

# Divided at Home, United Abroad: Assessing the Bases and Impact of Intra-Mbum Integration in the Mambilla Plateau of Nigeria

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**Abstract:** This paper focuses on analyzing life in Mbum communities in the Mambilla Plateau of Taraba State<sup>1</sup> in Nigeria particularly in the towns of Gembu, Nguroje, Maisamari, Jalingo, Kakara, Furmi, Yerrmaru and Mayo Ndaga. In spite of their background of ethnic disintegration at home (in the Nkambe Plateau of Cameroon), the Mbum in the Mambilla Plateau, Taraba State, Nigeria, have forged a strong sense of ethnic integration and constituted themselves into a unit. With the aid of a wide range of source materials including written, oral and field observations, the paper launches an inquest into integration among the Mbum in the Mambilla Plateau. It submits that a number of factors conspired to knit the Mbum in the Mambilla Plateau into an ethnic bond and this significantly influenced their interactions.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Mbum occupy part of the present-day Donga-Mantung (formerly the Nkambe Division) of the North West Region of Cameroon.<sup>2</sup> They form part of the larger Tikar country of Semi-Bantu origin and speak the *Limbun* language.<sup>3</sup> The Mbum is made up of three family groups or

village areas called clans. These include the Tang Clan, the Warr Clan and the Ya Clan.<sup>4</sup> Each Clan is made up of a number of villages and fall under the sovereignty of Clan Heads.<sup>5</sup> These Clans were formed as a result of their migrations in disparate ranks from Kimi (in the present-day Adamawa Region of Cameroon) to the Nkambe Plateau. Outstandingly, loyalties tended to influence the growth of this ethnic group as it affected virtually all aspects of their development. Thus, the Mbum in the Nkambe (Donga-Mantung Division) distinguish themselves as one of the ethnic groups in Cameroon that does not constitute a unified leadership structure. However, though the Mbum of the Nkambe Plateau of Cameroon are apparently disintegrated along clan lines, their kith and kin in the Mambilla Plateau of Taraba State in Nigeria are integrated and constitute an ethnic bond which has significantly influenced their activities. From this basic premise, this paper argues the Mbum in the Mambilla were forced by circumstances to forge an integrated knit.

### *Mbum-Mambilla Connection*

The movement of members of Mbum ethnic identity to the Mambilla Plateau of Nigeria has been in phases and guided by different circumstances. Three phases of these movements are easily identifiable. These include, the pre-colonial phase, the colonial phase (and the post-1961 phase). The pre-colonial phase of Mbum movements to the Mambilla Plateau was generally guided by the desire to establish trading contacts with the rest of Nigeria, plus geographical, historical and socio-cultural considerations. During the colonial era and with the establishment of German and British administrations (1902-1961), interactions between members of Mbum ethnicity and Mambilla Plateau did not only intensify but expanded in terms of the volume of activities. Besides the

<sup>1</sup> Taraba state was created out of the former Gongola State on 27 August 1991, by the military government of General Ibrahim Babangida. This saw the split of Gongola State into Taraba and Adamawa States. Taraba State consists of sixteen (16) Local Government Areas (or LGAs). They are governed by elected chairmen. They include: Ardo Kola, Bali, Donga, Gashaka, Gassol, Ibi, Jalingo (headquarters), Karim Lamido, Kurmi, Lau, Sardauna, Takum, Ussa, Wukari, Yorro and Zing. Taraba also played host to significant numbers of Mbum indigenous people. The geography of the state contributed greatly to this phenomenon. Taraba State is bounded to the west by Nasarawa and Benue States, to the northwest by Plateau State, to the north by Bauchi and Gombe States, to the northeast by Adamawa State, and to the east and south by Donga-Mantung Division of Cameroon. As the most proximate Nigerian State to the Nkambe Plateau, Taraba also distinguishes itself as one of the largest states in Nigeria (third out of thirty-six states) in terms of surface area. With agriculture being its main activity, there is no doubt that the state served as host to significant Mbum settlements. These settlements included predominantly: Gembu, Nguroje, Maisamari, Jalingo, Kakara, Furmi, Yerrmaru, and Mayo Ndaga. See Toyin Falola and Ann Genova, "Historical Dictionary of Nigeria". Jon Woronoff (Ed.), *Historical Dictionaries of Africa No. 111*. (Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, Plymouth, UK, 2009), 337.

<sup>2</sup> National Archives Buea, File No. AC13, E.G. Hawkesworth, "Nsungli Clans, Bamenda Division". Assessment Report, 1924. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Limbun* is derived from two words *Li* meaning "language" and "Mbum" referring to the people. *Limbun* therefore refers to the "language of the Mbum". *Limbun* is a related language to the Bamum, Ngemba and Bamileke languages of the Western Grasslands of Cameroon. See P.N. Nkwi,

and J.P. Warnier, *Elements for a History of the Western Grassfields*. (The University of Yaoundé: Department of Sociology, 1982), 149.

<sup>4</sup> NAB, Hawkesworth, 1924: 1.

<sup>5</sup> The Tang Clan is composed of Talla (Clan Head), Binka, Bih, Kup, Ntundip, Ngarum, Sinna, Taku and Tabenken. The Warr Clan is made up of Mbot (Clan Head), Binshua, Bogom, Bihnjeng, Chup, Mbaah, Njap, Njirong, Ntumbaw, Nkambe, Nwangri, Saah, Sop and Wat. Meanwhile the Ya Clan villages include Ndu (Clan Head), Konchep, Luh, Mbipgo, Nseh Makop, Njimnkang, Njilah, Ngvulu, Sehn and Wowo.

economic motives (trade), socio-cultural intercourse also occurred within this period. This was particularly evident with the advent of the British administration and the decision to conjoin their part of Cameroon to Nigeria for administrative expediency. The advent of WWII also saw many Mbum soldiers who fought in the war under the Allies (as part of the Royal West African Frontier Force-RWAF) not only moving to join their counterparts in Nigeria but also establishing permanent and semi-permanent settlements in the Mambilla Plateau after the war.<sup>6</sup> Ostensibly, the most authoritative factors that increased connection between the Mbum of Cameroon and the Mambilla of Nigeria were geographical.

