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## The National Ruling Party and Candidate Selection in Primaries: A Case Study of the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) in Mezam Constituency in Bamenda, North West Cameroon

Dr, Uchon Fidelis I

Senior Lecturer, Department of Political Science  
University of Bamenda, Cameroon

### **Abstract:**

*How and why do ruling parties fall short of sometimes respecting the formal patterns of candidate selection during primaries? The purpose of this paper is to investigate the factors that explain selection processes during primaries in ruling parties. Using the example of the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) party in power in Cameroon since 1985, it finds that formal rules and regulations may only be used when these are seen to serve the interest of the most powerful in the party. It is not uncommon for the most powerful, to try to influence the selection process and even do so at the expense of the formal rules of the game. They can and do negotiate amongst themselves on the choice of particular candidates in the primaries. They also recommend candidates and coach them. Candidates too have tried to negotiate their way in primaries by seeking elite support. The consequence of this is that candidate selection is characterised by conflict and violence with serious implications for internal democracy, transparency and accountability in the management of ruling parties.*

**Keywords:** Candidate selection, elite, party, power, primary

### **1. Introduction**

The process of candidate selection in primaries within the national ruling party reflects the extent to which ruling parties are willing or not to democratize or to consolidate democracy, as the case may be. The organisation of primaries is known to be guided by a set of internal rules and regulations (usually democratic) which define when the primaries are to be held, who qualifies as candidate, how is the campaign going to be done and the proclamation of the results. Too often, the selection process does not respect the rules and regulations. Rather, in most cases, the selection process is governed by informal negotiations and arrangements, coaching and co-optations. How and why do ruling parties fall short of sometimes respecting the formal patterns of candidate selection during primaries? Formal rules and regulations may only be used when these are seen to serve the interest of the most powerful in the party. It is not uncommon for the most powerful, to try to influence the selection process and even do so at the expense of the formal rules of the game. They can and do negotiate amongst themselves on the choice of particular candidates in the primaries. They also recommend candidates and coach them. Candidates too have tried to negotiate their way in primaries by seeking elite support. The consequence of this is that candidate selection is characterised by conflict and violence with serious implications for internal democracy, transparency and accountability in the management of ruling parties.

I use the example of the national ruling CPDM in the Bamenda constituency to demonstrate how the candidate selection process is sometimes characterised by conflict and violence. I analyse the events opposing the Fon of Mankon, Fon Angwafo III (CPDM heavy weight) and Clement Matoya (section president of the CPDM) during the primaries for the Section presidency in 2002 in Mezam I CPDM constituency. Before that I begin by tracing the origin of the ruling CPDM in the North West region of Cameroon.

### **2. A Definition and Conceptualization of Political Party**

The concept of political party is common and apparent among political scientists. Like democracy, political party is a wide concept with many variants, each of which can be used for a definition of it. A political party should be defined according to the context in which it operates and following the functions that it fulfills in a given political environment. In the broadest sense, Anthony Downs defines a political party as a coalition of men seeking to control the governing apparatus by legal means (Downs, 1957:24). Within the process of seeking to control, the selection of candidates for election who stand the best chance of winning an election is a prerequisite. And this has to be done through duly constituted elections or legitimate influence. In this regard, a political party according to the context of this study is a political organisation whose aim is to control government by recruiting, selecting and promoting the most qualified members during primaries which duly respect the rules and regulations defined in the party's constitution. Parties are not only known to recruit and train politicians, but also nominate the candidates able to participate in elections (Aragon,

2009). This definition has the advantage that it tries to investigate a function of the party which has been taken for granted i.e. its role in the selection of candidates. Indeed, in well developed democracies such as America, much has been written about the role of the Democratic and Republic parties in the candidate selection process, but much attention is still, I believe, to be given to this area in developing democracies. In addition, it focuses on the conflict and violence prevention dimensions of intra-party competition. When the candidate selection process respects the principles of transparency, fairness and accountability (usually enshrined in the constitution), conflict and violence are at least minimized.

