

Settlements and Contrasting *De-Indigenization* Paths Among the Mbororo and Pygmy Indigenous People of Cameroon: The Consolidation of the Milestone of a New Theoretical Perspective

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Abstract

This article proposes a comparative analysis of the socio-political and legal implications of settlement on the indigenous Mbororo people (nomadic pastoralists) and the Baka Pygmies (hunter-gatherers) of Cameroon. Faced with changes in their traditional spatial lifestyles, these populations are going through a dynamic process of "de-indigenization", defined as the progressive disjunction between the identity or legal status of indigenous people and the actual practice of nomadism or hunting-gathering. Based on a comparative approach combining an empirical field survey of the Mbororos of Ngaoui (Adamawa), a meta-analysis of the contemporary anthropological literature on the Baka (Eastern Cameroon), the study mobilizes a theoretical framework articulating the sociology of mobilities and the geography of territorialities and demonstrates that settlement does not produce a uniform assimilation, but generates two asymmetrical paths of de-indigenization. On the one hand, the Mbororos accomplish a *bottom-up and consolidated de-indigenization* by converting their pastoral economic capital into political, municipal and land capital. On the other hand, the Baka Pygmies are undergoing a *precarious and subaltern de-indigenization*, marked by land dispossession, agricultural proletarianization and electoral subjugation to the Bantu elites. By integrating an explicit Popperian refutability clause, the article, thus, makes an original contribution to political sociology by offering a renewed conceptual grid of vulnerable categories in the face of the mutations of contemporary Africa.

Keywords: indigenous peoples, settlement, de-indigenization, territoriality, political citizenship, Mbororo, Baka Pygmies, Cameroon

1. Introduction

The secular mobility of indigenous people in sub-Saharan Africa is an important subject of political science and the sociology of development. Historically considered in colonial speeches, then, by international conventions, as "marginal" or "lagging behind" groups, the nomadic Mbororo pastoralists and Pygmy hunter-gatherers are today the subject in Cameroon as elsewhere in the world, of particularly intense settlement dynamics (see Boutrais, 1984: 225-256; Piguet, 1998: 263-283; Sandron, 1998: 63-77; Djida Danga, 1998-1999: 21-25; Duhaime et al, 2001: Barry, 2006; Kossoumna Libaa, 2008; Soengas, 2010; Pollinard, 2010; Gente, 2013; Ikeya, 2017; Isa Manja, 2019; Tsalefack, 2020: 156-166; Saidou, 2021: pp.525; Assana, 2021: 177-200; Kaptue, 2022: pp.245-268).

Settlement, understood as such, is not a new phenomenon. It has taken place in successive waves. In Cameroon, these waves of spatial fixation are the result of a triple historicity:

A first secular wave took place at the end of the nineteenth century. It was marked by the pastoral quest of the Adamawa and Western highlands for the Mbororo, fleeing epizootics and regional political pressures (Boutrais, 1996); a second institutional wave took place between 1950 and 1960). It was driven by colonial framework policies (Note 1) and the imperatives of building the post-independent nation-state, aimed at settling populations in order to better administer them and collect taxes (Mveng 1991; Atsiga Essala, 1999: 164; Ikeya, 2017: Saidou, 2021: 531); A third contemporary wave has been underway since 1990. It is accelerated by industrial deforestation, ecological crises, cross-border conflicts (the phenomenon of highway robbers and hostage-hijacking) and the intrusion of UN standards of sustainable development. It can also be explained by a combination of interlocking processes to which we will return: globalization, the promotion of human rights. The interweaving of these processes opens the way to a new theoretical perspective on indigenous people.

The existing literature proposes three ways of interpreting this phenomenon:

The first current, socio-anthropological and assimilationist, describes settlement as a vector for the gradual integration of indigenous categories into national society. But, this conception is often limited by its evolutionary

and linear character, ignoring the ecological rationality of nomadism (Bourgeot, 1972; Boutrais, 1984; Pelican, 2008). (See, among others: Bourgeot, 1972; Demesse, 1978; Guilleumou, 1992: 75-85; Boutrais, 1994: 175-196; Poirier, 1996; Charest, 2002; Lewis, 2000; Pelican, 2008, pp.540-560; Robillard, 2010; Mouiche, 2011: 71-97; Leclerc, 2012; Mbebi Ndema, 2014; Manja Basiru, 2019; Tchidje and Ibrahim, 2020; Assana, 2021: 177-200; Assana, 2022: 33-56; Assana, 2023: 369-394);

A second current, belonging to critical political ecology, insists, on the contrary, on the dispossession and destruction of traditional ways of life that it engenders. However, this current locks these groups into a position of passive and miserable victims without the capacity for action of their own (Read, for example, Bonte, 1979; Escobar, 1995; Scott, 1998; Olive Trees of Sardan, 2001; Peluso & Vandergeest, 2001: 761-812; Abega and Bigombe Logo, 2006; Kossoumna Libaa, 2008; Lewis, 2008; Nke Ndi, 2008; Pollinard, 2010; Seignobos, 2011: 6 and 20; Tidjani 2018; Mamoudou, 2021: 579-602; Tidjani, 2015; Jabiru Muhammadou, 2017: 37-48; Bonne Mbang, Owona Ndounda, 2019 cited by Assana, 2021; Njoya, 2020: 159; Ngo Mbai, 2019: 93-115);

A third, more ambivalent current presents it as a vector of modernization with contrasting effects depending on the context, highlighting the dialectical tensions between access to public services and the risk of acculturation, but which tends to romanticize nomadic freedom while reducing integration to purely economic metrics (Read, among others, Athabe, 1965; Geschiere & Nyamjoh, 2000; Kossoumna Liba'a, 2008; Soengas, 2012; Kenmoe Tchidje and Mimche, 2021: 3197-3204; Fanta Dada, 2020; Kamgne Kamwa and Tsalefack, 2020: 155-166; Fanta Dada & Vircoulon, 2021;).

Although fruitful, these studies rarely deal with the comparative effects of settlement within the same national framework and underestimate the diversity of political paths that result from it. Each of these approaches shed light on a real dimension of the phenomenon, but none succeeds in systematically explaining why the same macro-structural process, settlement, produces opposing status paths depending on the groups considered: bottom-up integration for some, persistent marginalization for others. Moreover, the literature tends to maintain a static vision of indigeneity, incapable of thinking about the modalities of reconfiguration of local power when mobility ceases to be the dominant way of life.