In this regard, it is worthy of mention that, the boundary between Cameroon and Nigeria has been described variously as permeable, fluid, artificial and even porous over time. Funteh and Ngwa have captured this assertion lucidly in their submission. They maintain that:

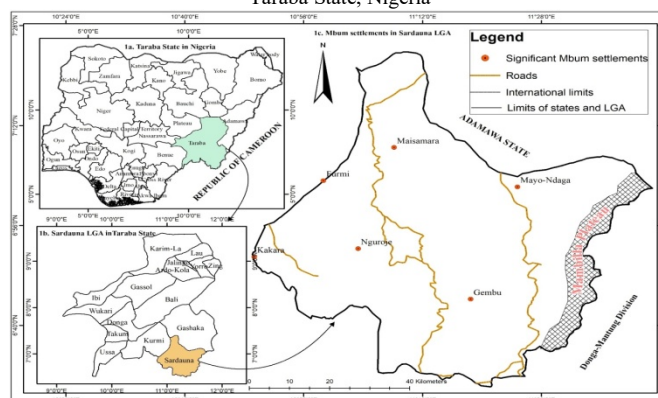
The frontiers of Cameroon and Nigeria reflected eventful spaces of openness, offering to both peoples great opportunities in terms of human and commodity cross fluidity. This disposition of consistent flow of persons and trade-currents and their multipliers effects were of great dividend. [...] Cameroon-Nigeria border [was] superimposed, the reason why the porous nature of its existence is common. [...] The permeability is characterized by the increase in the actual quantity of cross-border flows, as well as a deepening of the penetration of cross-border operations into the heart of the national territories.<sup>7</sup>

Among the numerous boundaries between Cameroon and Nigeria that exhibits these features was the stretch between present-day Donga-Mantung (Cameroon) and Taraba State (Nigeria). The permeability of this boundary line afforded many Mbum the opportunity to cross over to Nigeria with greater ease than travelling to many other parts of Cameroon. In the midst of this natural providence, the Mbum took advantage to migrate at the least distressful situation in Cameroon to establish permanent settlements in parts of Nigeria, particularly in the Mambilla Plateau of the Sardauna Local Government Area (LGA) of Taraba State.<sup>8</sup> In fact, they

easily transformed the phenomenon of transporting goods across the borders to moving people.

An important factor that motivated Mbum movement and settlements in parts of Nigeria particularly the Mambilla Plateau in former Gongola<sup>9</sup> (present-day Taraba) State was the similitude in geography and the availability of virtually free large expanses of fertile lands for settlements and farming. It has been observed that the Mambilla Plateau is not just within a proximate distance to Cameroon's Nkambe Plateau but also "Cameroon-locked"<sup>10</sup> and considered as Northern Nigeria's continuation of the of the Bamenda highlands of Cameroon. It has an average elevation of about 1,600 meters above sea level, making it the highest plateau in Nigeria and in West Africa in general.<sup>11</sup> These geographical features of the Mambilla Plateau have made agriculture the economic livewire of the people of the area, attracting the Mbum along with other Cameroonian groups like the Nso and Kaka.<sup>12</sup> The geographical features and proximity to the Nkambe Plateau, similar economic activities and the availability of lands for settlement, agriculture and animal rearing made the Mambilla plateau a destination of choice to many Mbum who were referred to in the area as "Kambu". The Mbum have not only constituted themselves into groups in this locality but have also been recognized among the ethnic groups in Taraba State in general and Mambilla Plateau in particular.

Map No. 1: Significant Mbum Settlements in Sardauna LGA, Taraba State, Nigeria



Source: Adapted from Oruonye, "The Impact of Climate Variability". 92.

<sup>6</sup> However, the final phase of Mbum movement to Nigeria was witnessed after the 1961 plebiscite. Following the express desire of a great majority of the people of Mbum-land to be integrated with Nigeria, the general plebiscite results in Southern Cameroons favored reunification with French Cameroon. As a result, some members of Mbum ethnic identity migrated to join their kith and kin who had earlier established settlements in Nigeria as a show of discontent with the plebiscite results.

<sup>7</sup> Mark Bolak Funteh and Canute A. Ngwa, "Terrorist Transnational Imprints, Border Closing and Circulation around the Lake Basin Region: Boko Haram against Human and Merchandise on the Nigeria-Cameroon of Far North Cameroon". Ambe Ngwa and Bolak Funteh (Eds.), *Crossing the Line in Africa: Reconsidering and Unlimiting the Limits of Borders within a Contemporary Value*. (Project MUSE: African Books Collective, 2019), 129-135.

<sup>8</sup> It is worth mentioning at this juncture that the movement was mutual. Nigerian groups also exploited the advantage offered by this natural providence to move in large numbers to settle in Donga and Mantung (including Mbum-land) whenever they were faced with some distressful situations like wars. This was the case after ethnic clashes in Nigeria in

January 2002, close to 20,000 Nigerians settled in the Grassland region particularly in Donga Mantung and Banyo.

<sup>9</sup> A state that was created in 1976 out of North-Eastern State and then split into two states, Adamawa and Taraba, in 1991. The capital was Yola. It was located in northeastern Nigeria. See Falola and Genova, "Historical Dictionary of Nigeria". 141.

<sup>10</sup> E. D. Oruonye, "Impact of Climate Variability on Rural Livelihood on the Nigerian Mambilla Plateau". *Journal of Global Agriculture and Ecology* 2. No. 3 (2015): 90. (89-100)

<sup>11</sup> C. Frantz, "Development without communities: Social fields, networks and action in the Mambilla Grasslands of Nigeria". *Human Organization* 40 (1981):211-220. Also note that some mountains on the plateau and around it are over 2,000 meters high, like the Chappal Waddi (Gang) mountain which has an average height of about 2,419 meters above sea level. It is the highest mountain in Nigeria and the highest mountain in West Africa if Mount Cameroon is excluded.

<sup>12</sup> Oruonye, "Impact of Climate Variability". 90.

As indicated on the map, it should be noted that many parts of Mbum-land share similar geographical features and human characteristics as well as activities with Taraba State of Nigeria in general and the Mambilla plateau in particular. For instance, as far as relief is concerned, similar to Taraba State, Mbum-land is characterized by an undulating landscape pattern with highlands and valleys as well as plains. Altitudes range from 700 meters above sea level in the Mbaw plain to about 2200 meters above sea level at Mbiyeh (Talla) in the mountainous zone. Such geographical features have also conditioned the economic activities of the people which are largely based on agriculture. This similarity in geography undoubtedly made Taraba State of Nigeria in general and Mambilla plateau in particular to be regarded as a pull destination by many Mbum of the Nkambe plateau in Cameroon. A number of factors influenced intra-Mbum integration in the Mambilla plateau.

