignment of the missionaries. On November 20th, 1908, Rev. Ernst baptized 32 scholars. These new Christians became the nucleus of the church in the Grassfields. Rev. Vielhauer declared that they had become brothers to the European missionaries.[63]Others were baptized as the years went by. Soon after the baptism, most of them

[54] For details on the Historical and Evolutionary Theory, see Lima, "Mungaka Language," 115-119.
[55] File No. EP4929, Assessment Report on Bali Clan, 1925, NAB, 4.
[56]Dossier, "Bali Kamerun," BMCA.
[57]Fochang, "Concept of God," 84.
[58] Lutz, "Excerpts," 18.
[59] Keller, *Presbyterian Church*, 28.
[60]Fochang, "Concept of God," 85.
[61] Gwanfogbe, *Basel Mission Education*, 85-86.
[62] See Gwanfogbe, *Basel Mission Education*, 4.
[63]Fohtung, "Self-Portrait of a Cameroonian," 222.

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were sent to different communities as teachers/catechists to impart on the people what they had learnt in Bali. For instance Thomas Feh was sent to work at Nyen in Medig, with John Ashili; John Mukum to Moghamo, and Thomas Seta to Andek.[64] In all the communities, the language of instruction was *Mungaka*.

In 1914, Cameroon became a theater of the First World War as Britain and France fought to oust Germany from the territory. This was achieved in 1916, but Basel Missionaries were only permitted to return to the territory from 1924, having been expelled after the German defeat. During this second phase, Revs Tischhauser and Vielhauer were at the forefront of BM vernacularization. These latter missionaries embarked on the first comprehensive written grammar of *Mungaka*, and translated the Old and New Testaments. Some of these translations were done with the assistance of some educated elites from Bali Nyonga and beyond. For instance, Elisa Ndifon was Vielhauer's closest assistant in the translation enterprise. According to Guy, the dissemination of vernaculars reached its apotheosis in the 1930s and early 1940s. Within this times, Bible translations, local church regulations, linguistic, ethnographic and botanical studies, literature, primers and catechism, all reflected the increasing sophistication of written *Mungaka* (and *Duala*).[65]

Vielhauer was particularly interested in the translation and publication of books, articles, and hymns in *Mungaka*. Throughout his services to the BM in Bali, he was involved in 14 publications. His first translation was *Tsu nana* (Proverbs, (1910), with *Nwa'ni Nikob* (the Bible) realized in 1961. Between these two, there were 12 other translations. Although Vielhauer died in 1959, he is always ranked among those who translated the Bible because he did a reasonable chunk before his demise. The project was completed by his co-workers, notably Elisa Ndifon, Adelheid, and Tischhauser.[66] All these materials were mandatorily used in BM churches throughout the Western Grassfields, until voices of dissent began emerging.

The popularization of *Mungaka* after the Second World War was not limited to the translation of church materials. Vernacular Schools still provided a hotspot for the spread of the language. According to Dah, Vielhauer was instrumental in the establishment of a catechist school in Bali in 1928, where he taught *Mungaka* with Yona Mbu until its transfer to Bafut in 1940. During the twelve years of the school's existence in Bali, it produced over 250 pro-*Mungaka* catechists, who carried the vernacularization program to different parts of the region. In 1933, there were 51 vernacular schools in the region. The number rose to 115 in 1933, with an enrolment of 1370 pupils. In 1936, the enrolment had risen to 2532 pupils. The switch to English schools was rather slow in the 1930s.[67] This preference for vernacular schools however began to change in the 1940s with the rise in anti-Bali Nyonga sentiments.

Reactions to Basel Mission Vernacularization

The reaction to the use of *Mungaka* as the BM medium of communication can be conveniently classified into two; reactions from colonial regimes and reaction from non-Bali communities.

Reactions from the Colonial Government

When the German government requested the presence of the BM in Cameroon, it was aware of the mission's philosophy on vernacularization, both in evangelization and education. However, just over a decade after German annexation, Governor Puttkamer began viewing vernacularization with skepticism and outright disdain. This early cleavage hinged on Puttkamer's dislike for Douala people for their advantage over white traders in hinterland trade. He believed that the influence of the Douala was already too great and needed to be curtailed. This disdain for Douala people and their language featured in the educational conference of December 18th, 1907, presided over by Governor Seitz. The use of German language was discussed at length and the government expressed its opposition to the use of any other language in schools in the territory, be it European or indigenous. The governor insisted that the geographical scope of the *Duala* and *Mungaka* languages should be reduced for fear of the growing influence of the two polities.[68]

[64]Aaron Su, "Bali Nyonga, the Gateway in Christianizing the Grassland of Cameroon" in Dah (ed) *The Planting of Christianity*, 58-59.
[65]Guy Alexander Thomas, "Why do we Need the White Man's God? African Contributions and Responses to the Formation of a Christian Movement in Cameroon, 1914-1968" (University of London-School of Oriental and African Studies: PhD Thesis in History, 2001), 156.
[66]Dah, "The Planting of Christianity," 56.
[67]Ibid, 59.
[68]Harry H. Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons, 1884-1914: A Case Study in Modern Imperialism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), 355-356.