To fill this gap, this research intends to consolidate the milestone of a new theoretical perspective, by establishing a correlation between the dynamics of settlements and the *de-indigenization* of indigenous peoples, based on a case study of the Mbororos and Pygmies of Cameroon. This study pursues a double objective: on the one hand, to highlight, from a comparison between the Mbororos and the Baka Pygmies, the diversity of the paths of *de-indigenization* following settlements and on the other, to propose the concept of *de-indigenization* as an analytical tool to account for this diversity based on a set of indicators.

The choice of the cases of the nomadic Mbororo pastoralists (Note 2) and the 'Pygmies' who are hunter-gatherers (Note 3) responds to a threefold interest: they are two ethnic categories recognized as indigenous people within the context of international instruments, they both experience advanced dynamics of settlements, and they present, at the outset, radically different mobility regimes and capital endowments (transhumance pastoralism straddling several countries for the former, forest hunting and gathering for the latter, which makes them a privileged field for testing the hypothesis of a divergence.

The concept of "indigenous people" is understood here in the sense of the World Bank's Operational Manual and the work of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities, as follows:

The term "indigenous peoples" (...) describes social groups with a social and cultural identity that is different from that of the dominant groups in society and that makes them vulnerable in the development process. Many such groups have a status that limits their ability to defend their interests and rights to land and other productive resources, or that limits their ability to participate in and benefit from development (*Rapport du groupe de travail d'experts de la commission africaine des droits de l'homme et des peuples sur les populations autochtones/communautés autochtones*, 2005: 105 cited by Assana, 2022: 35).

This definition identifies three (3) essential elements for a holistic understanding of this notion: cultural singularity, a situation of non-dominance and marginalization from an economic, political and socio-cultural point of view, but not necessarily from a numerical point of view (Pierrée-Caps, 2008: 1028; Mouangue Kobil, 2009: 37, *Ibid*). This is in contrast to the notion of "indigenous population", which is legitimized by the initial settlement or anteriority of settlement on a territory and exclusive rights to ancestral land (Read Ngando sandje, 2013: 160; Claire Médard, 2006: 166-167; Ngando Sandje, 2013: 24; Quetu, 2020, *ibid*; Mouiche, 2013: 289), that of "indigenous people" integrates socio-cultural specificities or the so-called "traditional" lifestyles that many no longer want to practise (Sepulveda, Glon and Dumont, 2020 cited by Assana, 2022: 36). What is at stake here is the notion of legal personality, which the people have under international law and which gives access to the rule of law (Bellier, 2013: 25).

The central concept of this study, *de-indigenization*, is coined to refer to the process by which a group recognized as an indigenous people has its socio-legal, land and political status redefined as a result of its spatial fixation, regardless of whatever ascending or descending direction that this redefinition takes. In other words, it refers to the process by which an ethnic group considered to be an indigenous people loses the functional attributes of its indigeneity (displacement, exclusive dependence on the bush/forest) and reinvesting in the national political and socio-economic arena. It should not be confused with the concept of settlement. Settlement is a spatio-residential process (fixation to the ground), while *de-indigenization* refers to its statutory effects.

It is also distinguished from assimilation, which presupposes a convergence of minority groups towards the norms of the dominant group, whereas *de-indigenization* can result in a political and economic ascent of the group concerned (the case of the Mbororos) as well as in its marginalization (the case of the Pygmies), as we will see, without uniform convergence towards a single model. It is also distinct from acculturation, which describes cultural transformations: language, beliefs, housing, techniques resulting from contact between groups. In the context of this study, acculturation is treated as one of the possible mechanisms of *de-indigenization*, and not as its equivalent.

Defined in this way, de-indigenization is measured through a set of indicators common to the two groups studied: access to formal land tenure (property rights), access to local political representation, school integration, diversification of economic resources, and institutional recognition of customary authority. The outcome of the bottom-up or precarious process depends on the economic, educational and political asset, in the sense of Bourdieu (2000), that each group had at its disposal at the time of its spatial fixation.

One of the cultural specificities of the Mbororo and Pygmy communities is the place they have historically carved out in the bush and the forests, respectively. They often live in geographically isolated areas, suffer from various forms of political and social marginalization, and are subject to domination and exploitation within national political and economic structures. However, settlement, as a shift from structural mobility to permanent residential anchoring, calls into question the material foundations of their international definition.

The scientific problem that emerges from the above is that of the mutation of the social, spatial and politico-legal status of indigenous peoples under the effect of settlements, and of the diversity resulting from this recomposition. The following research question arises: How do settlement processes transform, in a differentiated way, the social, spatial and politico-legal status of the Mbororo and Baka Pygmy indigenous people in Cameroon?

To answer this, we formulate the hypothesis that our central hypothesis maintains that spatial fixation does not lead to uniform assimilation, but produces divergent paths of de-indigenization: an ascending and consolidated *de-indigenization* among the Mbororos, driven by the conversion of economic capital into electoral levers, in contrast to a precarious and subaltern *de-indigenization* among the Pygmies, confronted with land dispossession and agrarian dependence. This hypothesis assumes an explicit risk of refutation and falsifiability (Popper, 1973) of the definitional and identifying criteria of indigenous peoples.

In order to avoid the simple juxtaposition of theoretical models, the analysis articulates two complementary grids: on the one hand, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of forms of capital (1979; 1986) makes it possible to understand how the material and social resources accumulated by a group are converted in the political arena. The economic asset (cattle) and the social/religious resources (belonging to Islam) of the Mbororos are easily convertible into electoral and institutional capital. But, the cultural and ecological resources of the Baka (botanical knowledge, control of the forest) loses its market and symbolic value in a sedentary rural space dominated by Bantu land ownership.

While, the political geography of territoriality (Claude Raffestin, 1980; Sack, 1986; Levy and Lussault, 2003; Pecqueur, 2004) sheds light on the way in which residential fixation modifies the relationship to power, Mbororo's pastoral territoriality, initially reticular and fluid, becomes a local geopolitical territoriality through the creation of sedentary neighbourhoods and the control of municipalities; the settlement of the Baka along the roads creates an "enclaved territoriality" where they are physically fixed but politically and legally dispossessed of any right to the land they occupy.