### 3. An Understanding of a (National) Ruling Party

Too often, a ruling party is understood as that party which has control over state or national governmental apparatus. In this study, I distinguish between a ruling party and a national ruling party. To do this, I compare and contrast the notions of 'national' as opposed to 'local'. The reason is that parties seek to select candidates to conquer power at various constituency levels. There are national and local ruling parties. A national ruling party is one that controls the national governmental apparatus but which may not necessarily control a local constituency area or apparatus. It is the party in power at the national or state level. It is that which controls the central apparatus of the state. A national ruling party can be an opposition party at the local or constituency level. Thus, although the CPDM is the dominant party at the national level, in the North West, taken as a constituency, it is not. The CPDM is not at the time of this writing the ruling party in the North West but an opposition. The CPDM is the national ruling party and the opposition party in the North West. It is underrepresented in the North West. This is because it has less council seats than the Social Democratic Front (SDF), its major challenger. Until the (re)introduction of multiparty politics and the eventual emergence of the SDF in the North West, the CPDM monopolized the political landscape. Soon after the early 90s, the SDF became the ruling party in the North West after participating and winning the CPDM in most local elections.

This distinction was necessary for analytical reasons. First, the political hegemony of the CPDM in the North West was lost to the SDF. Second, North West CPDM elites depended on this hegemony for sociopolitical survival. Most of them began to suffer from status anxiety. How was the CPDM going to do to regain its lost hegemony? Which way or strategy was most appropriate to use to rise up again? These were the questions that confronted North West CPDM as soon as it became the opposition. On the other hand, the ruling SDF in the North West was interested in consolidating its newly acquired hegemony. In an attempt to discover new ways of dealing with the SDF, the CPDM partly vested efforts on its primaries.

### 4. The Origin and Development of North West CPDM

As a political party, the CPDM was created from the ashes of the Cameroon National Union (CNU) in 1985, barely a year after a coup attempt, and five years after incumbent President Paul Biya assumed office at the helm of the state.<sup>1</sup> It was officially launched on the 24<sup>th</sup> March 1985 during the 4<sup>th</sup> ordinary congress of the CNU (also known as the first New Deal Congress) in the Congress Hall of Bamenda, the headquarters of the North West Region. During the opening of the Congress, Fon Angwafor III, paramount Fon (traditional ruler) of Mankon and president of the Mezam section of the CNU party presented a welcome address. Indeed, there is no official reason(s) for choosing Bamenda to host the first New Deal Congress and to eventually launch the CPDM. However, it is worthy to note that the North West in general and Bamenda in particular was the seat of some important statesmen like J.N. Foncha, S.T. Muna, A.N Jua, Ndeh Ntumazah etc. who were not only important personalities of the CNU-CPDM but were people who played leading roles in the reunification and unity of Cameroon. These personalities including some influential traditional rulers played a significant role in implanting the CPDM in the North West. They occupied leading positions in the party. They were members of the Congress, Central Committee, and the Political Bureau which are the ruling organs of the party. They were often appointed by the party to act as Chargé de Mission to accomplish a specific party mission.

The aim of the party is to mobilise and rally Cameroonians in order to seek and consolidate national unity, integration and independence; promote a democratic political system; promote the socioeconomic development of Cameroon and among others, formulate political guidelines and an action programme for promoting the welfare of all through hard work in an orderly, peaceful and democratic atmosphere.<sup>2</sup> From the aims above, two aspects that are relevant to the present work stand out clear. The first is that the party seeks to be integrative and inclusive that is being able to mobilise all segments of the society without any discrimination. The second is that it is democratic that is the process of integration or recruitment of members follow principles devoid of corruption, influences and pressure. However, the interpretation of these two principles 'integration' and 'democracy' when it came to the selection of candidates varied from one section to another.

#### 4.1. The Structure, Organisation, and Membership of North West CPDM

The structure of the CPDM in the North West follows a hierarchy of roles and responsibilities of the various organs of the party. There are basically four representative organs of the CPDM at the local level. These include: the cell<sup>3</sup>, the branch, the subsection and section. The cell is the basic organ of the party and covers a quarter or hamlet and mobilizes

<sup>1</sup> Many have considered the CPDM as a change of name from the CNU. There is no date of legislation of the CPDM as of the date it was launched. Consequently, its date of legislation was retained as that when the CNU was created i.e. 01/09/1966/UNC.

<sup>2</sup> See Section 2 of the Charter of the CPDM.

<sup>3</sup> The cell is that basic organ that is in direct contact with the grassroots. However, it was suppressed at one time during the one party era and reintroduced upon the advent of multiparty politics after 1990 for strategic reasons of mobilizing the grassroots.

the grassroots commoners such as peasants and farmers. It comprises 20 to 50 militants and meets in principle once in a month.