#### *Reasons for Intra-Mbum Integration in the Mambilla Plateau*

Basically, ethnic integration among Mbum settlements in the Mambilla plateau of Nigeria, in the Sardauna Local Government Area (LGA), Taraba State opposed to their state of disintegration back home in the Nkambe plateau. This was predicated on a number of factors including the following.

Firstly, the Mbum Minority status in the Mambilla Plateau served as a factor in unity among them. Nigeria is made up of over 250 ethnic groups with the most dominant being Hausa, oruba and Igbo.<sup>13</sup> Taraba State alone with large Mbum settlements is made up of well over eighty ethnic groups.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile an important factor in determining one's status as a dominant or a minority group in Nigeria in general was indigeneity. This situation gave rise to the concept of indigenous communities which remained a topical issue in political and academic discourse in Nigeria.<sup>15</sup> Generally, the Mbum in Nigeria particularly in the Mambilla plateau were not considered to have originated from there, and the question of their indigeneity remained a subject of controversy. Since they shared similar characteristics with former British Northern Cameroonians in that they both voted for integration with Nigeria in the February 1961 plebiscite organized in British Cameroons, they were usually bundled and branded as Cameroonians and not considered to be Nigerians. This

<sup>13</sup> Falola and Genova, "Historical Dictionary of Nigeria". 231-2.

<sup>14</sup> Madu and Ibrahim, "Ethno-Religious Conflict in Taraba State". 149. This has made the state the most multi-ethnic and the most prone to ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria.

<sup>15</sup> Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems. See C.Y.A Trujano, *Indigenous Routes: A Framework for Understanding Indigenous Migration*, (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2008), 13. Cited in Lenshie and Gambo, "The United Nations Plebiscites". 157.

reduced their bargaining power and political influence plus access to economic and financial resources which had the potential of exposing them to unfair treatments usually given to minority groups.

In this regard, albeit being a reputable ethnic group in Cameroon, the Mbum in the Mambilla plateau constituted a minority force by virtue of their origins, ethnicity status and even political, financial and economic influence. In fact, the Mbum could only be ranked the fifth or sixth ethnic group among the Mambilla, Kaka, Fulani, Ndola, Tigon, Chamba, Panso (Nso) and Hausa in terms of population size, political influence, economic power and other privileges enjoyed by other socially dominant groups.<sup>16</sup> However, though apparently a weakness because they bargained from an inferior and marginal position, the minority situation of the Mbum in the Mambilla plateau served as a factor in unity. This was because they felt that in order to forge a strong image of themselves, they had to build an integrated unit and be seen as one person. This state of affairs significantly contributed to intra-Mbum integration in Nigeria.

The Mbum disintegrated state at home had produced unpleasant outcomes ranging from clan-based politics, devastating intra- and inter-village conflicts, particularism and individualism which bred suspicion and hatred, low political and administrative representation to the general state of socio-economic underdevelopment of Mbum-land. The clan system in Mbum-land had dealt a serious blow to the Mbum ethnic identity vis-à-vis their political representation and the general perception of them within the precinct of the political entity called Cameroon. In view of the destructive impact of clannish politics in Mbum-land, Tanto paints a gloomy picture of its form and manifestations in this lamentation:

Indeed I am allergic to clans which [is] responsible for the disunity and inter-village conflicts in Mbumland. ...Peace, love and unity can put the Mbum out of the obscurantism in which we are found today. Obscurantism indeed because we have withdrawn ourselves from the oneness of Mbum into the narrowness and absurdity of clans because of politics, the fruits of which are still blowing in the wind. Mbum has become so divided that the greatest enemy of the Mbum man has become most unfortunately a Mbum man. The Mbum man is no longer his brother's keeper.<sup>17</sup>

Clan divisions had virtually been responsible for many of the issues suffered by the Mbum in Cameroon. Some of these unpleasant experiences at home included intra- and inter-clan conflicts, retarded economic development, absence of a

<sup>16</sup> Lawrence Takwa, (Executive Member of the Youth Wing of the Kambu Cultural and Development Association (KACDA), Sardauna Branch), in discussion with author on May 27, 2020. However, the reason for their few numbers in some parts of the Sardauna LGA and the Mambilla plateau was because they were scattered all over the LGA, Taraba State as well as elsewhere in the national territory of Nigeria due to the quest for opportunities.

<sup>17</sup> Tanto, "Foreword" to Nfor and Samari, *The Cost of Disunity*. xii.



paramount Mbum ruler and cultural festivities, low bargaining power of Mbum chiefs in the political environment in Cameroon as well as the inability to take consensual decisions in issues of ethnic interests among others.

The Mbum elements who settled in the Mambilla plateau of Nigeria were not oblivious to the sordid experiences and impact of clan loyalties at home. Emerging from this context, they generally opted for integration to reverse the experiences back at home. Thus, intra-Mbum integration in the Mambilla Plateau was not only seen as a means of seeking political and economic leverage but also aimed at contributing in obverting the divisive tendencies back home. This explains why they constituted themselves into a unit, under the Kambu Cultural and Development Association (KACDA), organized cultural manifestations, established a unified constitution, having a unified leadership and usually responding to events back home as one person.

The desire of the Mbum to constitute a political force and seek recognition within the mainstream of the Mambilla and Nigerian society was another factor that led to their integration. Sociologists and other scholars have agreed that integration of immigrants in a host community is a common occurrence.<sup>18</sup> This is because naturally, there exist diametric differences between immigrants and their host communities. These differences are most visible in the areas of language, ethnicity, religion, and education.<sup>19</sup> The Mbum “newcomers” to Mambilla-Nigeria generally chose to create strong immigrant communities based on a shared origin and to utilize their immigrant networks for political advancement. They remained a separate sector within the larger Nigerian society and among the Mambilla, united by the same historical experience, culture of origin and strong ethnic ties, but simultaneously became an integral part of the host society and even began to affect it. Even at this point, it is worthy of mention that cultural similarities, social affinities and religious interaction made their assimilation difficult. However, the need to preserve their identity as Mbum remained sacred and this was determinant to their integration in Nigeria. On the basis of this, Mbum settlers in the Mambilla plateau regarded themselves as a distinct people who necessarily had to integrate, constitute a political force and create social and economic niches for themselves. Intra-Mbum integration in Nigeria manifested in a number of ways.