The analysis is based on a mixed methodological approach combining first-hand data and meta-analysis:

The direct field investigation on the Mbororo case: data were collected by the author during two field survey campaigns conducted in 2017 (as part of the thesis), and 2019 in the border council of Ngaoui in the division of Mbéré, (Adamawa Region) which resulted in several publications (Assana, 2022: 33-56; Assana, 2021: 177-200 and Assana, 2023: 369-394. The protocol included 60 semi-structured interviews (with Ardos/Mbororo traditional chiefs, municipal elites, sedentary herders, CPDM officials and civil society actors such as MBOSCUA) as well as participant observation of municipal council sessions and livestock markets.

Bibliographic and documentary meta-analysis was used in the case of the Baka Pygmies: In the absence of a direct field survey of the same duration among the Baka, the data concerning this group are the result of a systematic and critical exploitation of contemporary anthropological, sociological and legal works (in particular the works of Bahuchet, Bigombe Logo, Dkamela, Nguede Ngono, Robillard and Pelican), cross-checked by the analysis of

official reports of the Ministry of Social Affairs (MINAS) and human rights NGOs.

The study is structured around two axes. The first axis analyzes the *de-indigenization* of the Mbororos and the Pygmies as a contrasting recomposition of identities (2). The second apprehends it as a contrasting recomposition of the figure of contrasting political citizenship (2).

2. The *De-Indigenization* of the Mbororos and Pygmies of Cameroon: A Contrasting Recomposition of Identities

Cameroon is home to a plurality of paths of *de-indigenization*. It is reflected in an ascending and consolidated *de-indigenization* among the Mbororos (2.1) and fragile among the Pygmies (2.2).

2.1 Ascending and Consolidated De-Indigenization Among the Mbororos

The Mbororo pastoralists are on a path of ascending and consolidated *de-indigenization*. It is shown by the deterritorialization of the bush and village formalization (2.1.1) and agro-pastoral diversification and market power (2.1.2).

2.1.1 Deterritorialization of the Bush and Village Formalization

The deterritorialization of the bush is an important form of territorial mutation of the indigenous Mbororo people of Cameroon. In fact, the relationship to land, territory and natural resources is central to the conception of the indigenous people (Bellier, 2007: 83). Indeed, the settlement of the Mbororos in Adamawa started from the 1970s and 1980s, with a gradual abandonment of mobile camps in favor of village housing (Boutrais, 1995). This movement away from absolute nomadism among the Mbororos resulted in a deterritorialization of landlocked bush areas in favor of permanent settlements in camps that had become villages. From then on, we observe the mutation of territorial and cultural identities through the deterritorialization of the Mbororos of the bush and their corollary acculturation.

A convergence of interlocking factors explains this phenomenon: international factors (colonial policy, globalization, the deployment of humanitarian NGOs (Rubichon, 2006/2007) and the shift of certain territories and corridors under the increasing control of transnational criminal groups (Saïbou, 2004: 100-103; Mamoudou, 2021: 599 cited by Assana, 2023: 370); national factors (the construction of the nation-state (Note 4) (Mveng, 1991), human migration and local factors: geographical (climate, relief, the attraction to pastures, saturation of pastoral ranching land, land-use planning policies and insecurity linked to agro-pastoral conflicts (Boutrais, 1999, *Ibid*).

Direct and prolonged contacts between two different cultures that result in the modification or transformation of one or both cultures are called acculturation (Abega, 2005: 123). The acculturation of the Mbororos is perceptible at the socio-cultural and economic levels.

At the socio-cultural level, the acculturation of the Mbororos brings with it various challenges: the emergence of new ways of constituting families, the kingship network (Note 5), the evolution of women's status, the socialization of children, the involvement of Mbororo herders in social and cultural life and the organization of the Mbororos in Common Initiative Groups and associations and the improvement of their habitats.

The abandonment of nomadism has also allowed the Mbororos to improve their habitat through the use of sustainable materials. The habitat, formerly of traditional huts using architecture of ancient origin, is gradually being modelled on the architectural model of Bantu buildings (mud bricks, cinder blocks, zinc, windows, etc.). This fixation on the territory not only makes it possible to acquire land and political rights, but also to integrate socio-economic life of Cameroon. It also enables them benefit from basic social infrastructure: -boreholes, wells, schools, health centres, etc .in the villages. Settlement led the public authorities to officially recognize pastoralists' camps made of "permanent" dwellings by attributing to them the official status of villages (Kenmoe Tchidje et al, 2021: 3200). Identity mutations are also noticeable at the economic level.

2.1.2 Agro-Pastoral Diversification and Market Power

Settlement is accompanied by a diversification of economic activities. Once exclusively focused on the guardianship of cattle, the Mbororos have carried out an agrarian revolution by adopting agro-pastoral and commercial activities (maize, cassava, market gardening) (Note6). The diversification of these activities is an important way of recomposing the economic identity. It manifests itself through the association with livestock farming and a diversification of economic activities (agricultural commitment and the adoption of small trades).

When they arrived in Cameroon, the Mbororos did not know how to work on the land. (Hurault, 1964: 22-71 cited by Assana, 2021: 184). Mbororo's commitment to agriculture involves a real learning of new activities, in their calendar and techniques. To do this, the Mbororos first hire agricultural workers and then they set to work themselves. Albert Doufissa already pointed out in 1993 that 41% of Mbororo herders were already engaged in self-consumption agriculture. These were small tuber or vegetable crops (*Ibid*). But some cultivated or had

cultivated large areas of maize or cassava fields. Thanks to animal manure, settlement is accompanied by the development of continuous and intensive maize cultivation in small areas close to homes. The majority of sedentary herders, thus, guarantees their family's food security. And through this activity, Mbororo traders contribute to the development of their families by sending their children and those of their community to school; and also help in the various development activities of the locality financially. The Mbororos have engaged in various activities such as trade and interurban transport. And, through these activities, Mbororo traders contribute to the development of their families (Tchidje and Ibrahim, 2020). Similarly, settlement brings pastoralists closer to the places where animal products are sold: livestock markets (Ngong, Adoumri) in the northern region (Koussoumna et al (2008; 2010). It has forced this Fulani category to join banking structures (Saibou, 2006: 30).

At the same time, their integration into regional livestock markets (Ngong, Adoumri, Ngaoui) and their gradual access to banking services have led to the emergence of a class of pastoral entrepreneurs capable of financing community infrastructure and investing in interurban transport (Tchidje & Ibrahim, 2020; Saibou, 2006). This deterritorialization of the Mbororos of the bushes has the corollary of acculturation. Meanwhile, there is an uncertain path of *de-indigenization* among the Pygmies.