The Branch is bigger and comprises several cells with an area of jurisdiction that covers a quarter in urban areas, a village, a hamlet, a clan or a section thereof in natural areas. It meets once every two months. The Subsection which is made up of several branches covers a council or subdivision and meets in principle every three months while the Section, whose area of jurisdiction may be altered by the party's chairman covers a (sub) division and meets in principle every six months. Although the organs of the party are structured in a way as to promote the recruitment of militants from all strata of the society, the influence of members of the ruling organ has been remarkable in the candidate selection process.

The ruling organs of the party include the Congress, the Central Committee and the Political Bureau. These national organs conduct the overall activities of the party. The congress for instance defines the general political, economic and social orientation programmes and meets after every five years under the chairmanship of the national president of the party<sup>4</sup> while the Central Committee which also directs the activities of the party has the specific duty to nominate candidates for elections.<sup>5</sup> The Political Bureau on its part assists the national chairman in directing party affairs outside meetings of the central committee.

Members of the ruling organ are generally drawn from the highest socioeconomic strata of the society. In the North West, they are those who, apart from being members of the party, have or are occupying governmental positions. There are some specialised organisations and groups like the women's wing of the party (WCPDM); a youth wing (YCPDM) which have ruling bodies namely: the national council and the national executive council. The aim of the WCPDM is to mobilise the Cameroonian women for the purpose of their awareness and full participation in the pursuit and achievements of the objectives of the party.

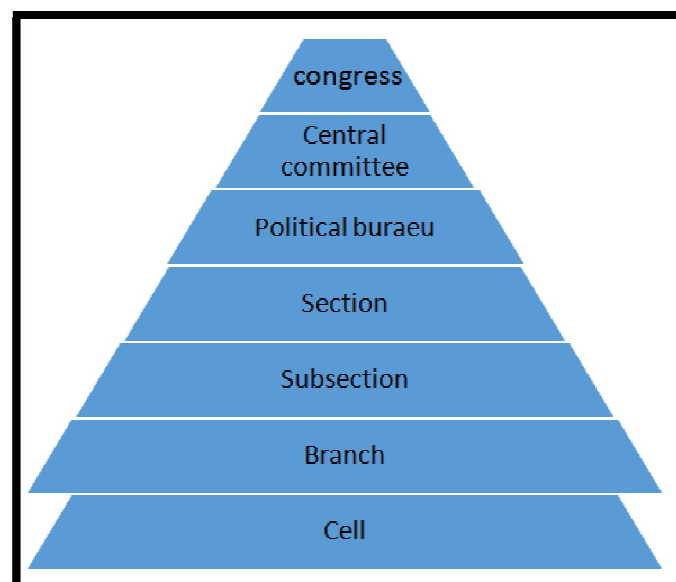


Figure 1

As far as membership is concerned, it is observed that the by-laws of the party provides for two categories of members. The first is made of those who become members after fulfilling certain conditions. The conditions include: being a Cameroonian of either sex, should not belong to any party or association depending on another political organisation, must abide by the constitution and by-laws of the party and must be able to pay the membership fee.<sup>6</sup> The second category of members is made of those who are *ex officio* members. They automatically become members as soon as they occupy certain positions in government and society. They are de facto *ex-officio* members and include first and second class chiefs, militants who are members of parliament, members of government and personalities ranking as such, members of the Economic and Social Council and regional governors.<sup>7</sup> Thus social position matters as far as membership in the CPDM is concerned.

This membership dichotomy as we intend to demonstrate creates inequality in the candidate selection process. The *exofficio* members are somewhat naturally predisposed to hold better positions and to be more influential during primaries while the others are somewhat predisposed to be disfavoured in terms of not having enough resources for political expediency. The *ex officio* members were often regarded as forming part of the party elite. On the basis of their elitist position, they could influence the candidate selection process where and when necessary and in most cases, in disregard of the formal rules of the game. Too often they were called resource persons or personalities and chargé de mission; appellations which reflect a kind of distinction between them and the lower category of members. It was within this framework that North westerners (people who come from the North West) of high socioeconomic status were co-

<sup>4</sup> Section 18.

<sup>5</sup>Section 23:2.

<sup>6</sup> See Section 6 of the Charter of the CPDM.

<sup>7</sup> Sections 11 and 20, CPDM Charter.

opted by the party or were compelled to join the party if they had to survive their status. This situation caused a good number of the lower category of members to be left with no choice than to sometimes rely on their personal connections with influential members for support during primaries.

