FORCED LABOR OF BAKA PYGMIES IN SOUTHEASTERN CAMEROON:
A Case of Ignored Slavery

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STUDY OBJECTIVES

- Among other things this study seeks to:
  - Show that the relations between the Baka pygmies and the rest of the populations of the south east Cameroon is characterized by slavery
  - Sort out and explain the basic features of this kind of slavery
  - Demonstrate the various manifestation of this slavery’s case
KEY INTEREST OF THE STUDY

- Render some justice to the sufferings of the Baka pygmies thereby bring them out from practical academic obscurity
- Bring out their (Baka pygmies) modest contribution of the historiography of slavery
METHODOLOGY

- Critical review of literature and available reports
- Collection of data through interviews and participatory observation
- Critical analyses and interpretation of data
- Elaboration and establishment of facts and synthesis
PRESENTATION PLAN

- Presentation of the origin and the evolution and the domination and exploitation of the Baka by the Bantou
- Presentation of the slave practices existing between the two populations
EVOLUTION OF THE BAKA / BANTOU RELATIONS: FROM FRIENDSHIP TO SUBJUGATION

This relation has witnessed two great phases and these are:

- An integrative phase which had economic, technological and cultural exchanges as main dynamic features

- The Baka depreciation phase which was conditioned by pre-colonial trade and the introduction of the cocoa culture during the pre-colonial period.
II- ELEMENTS (FACTS) OF INTEGRATIONISM BETWEEN THE TWO COMMUNITIES

- **Economic**: there was free association of the two communities with the ultimate aim of complementing each other productive system. Through this was a creation of a network of friendly relations between the people of the two communities.

- **Cultural**: there was the formation of alliances and sacrificial treaties between the two groups leading to joint participation in traditional ceremonies (Jengui, Beka, Edio)

- **Technological**: the Baka people obtained iron objects which were indispensable for their activities and in turn, communicated their technical knowledge in the domain of hunting, new methods of trapping animals as well as enriched them with the knowledge and use of therapeutic and medicinal plants. All the same there exist some distances between the two groups especially in the domain of sexual intercourse, meals and lodging.
SUMMARY I

- In the conduct of their mutual relations, the both communities do benefit but the Bantu are in a relative advantage.
- In this context, the Baka which are always to start negotiating for this relation usually gives more than it receives.
- The sets in a situation of unbalanced mutual relations from the onset.
B-PORTRAIT OF DOMINATION AND BAKA

ENSLAVEMENT

Proletarisation of the Baka by the Bantu

The Bantu are using the Baka without compensation for the production of cocoa which is a new practice within these limits. They also seek to have as many Baka under them as possible.

Inhuman and impersonal maltreatment

The Bantu operates many transactions on the Baka who have definitely become their property.
There is a gradual breakdown of the relationship that existed between the two groups. There is a social gulf between these two populations thereby bringing the relations to a near end. Henceforth the Baka are witnessing a situation where his former partner (Bantu) has become his master.
II – BAKA PYGMIES:

A PEOPLE UNDER THE SCOURGE OF SLAVERY

- The Baka pygmies are a source of manual force labour to their Bantou counterpart and other population living within this region.
1-THE BAKA PYGMIES: THE SLAVES OF MODERN TIMES

- The big cocoa producer do really exploit the entire Baka families in the farms and homes by virtue of (property right) which they impose on them.
- The Baka do lack any kind of social protection
- Some Bantou even administer corporal punishment on some of the Baka under their control
- The Bantou are hostile towards any initiative that favours the growth of the Baka
- The Bantou also exploit the Baka during official ceremonies
- The big poachers equally exploit the Baka for their activities and others to perform manual jobs in their homes.
2-CASES OF NEAR FREE HARDLABOUR

- Depending on the venue, the Baka received a daily payment for the daily hard labour which ranged between 100frs to 500frs cfa.
- Many of them were barely compensated with tobacco, alcohol and India helm.
- The Baka paid their debts to the Bantou through severe hard labour.
- The Bantou exploited the human labour of the Baka children in their.
- The Baka women auctioned the human labour to the Bantu in order to have their daily rations for their homes.
- This practice of exploitation were based on racial prejudice.
3- BAKA PYGMIES: SECOND GRADE CITIZENS

- They lack protection on the part of the government
- They are either partially excluded and marginalized in most activities of public life
- They have been placed under the Bantu tutelage
- They face surmountable difficulties in having landed and property rights
- Their children are segregated in school by the school authorities who are usually Bantu
- They equally lack official documents
SUMMARY III

- We are dealing with two ethnic entities that constitute two different classes. In the context, one of these entities (Baka) is at the mercy and produces the riches of the other.
CONCLUSION

- The Baka pygmies are living in a situation in the South East of Cameroon which is characterized by:
  - Rendering obligatory services to the Bantu with little or no form of compensation.
  - Considered as the property of each Bantu to whom they are entirely subordinated
  - They are at the background of all transactions
  - They are victims of social prejudice which are visible elements of their slavery
  - Their rights are constantly trampled upon
  - Their indebtedness to the Bantu makes them subjects of great exploitation
  - Their children go through the scourge of child labour exploitation
  - They are the engines for the production of most goods and services which makes them as slaves and in south eastern Cameroon
  - This situation or practice is hardly mentioned anywhere
  - It’s time to denounce and openly condemn the practice in all the spheres and situate it within the realm of other slavery practices in wake of a modern world ridden with calls of justice, equality and liberty.
Thanks.