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In 1910, German colonial authorities reiterated objections to the vernacularization of education. They argued that Bali Nyonga (and *Duala*) were gaining excessive influence in their respective regional settings. The imperial decree which sought to revamp the educational system stipulated in part that "in native schools, no other language is to be tolerated as a medium of instruction and as a subject except German and the actual dialect which is spoken by the people."[69]This occurred contemporaneously with tensions between the colonial government and Fonyonga II of Bali over the return of some 2000 guns which had been given to Bali during the imperialist wars of subjugation in the Western Grassfields. The fall of Bali from the good graces of the Germans was also seen in the systemic emancipation of chiefdoms which had been placed under Fonyonga in 1905. However, by implication, the 1910 decree was not to affect the Vernacular school at Bali Nyonga itself. It prescribed the use of different local languages in a sphere where *Mungaka* had enjoyed dominance.

In order to respect the new language regulations, missionaries had to study the languages of all chiefdoms where they had established vernacular schools. This task was bound to be as expensive as it was time-consuming. As such, the Home Board of the BM launched an appeal to the Colonial Office to reconsider its stance on the use of *Mungaka* (and *Duala*). Meanwhile, vernacular schools in the Western Grassfields continued to use *Mungaka* while hoping for a favourable outcome. By the time the First World War started in 1914, both sides were still at an impasse.[70]

However, contrary to German aversion on the use of *Mungaka* (and *Duala*), British authorities, who ruled using the policy of Indirect Rule,[71] were less inclined to resist vernacularization after the post-war reinstatement of Basel Missionaries. This was because the Nigerian Education Ordinance which was applicable to Cameroon permitted the use of indigenous languages. According to the ordinance, vernaculars could be used at the infant school level, particularly where large numbers shared the same tongue. Although *Mungaka* did not enjoy the large demographic scope prescribed by the ordinance, the BM managed to circumvent it and continue its use. The debate on vernacular instruction was eventually abandoned after a series of inquiries and reports by British authorities in 1927. The use of vernaculars was henceforth considered an integral component of BM activities in British Southern Cameroon.[72]

The use of vernaculars reached its apotheosis in the 1930s and early 1940s. From the late 1940s however, vernacularization apparently became anachronistic, especially with the wind of change which was blowing across Africa. At this time, there was a rise in the demand for English schools, which coincided with the rise in anti-Bali sentiments in the Western Grassfields.

A. Reactions of Non-Bali Communities

The decision by the BM to use *Mungaka* as a cross-cultural denominator in the Cameroonian mission field had a unifying objective, but the situation on the ground left much to be desired in the direction of unity. According to Guy, the use of *Mungaka* as a tool for evangelization and education engendered, most of all a strain upon traditional diplomacy in the entire Western Grassfields. *Mungaka*, he maintains, drove a wedge between different parties engaged in configuring a new balance of power in the 20th century.[73]

The first major case of resistance to *Mungaka* came from Foumban under King Njoya, who accepted Christianity in 1905. Foumban was the first station which the BM established after Bali. It was considered an offspring to Bali because of the fact that the first Christians of the kingdom were trained in Bali. Equally, Rev Ernst constantly travelled from Bali to check the progress at Foumban. By July 1906, the Foumban vernacular school had an enrolment of 60 pupils including Njoya, who is said to have attended classes in *Mungaka* with keen interest. It was not long before he began to view the Bali language with skepticism. As such, he opened a rival school on the same piece of land where the *Mungaka S*chool was found. He personally taught some 500 persons, using the Bamum script and Bamum language, and not *Mungaka*. The two schools produced two categories of Christians in Foumban; those of the missionaries, called *Nzintud-Christen* and those of King Njoya, called *Nzise-Christen*. In 1914, Gohring stopped teaching in the Bali language in favour of Bamum, which Njoya was using in his school since 1910.[74]Although king Njoya

[69] Gwanfogbe, *Basel Mission Education*, 72.
[70] Ibid, 72-73.
[71] Indirect rule was a colonial policy adopted by Britain in which the indigenous people were administered through their traditional rulers and institutions.
[72] Guy, "The White Man's God," 156.
[73]Ibid, 165.
[74] Dah, "The Planting of Christianity," 34-35.