## 5. Candidate Selection for the CPDM Section Presidency of Mezam I

### 5.1. *The Notion of Primaries and Candidate Selection*

A primary constitutes an internal process of candidate selection in a party. It is characterized by intra-party electoral competition among qualified candidates for office holding. The importance of organising primaries is that it enables the circulation of elites and provides the opportunity for young party members to access new positions, and eventually feel a sense of political satisfaction. Primaries are also organised to discover the best of potentials among party members in terms of those who stand the best chance of winning an inter-party electoral competition. Without primaries, the candidate selection process will be characterized by anarchy and a primary that is organised without respect of the constitution leads to party instability.

### 5.2. *The stake of the Section Presidency of the CPDM*

The Section is strategically the most powerful representative organ of the CPDM at the local level. It encourages and controls party activities within the division and during its meetings, members of the Central Committee, MPs, members of government and persons ranking as such, members of the Economic and Social Council as well as regional councillors resident in the area are required to attend the section conference. The section conference is therefore the most incorporative instance at the regional level.

The Section presidency is also strategically powerful and influential. It is the most powerful executive position of the party at the local level. It takes major decisions about the party and represents the party at the national level. Amongst other duties and responsibilities, Section presidents are empowered to mobilise potential militants at grassroots level, educate potential voters on election procedures, organise evaluation meetings, forward reports of party's activity of local level to party hierarchy, contact party hierarchy on issues related to party, stand as candidate where and when necessary, act as spies (observe and report activities of adversary parties) and develop appropriate strategies, meets out sanctions where things go wrong, and acts as mouthpiece or spokesman of the party's hierarchy at grassroots level. The Section Presidents also determine and receive party cards from the Treasurer General and sell them although they are not allowed to keep the proceeds which they return to the Treasurer General including the unsold cards. In addition, the Section controls the budget and its execution of Branch and cells within their area of jurisdiction if they deem it necessary and they are Presidents of Sections who convene and chair ordinary and extraordinary conferences at the local level.

Those who hold positions as Section president of the CPDM have been perceived to be much closer to the party hierarchy in Yaoundé (headquarters of the party). The position comes with certain advantages that are worthy to be mentioned here. A Section president is one who stands the chance of running parliamentary elections on the ticket of the party. A Section president is highly connected to hierarchy and is believed to influence decisions of the party concerning political and administrative appointments, for example. He/she is in a better position to contact and to be contacted. The probability for the Section president to be co-opted or appointed to top governmental positions and circles is high. As Section president, the gateway to become an MP, Mayor, Minister, Governor, Secretary of State, member of the Central Committee, member of Political Bureau, Chargé de Mission, resource person and so on is wide. The Section presidency of the CPDM in the North West is highly perceived as a giant step towards the "rapid" advancement of one's socioeconomic status within and outside the party.

Past records indicate that those who have served as Section presidents of the CPDM in the North West ended up with better positions within the party and/or in government. Fon Angwafo III of Mankon, a former Section president became parliamentarian and First National Vice Chairman of the CPDM; Simon Achidi Achu, once Section president became parliamentarian, Minister of Justice, Prime Minister and now Senator; Daniel Atia, former scribe of the party ended as parliamentarian; Fon Doh Gwayin of Balikumat started off as Section president and became parliamentarian; John B. Ndeh from Santa was former Minister of Transport; Peter Alange Abety is also a former minister of the New Deal; Paul Atanga Nji, Section president for Mezam II has been appointed Minister of Special Duties at the Presidency of the Republic, while Clement Matoya, a teacher of Government High School Mankon who handed over the Mezam section presidency to Tadzong Abel Ndeh, former Government Delegate to the Bamenda City council is serving as North West Regional Delegate for Trade. These are striking examples of some North Westerners who won the confidence of the ruling government by becoming Section presidents of the CPDM in their constituency of origin. That is why the struggle to become a Section president and/or parliamentary hopeful within the CPDM in the North West is highly challenging, competitive and sometimes marred with influence that escalates into conflict and violence.