#### *Realities of Intra-Mbum Integration in Mambilla Plateau*

The determination of the Mbum in the Mambilla plateau to achieve ethnic integration was pursued with rigor and tenacity. This led to the materialization of integration as evident in some variables including among others: the

<sup>18</sup> Nonna Kushnirovich, “Ethnic Niches and Immigrants’ Integration”. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 30- Nos. 7 and 8. (2010): 412-26.

<sup>19</sup> M.D.R. Evans and J. Kelley, “Prejudice, Discrimination, and the Labor Market: Attainments of Immigrants in Australia”, *The American Journal of Sociology*, 97 No. 3, (1991): 721-59.

creation of geographical, socio-cultural and economic niches by the Mbum, linguistic homogeneity, unified leadership, creation and functioning of KACDA, unified constitutional basis, celebration of cultural identity as well as a strong sense of solidarity. The reality of Mbum integration in Nigeria can be seen from a number of perspectives as discussed below:

#### *Creation of Ethnic Geographical, Socio-cultural and Economic Niches*

As if to remain true to Kotler-Berkowitz’s submission that: “the high level of ethnic concentration in [in geographical, social, religious and economic spheres] was associated with the high level of ethnic cohesion”<sup>20</sup>, the Mbum adopted measures to ensure ethnic concentration in the geographical, social, religious and economic spheres with the view of ensuring a high sense of ethnic cohesion. Quite some studies have provided the intellectual basis for understanding this action of the Mbum as an immigrant community in the Mambilla plateau of Nigeria. These studies generally hold that: “the different forms of ethnic concentration were a strategy that immigrants adopted in order to cope with lack of social networks in the host country, with language and skills deficiencies and with discrimination”.<sup>21</sup> The concept of ethnic niches suggests the tendency (or it is the propensity) for an ethnic identity/community to concentrate in a particular geographical region, social sphere or economic domain. In order to foster and maintain their ethnic identity, the Mbum in the Mambilla plateau created ethnic niches in the geographical, social and economic domains.

Geographically, there were identifiable Mbum locations/settlements in the Mambilla plateau. Their dominant State was Taraba (particularly in the Mambilla area) where there were found in significant numbers in Gembu, Mbanga, Nguroje, Maisamari, Kakara, Mayo Ndaga, Furmi and Yerrmaru. In these locations where there cohabited with the Mambilla, Fulani, Kaka and Panso (Nso), there emerged large Mbum neighborhoods called “Kambu” Quarters which invariably became their geographical niches. The common feature among them in their geographical niche was the manifestation of a strong sense of solidarity and the exhibition

<sup>20</sup> L.A. Kotler-Berkowitz, “Ethnic Cohesion and Division among American Jews: The Role of Mass-level and Organizational Politics”. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 20. No. 4, (1997): 797-829.

<sup>21</sup> Kushnirovich, “Ethnic Niches and Immigrants’ Integration”. 413-4. Some of these studies cited by Kushnirovich have included: S. Lieberman, (1981), “An asymmetrical approach to segregation”. C. Peach, V. Robinson, and S. Smith, (Eds.), *Ethnic Segregation in Cities*, (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 61-82; S. Model, “Ethnic Economy and Industry in Mid-twentieth Century Gotham”. *Social Problems*, 44. No. 4 (1997): 445-63; A. Portes, and R. Manning. “The Immigrant Enclave: Theory and Empirical Examples”. J. Nagel, and S. Olzak, (Eds.), *Ethnicity: Structure and Process*, (New York, NY: Academic Press, 1986), 152-63; R. Waldinger, *Still the Promised City? African-Americans and New Immigrants in Post-Industrial*, (New York: Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 1996) and A. Zeltzer-Zubida, “The multiple logistics of economic incorporation: second generation immigrants in the metropolitan New York labor market”. (University of New York, New York, NY, The City: A Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 2004).

of a distinct cultural identity which enabled them to establish a socio-cultural niche.

As far as the socio-cultural niche was concerned, the Mbum marked a peculiarity in their language, legendary hospitality, feeding habit, dressing and dancing customs. This is the substance of Tamngwa's submission that the Mbum in Taraba State (Mambilla plateau):

Spoke the *Limbum* language which was an easy language to speak just as the Fulani... they lived peacefully with themselves and their neighbors. They also share hospitality characteristics, they are humanitarians, so tolerating and accommodating [their] main dish [was] corn fufu. They also had the following soup: huckleberry referred to by the Fulani as *Kumbi*, draw soup, called *Nkwi*, cowpea, pumpkin leaves, garden eggs, cocoa yams leaves (*mbar*), cabbages and ... [they practiced dances including] *Mfuh*, *Samba*, *Njong*, *Ngiri*, *Mnkung* for men) [while the females participated in] *Njuh*, *Toh*, *Njang*. They also existed mixed dances where both males and females participated such as *Juda*, *Mbaya*, *Yawah* as well as a symbolic cultural dress designed with a gong, life stock and sharpened hoes.<sup>22</sup>

These cultural peculiarities were distinctive elements of Mbum culture which served as a badge of identity for them within their host communities and simultaneously as a factor that united them. Another prominent feature of integration among the Mbum in the Mambilla plateau was the linguistic homogeneity. It is argued that: "the issue of language and ethnic identity relationships provides considerable insights into the link between language and culture. Close and systematic attention to the relationship between language and ethnicity illuminates processes of cultural change and continuity".<sup>23</sup> It follows that if the dialectical difference that existed in the *Limbum* expression in Mbum-land was a factor or manifestation of disintegration, homogenizing *Limbum* among the Mbum in parts of Mambilla plateau was a great vector of integration.

Undoubtedly, sameness of language serves as a great unifier.<sup>24</sup> In this regard, the homogenization of *Limbum* in the Mambilla plateau built in the people a sense of brotherhood and the nostalgic feelings of kinship and 'home away from home'.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, language viewed as the wheel on which the culture of a people is driven played the role of not only bonding the Mbum into an ethnic knit but also played in preserving same culture and its transmission through generations. This has been a daily reality among the Mbum who have established permanent settlements in the Mambilla

plateau of Taraba State in Nigeria. *Limbum* is also listed among the major languages spoken in Nigeria especially in the northeastern part of the country. It is also worth mentioning at this juncture that their social interactions with Hausa and Fulani led to the adoption of those languages which facilitated their coexistence. These new languages in no way, led to the abandonment of their original language, *Limbum*.