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studied in *Mungaka* when the vernacular school was opened in his kingdom, he soon considered it a travesty for the language of another kingdom to be imposed on his people. The establishment of a rival school where the Bamum language was taught using the Bamum script was intended to mitigate the effect of *Mungaka* on his people. No doubt, *Mungaka* became increasingly unpopular forcing missionary Gohring to abandon it in favour of Bamum.

The grievances against BM vernacularization in the Western Grassfields were not unique to Foumban. Several other communities saw the imposition of *Mungaka* on them with a lot of disdain. Before the First World War, pockets of resistance were recorded in different parts of the Bamenda Grassfields, especially among communities which the colonial government had placed under Bali Nyonga to ease administration. As if placing them in a position of subservience was not enough, the *Mungaka* language reminded them on a daily basis of Bali Nyonga domination. However all cases of restiveness were ruthlessly crushed by the colonial government,[75]not in support of BM vernacularization, but because cohesion in the enlarged Bali realm was at the time more beneficial to the colonial regime.

During the interregnum, Dr Lehman and Dr MacNeil wrote a report on the state of BM churches in the Bamenda region. They realized that church activities at the BM base at Bali Nyonga had come to a standstill. Fonyonga had even locked the church house and handed the keys to the D.O at Bamenda. On the question of language, they reported that "the Bali language is understood but not spoken in the surrounding country because it is the language of the former despotic king.[76]Based on this assessment, one cannot help but question whether evangelists like Johannes Ashili and Nkosu who kept the fame of Christianity burning in Meta and Babanki communities, did so in *Mungaka*. If yes, then why wasn't the language used in surrounding communities? The likely probability here is that as Bali, which was the BM base closed down, these local evangelists did not understand why *Mungaka* should still be the official church vernacular. No doubt, in 1924 P. Dieterle questioned whether it would not be wiser to transfer the remains of the BM station from Bali. This suggestion was made on the promise that all missionary activities in Bali had come to a standstill, and that Bali people and their chief were disliked by their neighbours because of years of Bali brutality and domination.[77]The acrimony which non-Bali communities had for Bali made it impossible for them to willingly promote the use of *Mungaka* especially during the hiatus when Basel Missionaries were expelled from the territory. *Mungaka* only picked up steam after the post-war reinstatement of Basel Missionaries in 1924/25. This was not because the acrimony had abated, but because the vehicles for the propagation of *Mungaka*, in the form of missionaries, were back. From the reinstatement till the outbreak of the Second World War, the Western Grassfields (except Foumban) made use of *Mungaka* in vernacular schools and BM churches, with very few incidents of opposition. Large scale opposition only surfaced from the 1940s.

According to Keller, during the Second World War, several traditional rulers in the Western Grassfields formed a lobby to oppose the use of *Mungaka* in their respective chiefdoms.[78] The *Fon* of Nso was among the first to impose a ban on the use of *Mungaka* in his *Fondom*,[79] and this opened the floodgates for similar royal edicts in the Western Grassfields. Missionary Zurcher, who was in charge of the region at the time, articulated the anti-*Mungaka* uprising in the following words; "The war waged by other tribes against the Bali language has already registered victories. The chief of Wum (We area has prohibited instructions in the Bali language. It is quite impossible to recruit even two boys from this town of 12 kings for our vernacular school."[80]

Apart from Nso and the Wum area, opposition to *Mungaka* equally gained momentum, especially among the Moghamo and Meta. Animosity towards the infamous language was witnessed from 1942. In 1943, a contingent of Meta catechists came to the fore, asking for their indigenous language to be used by the BM in their respective communities. This was followed by a complaint from Moghamo chiefs calling on the colonial authorities to prohibit the use of *Mungaka* in schools in their regions.[81]

[75] For details on the suppression of revolts against the rule of Fonyonga, see Paul Nchoji Nkwi, *German Presence in the Western Grassfields, 1891-1913: A German Colonial Account* (Leiden: African Studies Center, 1989), 38-58.
[76] See Dah, "The Planting of Christianity," 47.
[77] Guy, "The White man's God," 55.
[78]Ibid, 166.
[79] File No. E-5-2, 15, Annual Report (1941), Buea, 22nd April 1942, BMCA, 15.
[80] File No. E-5-2,15, Annual Report (1941), Bafut, 2nd April 1942, by JW Zurcher, BMCA, 11.
[81]Ibid, 5.