### 5.3. *The Election of Section Presidents*

It is during the Section conference which in principle holds every six months that the candidate selection process is done. The Constitution and By-laws of the CPDM is not very clear on the conditions governing the election of section presidents. Rather, in Article 40 (5), it is stated that a circular of the National President shall lay down the conditions for the election of the executives of basic organs. This implies that the conditions for the election of Section executives are determined by the party's chairman and this can be drawn following particular circumstances. However, to be eligible for election, "only militants whose sense of duty, civic spirit, loyalty and moral behaviour are considered to be exemplary and

only members who are up to date in their contributions can vote, be voted for or nominated as the party's candidates in national or local elections".<sup>8</sup> If it is easier to identify members who are up to date in their contributions, it may be hard to say who truly has a sense of duty, civic spirit, loyalty and moral behaviour considered to be exemplary. Potential contenders can all claim to exhibit desired behaviours. Who between the ruling organ, and in particular, the Central Committee on the one hand, and, the local organ, on the other is in a better position to validate a Section president's candidacy? That is the crux of the matter and it is precisely the absence of clear cut conditions for eligibility that give room for elite manoeuvring in the candidate selection process. Too often however, the conditions for the election of the Executives of the Section have been seen to be a prerogative of the Central Committee. For example, the Central Committee is empowered to nominate candidates for various elections including nominating one or more Party candidate for the same seat or present one or more lists.<sup>9</sup> The reason here could be that the Central Committee being the most powerful national executive organ of the CPDM, all party officials including the Section presidents are directly under its political control.

Whichever direction the decision may come from, according to Article 32, the Section Executive is elected by an electoral college for a list comprising militants of the Section and those of the specialized organizations of the party. There may be several lists with the required majority being the absolute majority. Thus all those who have been recognized as militants of a particular Section are entitled to vote a list from amongst the lists of potential Section executive. Once elected, the Section executive serves a five-year term of office even though the Political Bureau may reduce or extend their term of office.

## 6. The 2002 Scramble for Mezam I Section Presidency: Matoya Clement Vs Abel Ndeh

I have reported the strategic significance of the office of Section president of the CPDM and I said that because of this, primaries into this office are characterised by clashes amongst contesters, influence peddling that escalate into conflict and violence. Apart from Mezam constituency in the North West, other constituencies that have seen violent clashes during primaries between 2000 and 2010 are: Bali, Balikumat, Bui, Santa, and Tubah. In 2006 in Bui I for example, Christopher Nsahlai, former Minister of Transport and resource person of the CPDM was accused of attempting to undermine the election of Lawrence Tasha as Section president.<sup>10</sup> Before then, in 2002, posits Lawrence Tasha, the "very" Christopher Nsahlai had attempted to discourage him from running as Section president and even threatened him to withdraw. In most of the cases, the conflicts, which usually opposed a category of emerging young elite and a category of traditional party elite, were resolved with the intervention and ruling of the Central Committee. In the lines that follow, I present the events that characterised elections into the Section presidency in Mezam in 2002, and I show the influence of traditional party elite in the candidate selection process.

The elections into the Section presidency of Mezam I in 2002, which took place at the Bamenda Congress Hall was hotly contested by Matoya Clement, Tadzong Abel Ndeh and Sunday "Bobo" Atanga. Matoya Clement, the outgoing, was Section president since 1996. He was a young High School Teacher and Senior Discipline Master of Government High School (GHS) Mankon, who decided to join the CPDM in spite of the fact that political tides at the time favoured the SDF.<sup>11</sup> He lost in the first round while Tadzong Abel Ndeh and Sunday "Bobo" Atanga continued in the second round. In a press release dated 14<sup>th</sup> October 2002, Matoya reports that during the intervals between the rounds, Tadzong Abel Ndeh approached his advisers and himself twice to obtain their political support.<sup>12</sup> It is also reported in the same press release that Tadzong Abel Ndeh, who was also Government Delegate to the Bamenda Urban Council had never belonged to a cell or branch of the party until he ran for Section President. Tadzong's first offer in return for the support of Matoya and his team was a sum of 2,500,000 FCFA. Matoya rejected the offer and within minutes, he returned with a second offer of 2,800,000 FCFA. Matoya still refused the offer and was then asked to name his price. Matoya had preferred the candidacy of Sunday "Bobo" for whom he campaigned. As he puts it, he could not see himself "campaigning for Tadzong because he is temperamental and moody".<sup>13</sup> However, when Tadzong realized that he was losing the support of Matoya, and in spite of the various offers, he walked to the Fon of Mankon, Fon Angwafo III, a traditional party elite and also First Vice President of the CPDM who was present throughout the exercise and reported that Matoya had refused to support him and even rejected his offers.

## 7. Traditional Elite Influence and Manoeuvring: Fon Angwafo Iii Makes His Choice

The 77-years old<sup>14</sup> Fon of Mankon was then brought into the show. He was in favour of the candidacy of Abel Ndeh who is also his brother in-law, having married the Fon's sister. To have his candidate win the election, the Fon summoned and intimidated Matoya, whom he considered to be his (political) grandson<sup>15</sup> in the following words: "Matoya, if you don't

<sup>8</sup>Article 7.