In the economic sphere, the Mbum in Mambilla also carved out an ethnic economic niche.<sup>26</sup> They established an ethnic concentration in the domains of agriculture and trade which formed the basis of their host economy. These activities were engaged not just because there were lucrative, but also because they reflected the economic identity of the Mbum. Historically, the link between the Mbum and Nigeria was based on availability of agricultural lands and long-distance trade. Having established settlements in the Mambilla plateau, business became a trademark of this ethnic group along with the Nso, Fulani and Hausa. They were also very much involved in agricultural activities with government assistance.<sup>27</sup> Like other counterparts in Taraba State, the Mbum were predominantly involved in agricultural activities.<sup>28</sup> They produced cash crops such as coffee, tea, groundnuts and cotton.<sup>29</sup> Food crops produced were maize, cassava and yam. Besides the cultivation of crops, some Mbum were also involved in cattle and sheep rearing though at very low scales. Rearing activities were largely developed as an inevitable outcome of favorable conditions such as availability of lands and pastures as well as their interactions with the cattle-breeding Hausa and Fulani among whom they were settled.

<sup>26</sup> At this point, it becomes necessary to clarify a few concepts for easy understanding. These include: Ethnic niche which according to Waldinger, (1994) and Wilson (2003) refers to a concept that describes ethnic division in the labor market. Similarly, the concept of ethnic enclave according Aldrich and Waldinger (1990) relates to ethnic entrepreneurship, and the concept of ethnic economy is a broad concept, which includes all economic activities, in which ethnicity and ethnic concentration play a role, and concerns immigrant ethnic self-employed, employers and employees. See R. Waldinger, "The Making of an Immigrant Niche", *International Migration Review*, 28. No. 1 (1994): 3-30; D. Wilson, "Ethnic Niche and Metropolitan Labor Markets", *Social Science Research*, 32. No. 3, (2003): 429-66; E. Aldrich and R. Waldinger, "Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship", *Annual Review of Sociology*, 16 (1990): 111-35 and I. Light and S. Gold, *Ethnic Economies*, (San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 2000).

<sup>27</sup> H.A. Kara, E. Aboki and M.M. Adamu, "Economic Analysis of Beneficiaries of Fadama II Project in Sardauna Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria". *International Journal of Research in Agricultural Sciences* 1. Issue 6. (2014): 385-91.

<sup>28</sup> A.I. Emodi and C.O. Albert, "Family Farming Practices in Taraba State". *Journal of Agricultural Extension*. (nd): 76-88. Abstracted by: EBSCOhost, Electronic Journals Service (EJS), Google Scholar, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Journal Seek, Scientific Commons, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), CABI and Scopus. Found online at <http://dx.doi.org/10.4214/jae.v20i2.6>. Accessed on May 20, 2020.

<sup>29</sup> Tea production was a major source of attraction for the Mbum particularly those who settled in Kakara. This was because of the Kakara Tea Estate which reminisced the Ndu Tea Estate experience that the Mbum had been imbued with. M.H. Umar, J. Nyamehand J. Jauro, "Agricultural management strategy on food security in Taraba State". *Journal of Biology, Agriculture and Healthcare*, 4. No. 8 (2014): 29-31.

<sup>22</sup> Paulycarp Tamngwa, (Kambu Elite in Gembu, Nigeria), in Discussion with author on May 26, 2020.

<sup>23</sup> Joshua A. Fishman et al, *The Rise and Fall of the Ethnic Revival: Perspectives on Language and Ethnicity*, (Berlin: Mouton, 1984).

<sup>24</sup> Samuel Gyasi Obeng and Efurosibina Adegbija, "Sub-Saharan Africa". Joshua A. Fishman (ed.) *Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 353-4.

<sup>25</sup> Eric Tandap (retired security officer in Bamenda and regular visitor to Gembu) in discussion with Author on May 14, 2020.

Apart from the fact that the soils and climatic conditions favored the growth of these produce, there were also reminiscent of the agricultural produce grown in Mbum-land. Thus, the practice of agriculture went beyond just being an economic activity to also reflect the cultural identity of the people. In some cases, the family farming and cooperative (*Njangi*)<sup>30</sup> farming practices were common among them. This invariably further bonded their ethnic identity into an integrated knit. Predominantly, family and cooperative farming practices undeniably fostered the process of ethnic integration among the Mbum in Mambilla Plateau of Nigeria particularly.

#### *Unified Leadership*

Another evidence of ethnic integration among the Mbum in the Mambilla plateau was their unified leadership. In fact, the putting in place of a unified leadership was a result of their recognition of the importance of a central leadership in ethnic integration especially as a migrant community. In this regard, John C. Maxwell's declaration that: "everything rises and falls on leadership"<sup>31</sup> is informative. It has further been argued that: "no organization can survive without leadership because the attainment of goals and objectives of any organization is dependent on leadership. It is the leadership that plans, organizes, coordinates, leads and controls the organization's activities".<sup>32</sup> Thus, an aspect of intra-Mbum integration in Nigeria which could be viewed simultaneously as a factor as well as a feature of unity was their unified leadership. All the Mbum in the Taraba State of Nigeria recognized the leadership of a single ruler called Tarr'Kambu who was based in Gembu, headquarters of the Sardauna LGA. Meanwhile, the Mbum-dominated Quarters in each town or village in the Mambilla Plateau were led by chiefs known as "Maiangwa" Kambu.<sup>33</sup>

The question of Mbum unity under a single leader in the Mambilla plateau was particularly engrossing to the mind. This is because a common feature of the Mbum in Cameroon was their background of clan-conditioned divisions which marred the process of integration in Mbum-land, leading sometimes to acrimony and conflicts which stalled overall socio-economic development of the area. The prevailing circumstances among the Mbum in the Mambilla plateau of Nigeria however, necessitated the putting in place of a unified leadership to steer the affairs of the Mbum while ensuring the

<sup>30</sup> This occurred in situations where farmers created small groups in which they joined efforts and took turns to work the farms of its members. This was a common practice in traditional Mbum society which has lingered on into the present-day.

<sup>31</sup> J. C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow them and People will Follow You*. (Nashville: Tennessee, Thomas Nelson Inc., 2007), 267.

<sup>32</sup> Dawood O. Egbefo, "Leadership and Ethno-Religious Crises: Implications for National Integration in Nigeria". *African Research Review, An International Multidisciplinary Journal, Ethiopia* 9. No. 4, Serial No. 39, (2015) :93.