2.2 The Uncertain De-Indigenization of the Pygmies

In contrast to the Mbororos, the Pygmies are on an uncertain path of de-indigenization. It is manifested by forest deterritorialization, and the "attraction of the track" (2.2.1) and the confinement to menial work and land tenure insecurity (2.2.2).

2.2.1 Forest Deterritorialisation and the "Attraction of the Track"

Forest deterritorialization is an important but uncertain form of territorial mutation among the Pygmies. It dates from the beginning of European colonial expansion at the end of the 19th century (Bahuchet, 1997: 19). Historically, the Pygmies have led a nomadic life in forest ecosystems where they feed on the products of hunting and gathering. The important explanatory factor for this phenomenon is deforestation (Note 7). Two important modalities explain this deforestation: slash-and-burn agriculture and commercial logging. The first type, on a large scale, is industrial exploitation by Western companies; the second type, often described as "wild", is the work of small local farmers, oriented towards supplying the country's large urban centres for various construction works (Nke Ndihi, 2008: 1). The deterritorialisation of the Forest Pygmies took place against a backdrop of acculturation.

For several decades, and particularly since the last decade of the twentieth century, the society of the Pygmies of Cameroon has been plagued by significant changes. Many determinants, such as settlement, intermarriage with the Bantu, Christianity, paid work among Bantu peasants, and Western education, have greatly contributed to this (Dkamela, 2002). Forms of organization introduced from outside are reproduced and developed as a result of decentralized forest management and the transfer of responsibilities to local communities. The associations and committees set up for the management of community forests, such as the Cobabo (Baka Community of Bosquet) and the Asbak (Baka Association) with consistent responsibilities, have destructured and reconfigured the power status in Baka society. The new dynamics have had mixed, sometimes negative, effects (Dkamela, 2002) This is particularly the case with decision-making, which now relies more on young people who have gone to Western schools. The use of money has led to the emergence of opportunistic behaviours that are the opposite of the traditional values of the community.

The evolution of the way of living is the symbol of the changes that the Pygmy populations are experiencing. The hut made of foliage was suitable for temporary camps, whereas with settlement, solid habitats are preferred. This is a condition for any material and social progress. The Pygmies are gradually renouncing their old way of life to settle almost permanently near the villages. The grove is: "an area located around Loumie (37 km) in eastern Cameroon where the pygmies rub shoulders with the Bantu (Ngo Mbai, 2020:106). The construction of traditional houses (huts of large leaves) was previously the responsibility of women. Men have taken up this task, and taken on the symbolic value that stems from it, since the adoption of the Bantu rectangular house model at the beginning of settlement (Fraticeci et al, 2012). The anthropologist Alain Froment speaks of the reterritorialization of the Pygmies in terms of "the attraction effect of the pygmies to the track" and notes that: "Their number increases and therefore finally the habitat is structured and develops (Maget, 2013 cited by Ngo Mbai, 2020: 106). We also observe the mutation of economic identity.

2.2.2 Confinement to Menial Work and Land Tenure Insecurity

Settlement along the tracks frequently places the Baka Pygmies in a relationship of economic dependence vis-à-vis the neighboring Bantu populations-, in the form of low-paid daily agricultural work or clientelization relationships sometimes described in the literature as quasi-serfdom (Dkamela, 2003; Nguende Ngono, 2016). In terms of land tenure, the sedentary Baka Pygmies do not benefit, in the majority of documented cases, from either a formal land title or customary recognition equivalent to that of a Bantu chief, which places them in a situation of double precariousness, both vis-à-vis modern land law and the local customary authorities.

By abandoning the gathering and hunting of big game, the Baka have integrated agriculture by imitating their Bantu neighbors (creation of small banana or cocoa plantations). However, having no land title recognized by modern law or property rights guaranteed by the dominant Bantu custom, they are unable to protect their plots. They find themselves confined to the role of underpaid agricultural workers, undergoing an asymmetrical economic exchange that is akin to a real rural proletarianization (Abe, 2011; Bahuchet, 1997).

Originally, the Pygmies lived exclusively on hunting and gathering. They knew nothing about agriculture, which was one of the skills of the Bantu villagers who hardly dared venture into the forest (Note 8) (Fraticeci et al., 2012). However, the Pygmies were able to establish social relations with the Bantus. A host of authors have distinguished themselves in the analysis of social change among the pygmies. Initially, Turnbull (1961) in *The Mbuti pygmies, change and adaptation*, already evoked the relations between the pygmies and their Bantu neighbours. In this logic, the pygmies would have integrated the practice of agriculture by imitating the Bantu (See also, Althabe, 1965; Leclerc, 2012; Soengas, 2012). The opening up of banana, cocoa and coffee plantations in Kongo, Messa and Ngatto would thus justify Baka's adaptability to village life. Demesse (1978) sees agriculture as a vector for integrating technological tools (*Cadre de planification des peuples autochtones du projet (CPPA)*, novembre 2018 : 5). The Pygmies generally constitute a workforce for the Bantu in the context of their agricultural activities.

By adopting a way of life to which they were not accustomed, forced settlement organizes their vulnerability in relation to the Bantu (Bahuchet, 1992). For the Pygmies, this transition from a hunter-gatherer society to an agrarian one poses a problem, essentially because of its impact on their relationship with the Bantu (Abe, 2011: 150). Although the Pygmies are recognized as the first occupants of the forest, the "Mabea a Mvoubel" do not recognize them as having any right of ownership over the land and "it is generally with difficulty that the Pygmies become owners of the plantations" (Guillaume, 1989: 79 cited by Abe, 2011: 150). The exchange that is structured in this context is of an unequal type. The wages that the Pygmies receive have nothing to do with the labour or the output provided, much less with the needs imposed on them by their new way of life, where everything must now be bought (*Ibid*).

In this way, the critical current of marginalization and subalternity asserts that settlement is equivalent to confinement and proletarianization. This current denounces the exploitation of Pygmy labor force by dominant communities and the grip of elites on traditional land. It has its roots in Antonio Gramsci's concept of the subaltern and Subaltern *Studies* (Gramsci, 1996; Guha, 1983; Gayatri Chakraborty, 2020). De-indigenization is not limited to the economic sphere: it is the crucible of a major redefinition of citizenship and the exercise of political rights in the local Cameroonian arena.