<sup>9</sup> Article 58.

<sup>10</sup>*The Post* newspaper, No. 0782 of July 17, 2006, page 5.

<sup>11</sup> Matoya, Personal communication, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> He is said to be born on May 21, 1925 in Mankon Palace.

<sup>15</sup> According to the Fon Angwafo III, Matoya Cletus Anye is his grandson in the sense that he brought him into the CPDM as the Youth President. When he saw that Matoya was doing well, he advised Atanga Sylvester Sonde, a "semi literate" who contested the Section presidency to give a chance to Matoya and he did. That was in 1996 Matoya became Section President for Mezam. However, Matoya claims that it was thanks to some external elites and personalities like Achidi Achu, Niba Ngu, John B. Ndeh, Akumdi Peter Awah, Professor Ephraim Ngwafor, Governor Kouambo Adrien, H.E. Prime Minister Peter Mafany Musonge, Hon. Siyam Siwe, that he was able to get the necessary resources that jump-started the rebirth of the party.

support Tadzong tonight and he is defeated, take your family and supporters out of Mankon soil forever".<sup>16</sup> Matoya was compelled to choose between voting for Tadzong, a vote that was seemingly to make a difference, or go on exile. The first option prevailed and he went to the podium where he raised Tadzong's right hand and he got his victory. That was how the Fon of Mankon influenced the candidate election process and his candidate won.

However, the story does not end there. The Fon had earlier prepared his candidate and used his position to influence support for him. Generally, at the verge of elections, the Central Committee usually issues memorandums on the general conduct of the elections including where possible, potential candidates. To that effect, the Secretary General of the CPDM issued a memorandum calling on "new blood" to be infused into the party. This was in response to the announcement of municipal and parliamentary elections due to be held in 2002. A local elite of "good standing" who received the support of at least the majority of the local elite, was being promoted. There was no indication from the Mankon palace at the time that the Fon of Mankon was backing a candidate until he left for a trip to America. However, two days before the deadline for the submission of the list of candidates, a meeting was held in the Council office of Tadzong Abel Ndeh. During the meeting, a Yaounde-based political elite informed that he received a phone call from the Fon of Mankon in America "decreeing" that either him or Tadzong must be candidate and since he was not ready, Tadzong had to be the man. The local elite who had been preparing for a candidate were shocked when they got the news and asked "What of the candidate we have been promoting?" In response, the Yaounde-based political elite said "The candidate you guys have been promoting is still young in the party and would definitely be rejected at the Central Committee". In trying to get further clarification, the local elite asked to know whether the Secretary General's letter about infusing new blood was a smoke-screen. Again, the answer was a sweeping "yes" from the Yaounde-based elite and his protégée. Whether or not the Secretary General's memorandum was a "smoke-screen", the traditional elite of the party represented by the Fon of Mankon and some external elite in the person of the Yaounde-based political elite influenced the selection process. They had chosen their candidate and prepared him for victory amidst tension with the local elite whose candidate was rejected for a purported youthfulness and immaturity. This event instructs us on the inter-generational conflict that characterizes the national ruling party wherein youth access to higher positions (elective or not) is only limited to the support and backing they can or do receive from the 'old' above and not from genuine support from below. The old accept to grant their support only to those (including the youths) they are certain will remain loyal to them and from whom they can directly tap some form of benefit. The old can relinquish power only when after doing so they feel secured and this is when they have in positions those who can protect and safeguard their interest. Within the party, the old political guard allow for genuine candidate selection when they are certain potential winners are their trustee. Following from this, youth networking with party elite is then perceived as the most efficacious means to access positions. Within this scenario, the political and democratic talents of youths are submerged and replaced by struggles to extend and expand connections with the traditional party elite. From this perspective, primaries are seen as electoral cinematography and dramatology void of genuine and substantive democratic competition.

### *7.1. Explaining the Maneuvering Attitude of Traditional Elite*

In any group, organization or society as a whole, there are some influential members who are few in number. This category of influential members is called the elite. They are those who occupy the most powerful positions in the organizational structure and role distribution of a group, organization or society. The position they occupy enables them to transcend the ordinary milieu of men and women and the decisions they take or do not take have irreversible consequences.<sup>17</sup> Their power is not derived from who they are but from the institutional position they occupy. This institutional position has advantages in terms of wealth, prestige and power itself which are necessary resources for political dispensation. When I say that they are the most powerful, I also mean that they get things done, and make others do what they want them to do even if they do not want to do it. The strength of the 'power elite' is basically the ability to reward or to punish. In other words, people tend to obey the power elite because they either expect some form of reward or resent being punished.