<sup>33</sup> Luria Abare Jang, (Lecturer, Taraba State University, Nigeria), in discussion with the Author on June 7, 2020.

preservation and transmission of its cultural identity to successive generations. To further strengthen the ethnic integration efforts of the Mbum in Nigeria, KACDA was created to promote the social, economic and cultural development of the Mbum in Taraba State. This association was involved in cultural activities and the promotion of unity among the Mbum. It is therefore no surprise that *Abi yu Ngir* (Unity is Strength) became its mantra.<sup>34</sup> KACDA operated under a unified constitution which spelled out the terms and basis of bonding among members of the Mbum community in the Mambilla plateau. Most importantly, the association played significant roles not just in the preservation of the cultural identity of the people but also in the promotion of unity among the Mbum in the Mambilla plateau and the larger Nigeria.

#### *Celebration of Cultural Identity*

To further demonstrate their oneness and unidirectional efforts, the Mbum in Mambilla-Nigeria celebrated their cultural identity in dressing, dance, cuisine, drinks and general comportment.<sup>35</sup> Besides their language-*Limbus*, other aspects of Mbum culture such as hospitality, cuisine, dances, marriage rites, dressing and feeding habits which they invariably regarded as formidable "cultural capital", remained sacred among them and marked an important aspect of their integration in the Mambilla plateau.<sup>36</sup> Typical of practices back home in Mbum-land, these features of Mbum culture had been celebrated and preserved over the years and this served as an instrument of integration and unity. A prominent cultural dance and regulatory society common among the Mbum in the Mambilla plateau was the *Nfuh* society. This was a male-dominated military dance whose roots are traced to the migrations of the Mbum from Kimi in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>37</sup> In virtually all their cultural manifestations, the Mbum in the Mambilla plateau ensured that the *Nfuh* displayed which rekindled nostalgic feelings and also helped to remind the people of their belonging.<sup>38</sup>

While the *Nfuh* society carried with it a lot of peculiarity even in dressing, the general manner in which the Mbum were identified in their settlements in the different parts of Nigeria

<sup>34</sup> Stephen Tanto, (President-General of KACDA, based in Jalingo, Nigeria) in discussion with Author on May 12, 2020. The existence of KACDA in the Mambilla plateau of Nigeria seemed to have provoked the creation of Mbum Cultural and Development Association (WICUDA) to promote the unity and socio-cultural development of the Mbum in Cameroon.

<sup>35</sup> This was a common phenomenon with ethnic groups living far from their homes. See Francis Nyamnjoh, "Cameroonian Bushfalling: Negotiation of Identity and Belonging in Fiction and Ethnography". *American Ethnologist* 38. No. 4 (2011): 705-6. (701-13) and Sonia Gsir and Elsa Mescoli, *Maintaining National Culture abroad Countries of Origin, Culture and Diaspora*, (European University Institute: INTERACT Research Report 2015/10, Conceptual Paper, 2015), 7.

<sup>36</sup> Discussion with Takwa.

<sup>37</sup> Stanley Yengong Nforba, "The *Nfuh* Society and the Defence of Mbum Land: A Study of the Mbum-Nso War, C. 1890-1901". (University of Buea, Cameroon: Long Essay in History, 2000), 18-9.

<sup>38</sup> Sylvester Gambo Jitzi, (Member of *Nfuh* society and Mbum Elite in Gembu) in discussion with Author on May 7, 2020.



in general and the Mambilla plateau in particular was by their outfits especially during cultural manifestations. It was generally distinct, with symbols of far-reaching meanings and interpretations.<sup>39</sup> The dresses worn as symbols of Mbum culture were not only marked by the physical meaningful designs made on them but also by the general feature of decency. Women were 'covered-up' enough as to conceal their sensitive parts while upholding the virtue of stooping or bowing low in front Tarr'Kambu and the elders as a sign of respect and honor.<sup>40</sup> These were values imbued in them by the elderly women as important aspects of their cultural identity and upholding them remained a duty even far away from home.<sup>41</sup> On their part, the men had the duty of not appearing in the presence of Tarr'Kambu bare-headed. They wore traditional caps of various shapes, sizes and colors-generally black, with all necessary embellishments reflecting their ranks, awards and functions. In some cases, men were fined between twenty and thirty liters of palm wine if they appeared in ceremonies particularly without their caps on. This act was dishonoring first to the man, the chief, other elders and above all, defiling to culture.<sup>42</sup> However, the Mbum interactions with Hausa and Fulani as well as other groups led to the adoption of other cultural outfits particularly the *Gandora* and *Saro*. Owing to its decent presentation, some Mbum wore them to their meetings and other cultural manifestations.

#### *Solidarity and Mourning Ceremonies*

In traditional Mbum society, deaths were as inevitable as they were regarded as communal responsibility. This was generally the perception of death among the Mbum community in the Mambilla plateau. In fact, as was the case elsewhere in Africa, death was indeed inevitable and generally rendered the immediate family and the entire community of the diseased sorrow-ridden.<sup>43</sup> Because of the feeling of grief that usually gripped the immediate family and the entire community after the loss of a loved one, there was the need for solidarity aimed at reviving the failing hopes of the bereaved. Solidarity was generally manifested in the forms of mobilization of psycho-social, material and even financial support. Interestingly, the Mbum in the Mambilla plateau usually organized mourning ceremonies for their kith and kin who died back home in Mbum-land and in other parts of Nigeria. However, this was most felt when a chief died back in the Nkambe plateau.

The death of chiefs in Mbum-land usually attracted elaborate celebrations and funeral rites. This was because according to Jeffreys, the Mbum chiefs belonged to the type of divine, sun-

cult kings widely distributed in Western Africa.<sup>44</sup> As revered as Mbum chiefs were in life, so too they were honored in death. The reverence accorded Mbum chiefs at death began from the general perception, through the announcement, embalment, interment and the funeral celebrations. Capturing this in her work, Ngegne maintains that:

The death of a *Nkfu* (Chief) was never announced. He was considered 'missing' but his corpse given a tepid bath and laid on a bed or mat in a separate room whose doors were blocked with spears. [...] Those who attended to the 'missing' chief were notables ... The grave was dug by some selected elders of the village. As the 'man of the people', the burial of the chief was sacred and thus different from that of a commoner. Chiefs were buried in an upright position.<sup>45</sup>

All these preceded the funeral celebrations (*Bfubfu*) which sometimes were delayed to a later auspicious date to allow for cultural and traditional manifestations and rites which were befitting of that status. While this custom has undergone mutations, it has survived great forces of change and has remained in practice till date. It has also experienced a trans-local (national) shift and was recognized and celebrated among the Mbum of Nigeria.