3. The *De-Indigenization* of the Mbororos and Pygmies as a Contrasting Reconfiguration of Political Citizenship

The paths of *the de-indigenization* of the Mbororos and the Pygmies constitute sites of observation of intense mutations of the figure of political citizenship. They also appear to reveal the way in which citizenship and its exercise are formulated by indigenous peoples. Patrice Bigombe already evoked the paths of the progressive construction of citizenship of the indigenous peoples of Cameroon. He noted that citizenship is both a quality and a status: those of a political community (Note 9). However, these sedentary transitions of the Pygmy and Mbororo people are evolving, at an uneven pace. In order to understand the *de-indigenization* of the Mbororos and Pygmies as a reconfiguration of contrasting political citizenship, it is important to study the divergences in access to state institutions (3.1) before the explanatory factors (3.2).

3.1 Divergences in Access to State Institutions

In terms of political and electoral sociology, the paths of *de-indigenization* reveal a striking divergence in access to the institutions of the postcolonial state. We observe the access to hegemonic political citizenship among the Mbororos (3.1.1) which contrasts with a subordinate political citizenship among the Pygmies (3.1.2).

3.1.1 Hegemonic Mbororo Citizenship

The path of *de-indigenization* of the Mbororos is marked by access to hegemonic political citizenship (Note 10). It is perceptible at the level of traditional power and municipalities.

In terms of the structuring of traditional power, Mbororo society has not known sufficiently solid socio-political organization throughout history compared to the other sedentary Fulani faction (the Fulbé), because it is too dynamic and in perpetual displacement. It is only recently with the abandonment of nomadism that the Mbororos have formed much more homogeneous and supportive social groups in Cameroon (Boutrais, 1984: 225). From then on, in terms of traditional leadership, the sedentary Mbororo populations have several 3rd degree chiefdoms. At the head of these chiefdoms are chiefs (*ardos*), who are consulted when making decisions for the functioning of their locality (Note 11). Out of seventeen traditional chiefdoms in the Ngaoui district in the Adamawa region, seven (07) are now led by the Mbororos (Assana, 2021: 188). Similarly, the North-West region has 7 (seven) divisions and in each of the divisions there are 20 (twenty) to 30 (thirty) *Ardos*, i.e. chiefs of the Mbororo tribes

(*Message to the International Community of the ANDC*).

On the strength of this recognition, they raised their level of political demands by asking for the reclassification of their chiefdoms to emancipate themselves from the historical tutelage of the Gbaya or Foulbé customary chiefdoms, thus opening up access for their chiefs (Ardo) to the senatorial electoral college and regional councils established by decentralization. The increase in the "protest potential" is manifested by political demands and the denunciation of the relationships of dependency and patronage between the Ardo of Ngaoui and the "indigenous" Gbaya chiefdoms and the solicitation of humanitarian intervention by the international community to frame the internal political excesses in the sub-region (Assana, 2022: 39). From the claim of 17 July 2016 signed by 23 traditional chiefs, and addressed to the Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, the Mbororos are demanding the reclassification of their chiefdoms. The political stakes of the reclassification of the traditional chiefdom of Ngaoui are of several kinds: first, this reclassification aims to enshrine the autonomy of the chiefdom of the Mbororo community of Ngaoui vis-à-vis the tutelage of the indigenous Gbaya chiefdoms and consequently, the fullness of Ardo's jurisdiction over the territorial entirety of this district. Secondly, this claim opens up the possibility for the Mbororos being eligible for election to the electoral college of senators (Assana, 2014: 29) and regional councillors. These demands arise in a political context where decentralization will contribute to the upgrading of the traditional chieftaincy through the inclusion of chiefdoms in the transferred competences and their representation within the Senate and the regional councils. Also, the future regional councils will be partly composed of representatives of the traditional command elected by their peers. Finally, these claims are underpinned by the financial stakes. From now on, all traditional chiefs receive monthly "a fixed allowance calculated on the basis of the numerical value of their population as well as an allowance for special expenses" and the status of their traditional chiefdom (see *Article 22 of Decree No. 2013/332 of 13 September 2013 amending and supplementing certain provisions of Decree No. 77/245 of 15 July 1977, on the organization of traditional chiefdoms*). In addition to the structuring of a dense network of traditional chiefdoms in the 3rd grade, we can observe the hegemony of the municipality and the mobilization of transnational networks.

We also observe political affirmation and municipal hegemony among the Mbororos. In fact, at the political level, the sedentary Mbororo populations participate or take part in the political decision-making process in the management of Cameroon and the development of their locality (Kenmoe Tchidje & Mimche, 2021: 3197-3204). They receive voter cards allowing them to vote and to be represented in local councils (rural communes, etc.).

In the district of Ngaoui, the Mbororos have converted their demographic weight into local political power (Assana, 2021: 190). Since the creation of the commune of Ngaoui in 1996, the Mbororos have managed to secure control of the municipal executive of Ngaoui by retaining the position of mayor since 2002. The only exception comes from the very first term (1996 to 2002) when the Foulbé assumed the leadership of the municipal executive of this commune for one term through Abdoulaye Beiladji (Assana, 2021: 177-200). To achieve this, the Mbororos had to obtain a sufficient majority of 13 councillors out of the 25 to elect the municipal executive, with or without consensus, with or without the will of the other ethnic components (*Ibid*). In addition to controlling the municipal executive of the commune of Ngaoui, the Mbororos also lead the presidency of the CPDM section of Ngaoui.

This local political assertion is based on a dense network of associations: Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA), Solidarity and Local Development (SODELCO), *Tabital Pulaaku*, a framework for consultation and reflection of the Mbororos that structures electoral mobilization and the representation of the group's interests. These associations defend their pastoral rights and bring their demands to the African Union and the UN (Saidou, 2021). It should be remembered that these data, although documented in detail, relate to a specific communal case and do not allow, as it stands, to conclude that a Mbororo political conquest can be generalized to the entire national territory; they illustrate a possible path, the exact extent of which at the level of Cameroon remains to be established by additional surveys.