A political party like any other societal organization has its own elite i.e. those who occupy sweeping positions and who take decisions that lead to immeasurable consequences. The national ruling CPDM is a party with various levels of power distribution that reflect a hierarchical order of elite position. Although there is power at every level of the party structure, the power is unevenly distributed. Some party elite have more powers than others. The decisions of some party elite have sweeping consequences while that of others are limited. The chairman of the party is considered the most powerful man and his decisions have sweeping consequences at every level. The Secretary General of the Central Committee is also powerful but his influence is limited to members of the committee he heads and local organs of the party. At the local level, precisely the Section constituency, there are members of the party who are not necessarily Section presidents but have more powers than Section presidents and have used the powers to exert influence in the candidate selection process. This is the case of Fon Angwafo III, the paramount Fon of Mankon.

Fon Angwafo III falls within the category of the traditional party elite. By traditional party elite, I refer to those elite who have a record history of occupying influential or decision making positions within a party. They have long served as influential members and are reluctantly willing to democratize. They rely on their (past) experience and longevity to believe that they have a leading and mentoring role to (still) play within the party. Their stock of experience and knowledge has institutionalized in them a habit of coaching and mentoring. They believe in their political maturity and think that they understand politics and its intricacies better than anyone else including the emerging elite. That is why

<sup>16</sup>

<sup>17</sup> MILLS, C. W., *The Power Elite*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1956, p.8.

they are sometimes in opposition with the emerging elite whom they believe are not right and ripe enough to stand for certain positions except for those they must have chosen to coach. To distinguish themselves from the 'others', they rely on the stock of accumulated functions and occupations within the party. They have a reputation of high and constant engagement and participation in party activities. As such they have constantly played specific roles in specific decisions and events. Because of the stock of experience, knowledge, functions and occupations accumulated overtime, a culture of political manoeuvring and influence was born in these elite. Political manoeuvring and influence have become a matter of sheer habit and this attitude was reflected in the candidate selection process.

### 7.2. Understanding the Political Attitude of Fon Angwafo III, Fon of Mankon

A Political attitude is considered to be a pattern of orientation towards politics.<sup>18</sup> There is no best way to understand the sweeping and interventionist role played by the Fon of Mankon if we do not investigate into who he is; the sources of his powers and his degree of influence in Mezam constituency and the party. The Fon of Mankon is of inestimable standing and reputation in Mankon and beyond, including the entire North West. He has established himself in his own position as First Class Paramount Fon of Mankon Kingdom and as First National Vice Chairman of the CPDM. These positions which he began holding as far back as 1954 when he became the Fon of Mankon have brought him wealth, prestige and power but also public opprobrium, disaffection and disapproval. Wealth, prestige and power are useful resources for political dispensation and survival. However, when accumulation becomes habit making, and thus difficult to overcome, the conservation of the wealth, power and prestige must necessarily pass through the consolidation of acquired institutional positions. In other words, where the Fon was unable to accumulate more power, prestige and wealth, he redeployed his energy to make sure his position was safe from attack. And to do that, he tried to position the right people at the right place and at the right time within his traditional, customary and political area of jurisdiction. He strongly believes he has sufficient education, intelligence and wisdom to make decisions based on what he honestly thinks is best for the Mankon community, the party and himself.

As a cultural group leader, the Fon of Mankon has the power to get the Mankon people, his cultural subjects, do or not do things and even if they do not want to do them. As traditional elite of the CPDM, he sometimes decided and presided over the political destiny of the party's "cadets" and in particular those who were his cultural subjects i.e. the Mankon CPDM officials and militants. Although he is no longer active at the Bamenda municipal council, where he pioneered the position of chairman for thirteen uninterrupted years, he remains an ex officio member of that council and his in-law, who later became the Government Delegate to the Bamenda Urban Council (BUC), was largely believed and perceived to be the Fon's protégée.<sup>19</sup> He was member of the House of Chiefs and resigned and became the first chief to be elected Member of Parliament (MP) in 1961.