The celebration of funeral rites of Mbum chiefs who died at home was considered by the Mbum in the Mambilla plateau as both a privilege and a responsibility. The special manner in which the celebration was done was the fact that clan lines were completely disregarded. It should be noted that while at home, clan-lines formed the basis of such celebrations, this was not the case among the Mbum in Nigeria. Any Mbum chief who died was regarded by them as a Mbum chief without any need for recourse to his ancestral or clan origins. Though the Mbum in the Mambilla plateau in Nigeria recognized their clan affinities back home, they did not isolate themselves to celebrate the death of a chief on grounds of clan relationships. They usually celebrated *Bfubfu* as one person regardless of the clan-base of the chief who died. This served both as a unifying factor as well as a manifest feature of intra-Mbum integration.

Apart from celebrating the funeral rites of chiefs, the Mbum in the Mambilla plateau also demonstrated solidarity to families that lost dear ones or were mourning. Since they were generally settled in close proximity in quarters, the loss of a family member to death in Nigeria or back home in Mbum-land was always received with sorrow and the immediate family was consoled with through the difficult times. This was done through visits with material gifts and money to support the bereaved through the challenging times. In some cases, money was raised by the Mbum community to assist the bereaved family travel home for the burial of their loved

<sup>39</sup> Discussion with Tamngwa.

<sup>40</sup> Leticia Kimbi (member of *Toh* women's dance in Gembu), in discussion with author on May 5, 2020.

<sup>41</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>42</sup> Abel Njilah, (member of the Advocacy Committee of the Kambu Association in Gembu, Nigeria) in discussion with author on May 7, 2020.

<sup>43</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, (Oxford: Heinemann Education Publishers, 1969), 137.

<sup>44</sup> Jeffreys, *The Wiya Tribe*, 50. Cited in Faith Mangeh Ngegne, "Dynamics in Cultural Appropriation and Repercussion of the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC) in Mbum Land, 1927-2011". (The University of Bamenda: Master of Arts Dissertation in History, 2019), 53.

<sup>45</sup> Ngegne, "Dynamics in Cultural Appropriation". 53-4.

ones. This feature of Mbum integration in Mambilla-Nigeria necessitated the putting in place of special precautionary funds in case such instances arose.

#### *Nuptial Rites and Intra-Marriages*

It may be worth mentioning that marriages served as a badge of responsibility and social worth among the Mbum at home and in the Mambilla plateau. Someone's social status was enhanced and to some extent, measured by his/her marital status. Basically, three variables were used to determine someone's social standing and these included: having constructed a house, being married and bearing children. It followed that nuptial custom was central in the Mbum society. Marriage was a natural phenomenon which often served to extend family frontiers. The coming together of a couple was also a merger of the two families which led to greater involvement and responsibilities on the concerned families.<sup>46</sup> The choice of the partner was largely based on the person's behavior and ability to work hard in any major duties. Though women were requested for marriage primarily for the sake of procreation and to cater for their husbands, the family increased numerically and the need for food also increased. This extended the frontiers of gender roles making women to engage economic activities with the aim of assisting in household provisioning.

A prominent feature of the Mbum integration in Nigeria was the celebrations of nuptial ties among them. Marriage ceremonies were occasions to celebrate cultural identity and strengthen ties between Mbum families. The unifying role of marriages among the Mbum in the Mambilla plateau of Nigeria within this period cannot be overemphasized. While inter-marriages with other groups were never discouraged, intra-Mbum marriages were greatly encouraged because they had the double role of unifying Mbum families and preserving Mbum culture. In fact, many Mbum in the Mambilla plateau got married among themselves and pro-created thereby ensuring continuity. Most importantly, marriage rites were typical of practices back home in Mbum-land and in most cases, involved personalities from there. From the foregoing evidences of intra-Mbum integration in Nigeria, it is safe to argue that the Mbum were disintegrated at home but highly integrated in Nigeria. This manifestation of intra-Mbum integration in Nigeria was not without impacts.

#### *Impact and Challenges to intra-Mbum integration in Nigeria*

The sense of ethnic unity and integration among the Mbum in parts of Nigeria especially in the Mambilla plateau bore with it some far-reaching consequences. Some of these impacts include: the trans-local expression of culture, receipt of awards in National Carnivals and the recognition of the Kambu (Mbum) as an ethnic identity in Nigeria. The trans-local expression of different aspects of Mbum culture including language, dance, cuisine, marriage and funeral rites, dressing, as well as economic activities did not only boost the

image of the Mbum ethnic identity but also won for them admiration. In this light, the Mbum dance especially *Mnkung* participated in the Nigerian National Carnival and received awards for their immense participation.<sup>47</sup> The material and financial awards from these festivals were important to the sustenance of the Mbum community but not more than the indelible marks created by feeling of ethnic pride generated by such participations. It thus goes without saying that intra-Mbum integration in Nigeria served not only to preserve its cultural identity through generations but also to expose it to the wider world.

Ethnic integration among the Mbum in Nigeria also resulted in their recognition as one of the ethnic groups in that country. Albeit emerging from a minority position, the Mbum in Nigeria saw the need to knit a close bond which propelled them into recognition among the major ethnic groups especially in the Mambilla Plateau. While significant numbers of Mbum had settled in parts of Nigeria, particularly in the Mambilla plateau in the period before 1961, the numbers surged significantly by 1961 causing the post-independent Nigerian government to recognize the group as one of the major ethnic groups of the Gongola and later, Taraba State. In this vein, Lenshie and Gambo hold that: "Sardauna LGA is inhabited by the Mambilla, Kaka, Fulani, Kambu (Mbum) and Panso (Nso) ethnic groups, whose villages are situated on the undulating mountainous ranges, spread from the Nigerian borders into the Republic of Cameroon".<sup>48</sup> By this, the Mbum marked their effective presence as a recognized ethnic group in Nigeria and this facilitated that insertion into the Nigerian community.