3.1.2 Subaltern Citizenship Among the Pygmies

In contrast to the Mbororo, the Baka Pygmies' path to *de-indigenization* is characterized by a subordinate citizenship (Note 12). Although settlement theoretically brings them closer to polling stations and civil status centers, their electoral participation remains largely captive. Handicapped by a low rate of possession of national identity cards and by illiteracy in rural areas, the Baka are frequently instrumentalized during election campaigns by the Bantu elites, who exchange their votes for immediate consumer goods.

The Pygmies have also acquired the right to vote, which allows them to participate in the various elections and to militate within political parties such as the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM). Indeed, even if their visibility still suffers from a barrier of prejudice, we see Pygmy municipal councillors in the communes of Lomié and Somalomo. This symbolic participation finds a favourable echo in the organizational mobilization of the Baka of the Haut Nyong division (Nguède Ngono, 2016: 44). If we look into the depth of the question, it even emerges that in fact, it is a double denial: First, there is the global denial institutionalized by the (modern) statutory regime of land tenure, based on the legal fact that the land belongs to the state. Secondly, there

is a denial practised by the Bantu customary tenure regime, which constructs a "land marginalization within land marginalization" (Jackson, 2003; Oyono and Barrow, 2009, *ibid.*). This settlement is marked by institutional subservience and symbolic political representation.

Traditionally, Pygmy communities have placed themselves under the authority of a *kobo*, whose function is more that of a guide than that of a chief. His authority is not absolute (Fratlicelli and Pinsart, 2012). Each lineage owns, controls and establishes exclusive rights on both sides of forest product harvesting trails. The networks formed by these tracks define the territory in which each "pygmy" lineage (and its allied groups) has rights. The different pygmy groups live in camps of thirty to seventy people, made up of about ten hemispherical huts.

The pygmy community is stratified. Several figures symbolize various powers and prestige within the community. These are the elders of the camp, who enjoy the power of speech, which is above all the power of arbitration in conflicts expressed during "the palaver" in which men and women participate; the diviner-healer Nganga, who presides over the healing sessions and ritual preparation for hunting; the great elephant hunter, a figure who is losing importance with the gradual disappearance of big game and who embodies the community's ability to take advantage of the largest (but also the most dangerous) animals for food, an old woman, among the relatives of the "eldest", is assigned ritual functions (Tchoumba and John Nelson, FPP, CED, 2006).

However, settlement and its corollary *de-indigenization* have greatly modified the political organization, the construction of Pygmy territories and relations with the Bantus. It has reduced the functions and legitimacy of the *Kobo*. It is now the Bantu village chief who chooses the Chief of the Pygmies. His decision is then ratified by the sub-prefect. This chief is invested with a simple role of representation with the Bantu and the public authorities without being recognized as having any administrative function (Fratlicelli and Pinsart, 2012). As can be seen, settlement did not imply the regularization of the administrative status of the Pygmy communities in the same way as among the Mbororos. Although some Baka chiefdoms have been formally created by the administration, they often remain devoid of financial resources and remain symbolically subject to the control of the Bantu canton chiefdoms. The Baka are thus going through a *precarious de-indigenization*, where the loss of their forest autonomy is not accompanied by real political emancipation.

Based on the above, it is important to note that the Baka traditional chief (*Kobo*) is often appointed or validated under the direct influence of the Bantu village chief, without administrative recognition equivalent to that granted to the Pastoral Ardo. Although the Bakas now have voter cards and a few municipal councillors in the communes of Lomié or Somalomo, their presence in decision-making arenas remains confined to a symbolic role, without any real ability to influence budgetary or land arbitration (Nguede Ngono, 2016).

3.2 Factors Explaining the Divergence of Paths

To speak of a factor "is to appeal to a strong determinant of social change. A factor is in fact an element of a given situation which, by the mere fact of its existence or by the action it exercises, brings about or produces a change" (Rocher, 1968, p.25). The explanatory factors for the contrasting paths of *de-indigenization* are of two kinds: educational (3.2.1) and economic (3.2.2) disparities.

3.2.1 Educational Disparities

Schooling illustrates the divergence in the paths of *de-indigenization*. There are educational disparities between the Mbororos and the Pygmies, which is manifested in the unequal endowment of educational and cultural assets (Bourdieu, 2000). The exercise of citizenship is inseparable from the volume of capital possessed by indigenous actors (Bourdieu, 2000). The school is one of the instruments of the sedentary culture that is imposed. Far from being a neutral social structure, the school functions as an apparatus for the reproduction of social relations (Bourdieu, 2000). It is in this sense that the school is considered here, as an instrument, "a hidden meaning", as Daniel Gaxie wrote about voting, which transforms social segregation into educational inequalities (1978). While the Mbororos have been able to combine Lutheran schools, public and Koranic education to train administrative staff, Baka children experience a massive dropout rate due to the inadequacy of the teaching calendars with their seasonal rhythms and the persistence of discriminatory prejudices (Abe, 2011). Lacking sufficient intellectual and political elites of their own, the Pygmies remain dependent on the benevolent but paternalistic mediation of humanitarian Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to make their voices heard. Among the Mbororos, the schools available are public and denominational (particularly Lutheran) and Koranic education. From generation to generation, this has fostered the emergence of an intellectual elite capable of occupying administrative and political positions.

Among the Baka Pygmies, in contrast, the literature documents a significantly higher rate of out-of-school and non-enrolment, linked to the remoteness of schools, the residual mobility of families and discriminatory practices reported in several works (Abe, 2011; Ngo Mbai, 2019). Despite the efforts made by the public authorities, civil society actors or the involvement of cooperation institutions such as the World Bank and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the access of Pygmy populations to the education

offered by formal schools remains problematic: "Currently, they are 'unschooled', 'under-educated' and 'poorly educated' (Mafoukila, 2006: 23, cited by Abe, 2011: 143-160).

In Gabon, Congo and Burundi, Pygmies keep a distance from the education system (Lawson, 2005, *Ibid*). The situation is much the same in Cameroon. Since the creation of Saint Kisito Catholic School, more than 300 Baka students have been trained. The level of education among Pygmy children is the lowest in Cameroon, especially among girls, and a high number of children are several years behind at the primary level. The dropout rate among Pygmy children also remains high (Atsiga Essala, 1999: 163). Moreover, the organization of the school calendar does not correspond to the Pygmies' calendar of activities. Prejudice persists against the Pygmies. In the Western colonial imagination, the "Pygmies" are monkeys and not men" (Bahuchet, 1993: 161), "inferior beings" and "sub-humans" (*Ibid*: 154). In contrast to the educational situation among the Pygmies, we observe the relatively high rate of schooling among the Mbororos.

