

UNITED NATIONS
TRUSTEESHIP
COUNCIL



GENERAL

T/PET. 5/40 4/28

3 January 1950

ENGLISH

ORIGINAL: FRENCH

Dual Distribution

PETITION FROM: THE "UNION BAMILEKE" IN THE NAME OF
THE POPULATION OF BAMILEKE

CONCERNING: THE CAMEROONS UNDER FRENCH AND UNDER
BRITISH ADMINISTRATION

Note by the Secretary General: In accordance with rule 85 of the rules of procedure for the Trusteeship Council, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith to the members of the Trusteeship Council a communication dated 20 November 1949 from the "Union Bamiléké" in the name of the population of Bamiléké concerning the Trust Territories of the Cameroons under French administration and the Cameroons under British administration.

This communication was transmitted to the Secretary-General by the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa.

/BAMILEKE UNION

BAMILEKE UNION

PETITIONS

presented by the BAMILEKE UNION on behalf of the
Bamiléké Population

While reiterating our loyalty to the Administering Power, we have the honour to draw your attention to the following facts which are liable to cause a dangerous state of unrest among the indigenous population.

The Bamiléké constitute an ethnic group which is very prolific, thanks to its ancestral institutions. They live between two large rivers, the Noun to the east and the Nkam to the west. The northern part is bounded by the range of the Bambouto Mountains, which separates them from the British Cameroons, the south being occupied by the forest regions of the Mbam and the Mungo.

Until the arrival of the white man, the Bamiléké had to support himself in this narrow area, only parts of which are fertile, and he has acquired a very definite idea of individual ownership. It is in accordance with this idea that in each chieftainship and for each family well-defined enclosed individual family properties have been created. At the head of the chieftainship is a chief, who plays the part of arbitrator in case of disputes. He is also the custodian of any estate falling vacant as a result either of the extinction of a family or of its expulsion for serious offences.

As we intend to develop within the French Union in accordance with our traditions, we ask:

- (1) that the Decree now governing land tenure in our country should be amended, since this Decree was promulgated at a time when the local Assemblies were not yet in existence;
- (2) that the term "unoccupied and ownerless land" ("terres vacantes et sans maître") should be excluded from any relevant legislation;
- (3) that the Administration should facilitate or even suggest the recognition of the collective rights of the Bamiléké communities to the land on which they have lived from time immemorial and which is generally surrounded by a ditch which they have dug or by natural boundaries;
- (4) that within this collective property the individual rights of heirs and beneficiaries should be recognized;

/ (5) that any

(5) that any concessions hereafter granted to persons foreign to the Region should once more become the property of the community concerned as soon as such persons have to leave the country for good.

II. FOREST PROPERTY

The Bamiléké plateau, unlike the adjacent regions, constitutes a savanna. The few trees to be found there have consequently been planted by the inhabitants for their fruit or for firewood or building timber.

In view of these facts, we ask:

- (a) that the Bamikélé should be allowed to utilize freely the trees that they have planted;
- (b) that all felling dues and all prosecution of indigenous persons by the Service of Woods and Forests for the non-payment of this due should cease;
- (c) that Forest Reserves should be created by the Service of Woods and Forests in the forests themselves and not in the small isolated woods planted by the Africans for their own personal needs.

III. EDUCATION

In view of the fact that on the one hand the proportion of children receiving schooling in the Bamikélé Region is still infinitesimal (2.5 per cent);

And that on the other hand the Bamikélé make a large contribution towards the Territory's budget (population of over half a million workers and tradespeople):

Appreciating the effort made by the Administering Power in this respect during the last few years.

WE ASK:

- (1) that the education of our children should be developed as much as possible by increasing the number of rural schools (at least one per chieftainship) and improving the quality of the teaching, which should be adapted to local requirements;
- (2) that two mixed non-denominational colleges should be created in the Bamikélé Region.

We deplore the slowness with which the Education Service is progressing with the building work for the Bafoussam Vocational School, and we ask that this establishment should retain its original character as a vocational and not a handicraft school.

/IV. HEALTH

IV. HEALTH

In view of the density of the Bamikélé population (more than 300 per square kilometre in certain chieftainships) and the bad hygienic conditions imposed upon us by the cold of the high plateau, we ask that a serious effort should be made to deal with this, and, therefore;

that facilities should be provided for the settlement of civil medical practitioners in our country;

that child welfare should be provided in all the main chieftainships by suitably trained staff.

V. CUSTOMS AT THE FRONTIER

The former German Cameroons were partitioned, by agreement, by a line which disregards the ethnic coherence of the communities affected by this line. The result is that some members of one and the same family live under British Administration, while others live under French Administration.

Accordingly, we ask:

That the customs barrier between the Cameroons under British Administration and the Cameroons under French Administration should be abolished, and that provision should be made for the eventual unification of these two territories, the separation of which has no justification.

BAFOUSSAM, 20 November 1949

FOR THE BAMILEKE UNION,

The President:

(signature illegible)

J. L. DJOMO

SECTION DELEGATES

(23 Signatures illegible)