Outstandingly, the Mbum in Nigeria were able to insert into economic, political and socio-cultural life of their host Nigerian community. In terms of economic activities and involvement in services, while agriculture remained their main economic activity, the Mbum were also present in significant proportions in other activities in Nigeria at large. These included governance, civil service, customs, armed forces, medicine, education as well as other private sector activities. Cases in point included, Polycarp Tamngwa who served in the Nigerian Presidency, Emmanuel Nfor, a custom official and George Tamngwa of the Independent National Elections Commission (INEC). In the domain of education, some Mbum were also involved in rendering services as teachers and university lecturers in different parts of Nigeria. However, the Mbum integration in Nigeria at large and in the Mambilla plateau in particular was not without some challenges. Some of these encumbrances will be examined in the next section of the study.

<sup>47</sup> Discussion with Takwa. The National Carnival of Nigeria is an annual festival that brings together both indigenous and foreign tourists to enjoy the remarkable sights and sounds from the displays of culture and other attractions. It is a veritable melting pot of cultural manifestations that sees competitions among groups for various prizes.

<sup>48</sup> Lenshie and Gambo, "The United Nations Plebiscites in Northern Cameroons". 159.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 40.



Intra-Mbum integration in Nigeria at large and in the Mambilla plateau in particular was not without challenges. The major challenges to intra-Mbum integration in Nigeria within the study period were multifaceted but predominantly centered on low economic and political power, ethno-political conflicts as well as citizenship questions which tended to haunt this ethnic identity in Nigeria.

In spite of the clear ethnic niches created by the Mbum in Nigeria covering the geographical, economic and socio-cultural domains, they remained subservient to other groups when it concerned economic power and political representation. While citizen participation in the political process adds value to democracy<sup>49</sup>, the citizens and ethnic groups that participate invariably reap some benefits. Ethnic representation in governance was a central issue in Nigerian politics and a significant factor of development of local peoples and their communities. It follows that the absence of political representation of an ethnic identity is detrimental as it impedes its development. Unfortunately, the Mbum in Sardauna LGA of Taraba State in Nigeria were never being represented in local, state or national government. This was a serious deterrent to the socio-economic advancement and self-image of the Mbum ethnic group amidst the more dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria. It also posed as a challenge to intra- and inter-Mbum integration. This situation also increased their vulnerability in times of conflicts and crises.

Taraba State in Nigeria was a veritable theater of conflicts of both ethno-religious and ethno-political dimensions which increased in both frequency and intensity in the post-independent period. These conflicts were generally caused by “the struggle over values, claims to status, power and scarce resources in which the aims of the ‘opposing’ parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralise, injure or eliminate rivals”.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, Madu and Ibrahim, arguing from this background aver that:

Taraba state is composed of over eighty (80) ethnic groups, belonging to several religious sects, the state since creation has remained the most highly multi-ethnic above all the states in Nigeria, this makes it volatile and has been grappling and trying to cope with the problem of ethnicity on the one hand, and the problem of ethno-religious conflicts on the other. This is because over the years the phenomena of ethnicity and religious intolerance have led to incessant recurrence of ethno-religious conflicts, which polarised the state along that line.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Marina Tavčar Krajnc et al, “Ethnic Minorities and Political Participation: A Comparative Study of Post-Yugoslav Countries”. Andrej Kovacic (Ed.), *Innovative Issues and Approaches in Social Sciences*. 5. No. 1 (2012): 6-23.

<sup>50</sup> L. Coser, *The Function of Social Conflict*, (Clemo: Free Press, 1956), 8. Cited in Lenshie and Gambo, “The United Nations Plebiscite in Northern Cameroons”. 166.

<sup>51</sup> Madu and Ibrahim, “Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Taraba State”. 149.

Apart from the ethno-religious conflicts, what directly affected the Mbum were conflicts of an ethno-political dimension.<sup>52</sup> These conflicts did not only destabilize the Mbum in the Mambilla plateau in Nigeria but also brought to the fore the thorny issue of their citizenship exposing them to danger of expulsion from Nigeria as they were generally regarded as aliens. However, the intervention of Gongola State Government under Alhaji Abubakar Barde spared them the embarrassment of expulsion from Nigeria.<sup>53</sup> In spite of these challenges, the Mbum in Nigeria remained a formidable ethnic identity with a strong bond of unity and integration which raised them to a reasonable degree of socio-cultural and economic recognition.

## II. CONCLUSION

This paper sought to highlight the reasons for which the Mbum in the Mambilla Plateau of Nigeria constitute a unit in spite of their disintegrated state back home in Mbum-land, in the Nkambe Plateau of Cameroon; the manifestations of integration as well as the impact and challenges to their integration. The paper reveals that in spite of Mbum disintegration at home, circumstances conspired in Nigeria (the Mambilla plateau) to knit them into a strong bond. Meanwhile intra-Mbum integration in Nigeria was manifested through a number of channels including their settlements in specific geographical locations in the Mambilla plateau like Nguroje, Yermaru, Gembu, Maisamari, Kakara and Furmi as well as cultural manifestations and economic integration. Similarly, integration yielded some fruits such as their recognition as one of the main ethnic groups in the Mambilla plateau. However, they also faced challenges among which were their low political representation as well as conflicts of ethno-religious and ethno-political nature. Outstandingly, the desire to uphold cultural values and to preserve them through generations was not only the duty of the Mbum elders back at home in the Nkambe plateau but was a responsibility of all Mbum abroad particularly in the Mambilla plateau of Nigeria. It was expected that through daily interactions, *limbum* should be the link language; that on regular basis, they should meet together in cultural ceremonies to celebrate their identity.<sup>54</sup> Thus, “though seemingly disunited at home, the Mbum take relationships seriously away from home”.<sup>55</sup> As an identity issue therefore, it was always the desire of the Mbum in the Mambilla plateau of Nigeria to remain true to themselves and not be assimilated by the more dominant cultures. This also greatly contributed in knitting them into a united bond.

<sup>52</sup> See Lenshie and Gambo, “The United Nations Plebiscite in Northern Cameroons”. 166. See also A. Ahmadu, K. Joseph and L. Ngah, “Population Mobility and Violence on the Mambilla Plateau, Sardauna Local Government Area of Taraba State”, *Jalingo Journal of Arts and Social Science*, 1. No.1 (2009):82-97.

<sup>53</sup> Lenshie and Gambo, “The United Nations Plebiscite in Northern Cameroons”. 166.

<sup>54</sup> Richard Lapsamba, (Civil engineer and Mbum Elite based in Douala) in discussion with Author on February 17, 2020.

<sup>55</sup> *Idem*.

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