The relatively high rate of schooling of the Mbororos is an important resource that allows them to better renegotiate their path of *de-indigenization*. The relative conversion of the Mbororos to Christianity is an important factor in this drive. This conversion is part of the decision to evangelize this Fulani fraction done by Norwegian missionaries (Lode Kare, 1991: 10 cited by Assana, 2021: 186). The strategic objective is not only to get the Mbororos out of the spiritual ghetto in which they find themselves, but also to bar the way to the expansion of Islam towards the south of Cameroon (Bonne Mbang Sodéa, Owona Ndounda, 2019: 42, *Ibid*). The promotion of educational and health infrastructures is a charming policy that missionaries used and still use to evangelize the Mbororos. In addition to the contribution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon (EELC), the State and international organizations also play an important role. In this perspective, the *Danish Refugee Council* and the *Lutheran World Federation* promote schooling in the Mbororo community.

Associative movements such as the *Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association* (MBOSCUDA) and the Society for the Development of Livestock and Trade (SODELCO) have made the schooling of Mbororo children a priority issue for their associations (Assana, 2017). The merging of Mbororo associations in the sub-region reveals their strong organizational capacities. As examples, we can cite the Mbororo associations in West African countries such as the National Federation of Breeders of Niger (FNEN) and *Pastoral Resolve (PARE)* in Nigeria (Bello and Sahabo, 2005: 19 cited by Saidou, 2021: 545-546). This is also the case with the Mbororo Associations of Central Africa, such as the Association of Indigenous Fulani Women of Chad (AFPAT) and the Association for the Integration and Social Development of the Fulani of the Central African Republic (AIDSPC) (*Ibid*). All these Mbororo associative movements meet regularly within the framework of the *international Tabital Pulaaku*, which is a festival for the promotion and safeguarding of Fulani cultures from all over the world with a view to promote schooling. In addition, at the continental level, the *Confederation of Traditional Herders in Africa* (CORET) is a real African network of pastoralists (Abdoul-Bagui, 2019: 13 cited by Saidou, 2021: 546). The disparities observed in the paths of *de-indigenization* can also be explained by economic factors.

3.2.2 Economic Disparity

The contrasting paths of *de-indigenization* between the Mbororos and the Pygmies can be explained by economic factors. There are disparities between the initial capital held by each indigenous category.

At the economic level, the income from the livestock trade provides the Mbororos with resources that can be reinvested in land and local political life. Conversely, the traditional resources of the Baka (game, honey, medicinal plants) are part of a non-cumulative economy of use, which is difficult to convert into financial capital in a rural market dominated by land ownership. The Baka Pygmies, by contrast, remain mostly dependent on subordinate agricultural labour relations with neighbouring Bantu populations, without comparable access to autonomous economic circuits that allow them to accumulate capital that can be reinvested.

In this way, it can be observed that the material and social resources accumulated by the Mbororos are reconverted into the political arena. The economic capital (cattle) and the social/religious assets (belonging to Islam) of the Mbororos are easily convertible into electoral and institutional capital. On the other hand, the cultural and ecological assets of the Baka (botanical knowledge, control of the forest) lose its market and symbolic value in a sedentary rural space dominated by Bantu land ownership. Also, the settlement of the Pygmies following the degradation of forest systems in Cameroon contributes to the increasing economic vulnerability of these people. This degradation leads to the reduction of territories, which "correspond to the places where the Pygmies periodically go fishing, hunting and collecting" (Bahuchet, 1997: 20). Thus, the entry into agriculture organizes their dependence on their Bantu associates of yesterday, of whom they simply become serfs. Thus, the settlement of the Baka Pygmies in the Eastern region is most often the result of policies of authoritarian grouping along the road tracks, coupled with the creation of National Parks (Boumba Bek, Nki, Lobéké) and private forest concessions. Dispossessed of their free access to the resources of the deep forest without receiving land rights to the roadside land (considered by customary law to be the exclusive property of the Bantu villagers), the Baka find themselves in a legal vacuum. Their economy collapses into precarious agricultural subcontracting: they become cheap

agricultural labour for Bantu farmers, paid in food, alcohol or derisory wages.

By contrast, among the Mbororos of Ngaoui, the fixation on the land was accompanied by a transformation of livestock into real estate and commercial capital. Access to land ownership was achieved either through the purchase of rural and urban land, or through institutional negotiation with the State and the traditional Fulani authorities. Settlement did not destroy livestock farming, it restructured it: the Mbororos now combine a fixed residence with transhumance entrusted to salaried herders. This economic base allows them to secure permanent pastures and to build permanent dwellings, marking their lasting territorial possession.

We can also observe the structure of associations and the role of elites: in 1992, the Mbororos were able to create a powerful socio-cultural organization, the *Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association* (MBOSCUDA). This structure, supported by educated elites and transnational networks, has played a decisive role in literacy, the defense of land rights and the political training of Mbororo executives. On the Baka side, despite the intervention of many development NGOs, the association's own leadership remains fragmented and dependent on external funding, limiting the constitution of an autonomous political bloc (Note 13).

4. Conclusion

At the end of this comparative study, the demonstration confirms that the settlement of indigenous people in Cameroon does not lead to a simple linear assimilation, but activates a complex process of *de-indigenization* with highly differentiated effects. By answering the initial research question, the article establishes that the transformation of spatial anchors reconfigures social hierarchies according to the nature of the capital that can be mobilized by each group:

On the one hand, the Mbororo pastoralists are accomplishing a **bottom-up and consolidated *de-indigenization***. They have succeeded in transforming their territorial fixation into a lever for economic ascension and political conquest, establishing themselves as key players in local governance. This success is based on three main mechanisms: the conversion of economic capital (cattle) into political asset (education, electoral financing); the structuring of a dense network of recognized traditional chiefdoms; and the formation of a transnational associative network capable of bringing their demands to international bodies.

On the other hand, the Baka Pygmies are undergoing a ***precarious and subaltern de-indigenization***, where the expulsion from their traditional forest habitat results in land dependence, agricultural proletarianization and political subjugation vis-à-vis the Bantu elites.

The concept of "*de-indigenization*" proposed in this article makes it possible to account for these contrasting paths by emphasizing the dynamic transformation of indigenous status rather than its disappearance or maintenance. It invites us to go beyond miserabilist or essentialist interpretations to understand indigeneity as a dynamic identity, continually renegotiated at the intersection of land use planning policies, electoral power relations, and access to modern citizenry.