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In addition to the proliferation of anti-*Mungaka* movements under the guidance of traditional rulers and other elites, vernacular education apparently became anachronistic especially with the wind of change blowing across the African continent. At this time, there was a rise in the demand for English schools and a more than proportionate decline in vernacular school attendance, especially from the mid-1940s.[82]

The Resilience of *Mungaka*

Although the BM vernacularization scheme faced massive denudation especially from the 1940s, it was practically impossible to eliminate its last vestiges. There still existed a small class of converts who believed the unity and progress of the BM and later the Presbyterian Church (PC) could be better ensured if the Western Grassfields maintained the vision of the founding missionaries by sticking to the use of *Mungaka*. According to Guy, J. Mukum, a senior BM agent in Batibo paid visits to several Moghamo chiefs, convincing them on the merits of the continuous use of *Mungaka* in the entire Western Grassfields.[83] There existed several others like Mukum who could not comprehend the sudden *volte face* and rebuttal of the Bali language.

Meanwhile the BM continued to resist all efforts to abandon *Mungaka*, both from the indigenous population and the colonial government. For instance the Synod Office at Bafut called on the church in 1944 to not abandon the official church vernacular.[84] In 1954, the provincial Education Officer wrote to the Basel Missionaries, prohibiting the use of *Mungaka* in non *Mungaka*-speaking areas of the Bamenda province. However, the General Synod of 1954 in Buea, which was then under indigenous chairmanship, resolved to oppose the prohibition, and to carry on teaching *Mungaka* in all BM schools in the province.[85]

In 1957, the newly appointed subcommittee charged with addressing the conundrum on the use of *Mungaka* in primary schools, made the following declarations with the hope of putting the matter to bed:

> Neither *Duala* nor Bali [sic] can rightly be regarded as a dominant vernacular…any native agency which wishes to use Bali or *Duala*…should be permitted to do so in the classes where 2/3 of the pupils speak the proposed vernacular as the mother tongue or speak as their mother tongue a tribal tongue similar to the proposed vernacular…managers of schools should at the beginning of the school year apply to the education department for permission to use the proposed vernacular and at the same time show language distribution in the classes concerned.[86]

The education department however turned down this proposal. In 1958, it imposed a general ban on vernacular schools. After the ban, *Mungaka* continued to survive in what had changed to the Presbyterian Church. This came in the form of *Mungaka* songs and the Apostles' Creed, which was recited during church service. However, after independence the importance attached to *Mungaka* gradually waned, although not to the point of extinction. In 1963, Rev. Thomas Ediage, the District Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) reported that it was no longer English language, but Pidgin English which was threatening the survival of *Mungaka*, especially in the cosmopolitan environment of growing towns and suburbs. This argument was endorsed at the General Synod where Pidgin English was acknowledged as a swiftly spreading lingua franca.[87]

Conclusion

The decision by the *Fon* of Bali to pressure the colonial government for the Basel Mission to be sent to his *fondom* was something of a gamble, especially as he understood very little about the white man's God. However, the gamble paid dividends as the BM wasted little time in making Bali Nyonga their headquarters in the entire Western Grassfields. Besides being a center for the spread of Christianity, the *fondom* became a base for formal learning in the region, attracting learners from far and near. Graduates from Bali (Pro-*Mungaka*) carried the flame of education and Christianity to different areas of the Western Grassfields where the BM opened churches and schools. This fitted perfectly in the vision of the Bali *Fon* who always wanted to be revered by other traditional rulers in his proximate and distant environment. Bali influence was given a further bolster by the adoption of *Mungaka* language as the official BM medium of communication. Scholars

[82] Keller, *Presbyterian Church*, 66.
[83] Guy, "The White Man's God," 167.
[84] File No. E-5-2, 15, Annual Report (1944) Buea, 3rd April 1944, BMCA, 4.
[85] File No. 949, Resolution Concerning the Teaching of Bali Schools, 1954, PCCCAL.
[86] File No. 949, Report of the Subcommittee on the Question of vernacular teaching in primary Schools in Southern Cameroons, May 1957, PCCCAL.
[87] File No. 1347, Report of a Speech Discussion at the General Synod held in Buea, 25th November 1966, PCCCAL.

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and Christians were therefore assessed to a large extent on the basis of the degree of their mastery of the Bali language, irrespective of their *fondoms* of origin. Although BM vernacularization had a uniting objective, it ended up polarizing the Western Grassfields because it gave the impression that other communities were subservient to Bali Nyonga. Before the coming of colonialism, the aggressiveness of Bali Nyonga had earned it more foes than friends. The BM's decision to further glorify the *fondom* was largely ill-informed because it reminded communities of Bali Nyonga tyranny. Such an unhealthy background was inimical to the vision of the BM to create a church village. That notwithstanding, vernacularization was doomed from birth because of the pluralism of indigenous languages in the region. The adoption of any other local language would still have created cleavages in the long run. Simply put, *Mungaka* created a wider and earlier backlash because of the bad blood which preceded the BM. Although the vernacular was eventually eclipsed by Pidgin English at independence, some vestiges of the language still exist in Presbyterian churches in contemporary times.

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