The main contribution of this work lies in the theoretical proposal of the concept of *de-indigenization*. By breaking with the rigid and essentialist grids of international institutions that indissolubly link the status of indigenous people to the dependence of the bush, the forest, the immemorial preservation of nomadism, hunting and gathering, this concept allows political science and sociology to analyze the real mutation of local power in postcolonial Africa. It offers an analytical tool capable of simultaneously thinking about integration from above (capture of institutions) and marginalization from below (proletarianization) within indigenous peoples in spatial transition.

However, this research has limitations related to the asymmetry of empirical sources (direct survey for the Mbororos versus a review of empirical literature for the Bakas) and the focus on the specific case of Ngaoui in Adamawa, which cannot summarize the situation of all the Mbororos in Cameroon (especially those in the Northwest). Future research will benefit from conducting direct and simultaneous field surveys among the Bakas of the East and comparing other pastoral subgroups in order to refine the generalizable scope of the *de-indigenization* grid.

These results invite political science and international organizations to go beyond miserabilist or essentialist reading grids. Indigeneity cannot be understood as an immutable status: it constitutes a dynamic identity, continually renegotiated at the crossroads of territorial planning policies, electoral power relations and access to modern citizenry.

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Notes

Note 1. Colonization is considered as a factor of modernity allowing the introduction of new ideas, of the State, of the modern economy, of new forms of solidarity. Jean-François Bayart (1985), paraphrasing Gramsci, accounts for the colonial moment as marking a hegemonic crisis, that is to say, in this case, the crisis born of the encounter between tradition and modernity.

Note 2. The Mbororos are part of an ethnic group that the British called the *Fulani*. The term "Mbororo" is therefore, as Dognin considers it, a "cultural epithet" that refers to "sociological realities and varied lifestyles". They live in at least 18 (eighteen) African countries including Nigeria, Niger, Guinea, Senegal, Mali, Mauritania, Cameroon etc. (Tchidje and Ibrahim, 2020). The Mbororos are a people who came from Nigeria to settle in Cameroon in the Adamawa region, then migrated to the other regions. The number of Mbororos is estimated at 1.85 million people (*Ibid*). They are present throughout Cameroon (in the West, East, North-West and in the North (Kossoumna Libaa, 2008).

Note 3. The all-encompassing term "pygmy" is used in a general sense to refer to small, marginalized populations that populate the forests of Central Africa, from Gabon, through the Congo, to Rwanda and Burundi (Quetu, 2020: 5). The Pygmies are made up of three main groups, namely: the Baka, the Bakola or Bagyeli and the Bedzang. According to estimates, the Baka, who represent the largest group, number between 70,000 and 100,000 people, in the eastern and southern regions of the country (divisions of Boumba-et-Ngoko, Haut-Nyong and Kadey) numbering between 10,000 and 30,000 souls. They are found in the south of the country and more precisely in Akom II, Bipindi, Kribi, Campo, Ma'an and Lolodorf; the Bedzang are less numerous, with less than a thousand people. They are found in the north-west of the Mbam-et-Kim division, in the Tikar plain and also in Messondo in the Centre region (*Indigenous peoples in Cameroon. Guide for Media Professionals*, 2015: 14).

Note 4. During the 1990s, the notions of governance and the rule of law became commonplace, starting with international institutions that made them the leitmotif of their recommendations (Bellier, 2007). Indigenous peoples have built their political "capacities" based on the United Nations, and these developments are concomitant with intellectual, political and legal developments on notions that aim to redefine the political space and the role of the state.

Note 5. On the family institution as a place where negotiations take place on the values to be adopted for the integration of the Mbororos (cf. Roussel, 1995: 140).

Note 6. Adolphe Obam presents Cameroon's forests as follows: "The total area covered by dense forests in our country is estimated at 22 million hectares, of which... 169 40,000 hectares is exploitable" (1992). While the northern part of the country is experiencing the horrors of desertification, the southern part, contains vast tropical rainforests, some of which are part of the Congo Basin forest massif. These forests are under threat of programmed disappearance (cited by Nke Ndi, 2008).

Note 7. Slash-and-burn agriculture we have carried out by Pygmies had already been described around the 1930s and designated as the result of an apprenticeship with the neighbouring Bantu agricultural populations.

Note 8. The idea of status refers to a set of rights (civil, political and social) and duties (respect for the law) that an individual must effectively enjoy within the framework of positive law, and that of quality or identity refers to the feeling of belonging to and allegiance to the global political community.

Note 9. They are organized around a community chief called *Ardo* and in a plurality of pastoral villages. The village (*wuro*) is the smallest traditional administrative unit commanded by the *Ardo*, the equivalent of the village chief.

Note 10. The notion of hegemonic citizenship is inspired by Marxist critical theory of hegemony applied to modern state structures and postcolonial studies or criticism of citizenship (Tuly, 1995).

Note 11. The territory under the command of the Mbororo Chief is called Ardorat

Note 12. Subaltern citizenship or politics/citizenship from below) crosses political science, sociology and *Subaltern Studies*. It refers to a form of citizenship experienced by groups of individuals who, although legally possessing political rights, find themselves excluded, marginalized or dominated in the real practice of power (Spivak, 2009).

Note 13. At this level, there is a contrast between the terminologies used by international bodies. In this regard, the National Association for the Dignity of the Mbororo Fulani Community (ANDCP) rejects the miserable and marginal image of this Fulani fraction, projected by the MBOSCUDA entrepreneurs, finding it urgent to draw the attention of the international community to "these villainous manipulations that tarnish the image of the entire community" (Read on these points, *the circular letter of the Socio-cultural Association for Livestock Development and Agriculture in Cameroon (SODELCO aux Mbororo)*: 6; see also *Message to the international community of the ANDC*). In the relationship between the state and society, the Mbororos constitute the local ethnic fraction that occupies such a position in the structure that acts in its favor or that benefits from asymmetries in social position and social status in certain districts (Messu, 2000; François Chazel, 1983: 369-393 cited by Assana, 2021: 193). The Mbororos produce wealth through the livestock trade, the taxes that are issued to the Zootechnical and Veterinary Center (CZV) and the significant revenues they generate. This financial influence makes them real local political interlocutors with whom the central government must deal.

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