The Fon has used his positions as traditional ruler and partisan politician to influence the candidate selection process. He reinvented tradition as an instrument to intimidate political adversaries. He threatened Matoya with excommunication from Mankon land if he does not comply with his instruction to support Abel Ndeh. Matoya was compelled to comply for fear of not being excommunicated. As Fon of Mankon, it is believed that Angwafo III has "natural right" over the entire Mankon land. He is believed to be owner of all land and can decide who can or cannot occupy land.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the sacred nature of his position as traditional ruler is a symbol of uncontested spiritual command, power and authority<sup>21</sup> that he exercises over his subjects. It is believed that disobedience and disrespect for the Fon tantamount to a curse of oneself and sometimes one's future generation. The fear of excommunication, of losing land and property and of a divine curse forced Matoya to accomplish the Fon's political desire. Within the party, the Fon is First National Vice President and this position also commands political respect and obedience.

The position of the Fon of Mankon assigned him the ultimate function of making decisions he considered relevant. Fon Angwafo III used his position to establish a hierarchy of values, to form the way of thinking of Mankon people and to determine the content of believe.

### 7.3. The Effects of the Electoral System

Elite maneuverings in the candidate selection process is also a consequence of the nature of the electoral system. The influence of the selection process on individuals' behaviour is greater under electoral systems that encourage personal vote seeking behaviour, than under electoral systems that encourage party centered behaviour. The CPDM has a political culture of encouraging individualistic politics rather than collaborative politics of the party. The nature of Institutional arrangements to a considerable extent does explain it. Institutions provide incentives and constraints. While some institutional arrangements encourage individuals to behave in a party-centered and unified manner, others encourage individuals to emphasize on personal reputation (Shomer, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Fon Angwafo III ruled the BUC from 1964-1968 when it was still known as the Mankon Urban Town Council under the Ministry of Local Government in Buea. When it became the Mankon Area Council, its chairman was still Fon Angwafo III who ruled from 1968-1972 and from 1972-1977, when it acquired the status of Mankon Rural Council.

<sup>20</sup> According to Goheen (1992), land remains a major symbol of wealth. The elite including traditional rulers have used their access to the State and their knowledge of new land ordinance to acquire access to the allocation of national land on individual basis. Land cannot be acquired without the approval of traditional rulers who are ex officio members (chairmen) of the land survey and distribution commission.

<sup>21</sup> His authority is enshrined in and legalised by *Kwi'fo*, the most powerful institution of Mankon. The chieftaincy position also confers on him the duties to preside over religious rituals, war council (*Nda-Ala*) council of Bukum and every important meetings (*Ngota*); to award titles to deserving persons for their 'outstanding performances' such as insignia like the red feather (*Nso ngu*) and others; he is the highest magistrate of the land and receives appeals on all cases except those of treasonable felony and murder; above all he is father of all Mankon and head of all regulatory societies of which he is a member.

In an open list proportional representation electoral system, a party might adopt a restrictive selection process whereby a single party leader decides who is allowed to represent the party (Shomer, 2016). One advantage of this system is that it encourages and better matches with one's constituency preferences and differentiates one from co-partisans. If candidates are to build reputations they do not share with other members of the party, they must, at least a good deal of the time, look like mavericks rather than loyalists. In a closed-list proportional representation system party leadership arguably exercise a strong control over candidate's probability of gaining re-election (Shomer, 2016).

The more inclusive the electorate and decentralize the process is, the greater the incentives for party elite to emphasize their personal reputation and break their party line. A personal reputation is achieved by enhancing one's own recognition, emphasizing his individuality and distinctiveness from his fellow co-partisan colleagues. A party reputation on the other hand is achieved by emphasizing the collective unified reputation of the party, and adhering to party leaders' wishes and interests. This will minimize positions and actions that conflict with the party's platform.

Intra-party candidate selection procedures (i.e. nominations) are the manner by which parties determine which candidates are going to be allowed to represent the party's banner on the ballot at the general elections (Shomer, 2016). Theory holds that in centralized selection processes, party cohesion is enhanced. Party leaders are given disciplinary tools with which to punish reluctant members, so that he or she defies the party's line and refuses to vote in accordance to the party leader's recommendation, party leaders may punish him in the next election by not allowing him to represent the party's banner. When candidates are selected by party leaders, they face the incentive to behave in a party-centered manner, accentuate their conformity with the party's ideological stances and emphasize their loyalty to their party in general and the party leaders, in particular (Shomer, 2016).

## 8. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to describe and explain the selection process during primaries and the political role of party elites during this process. Although party elite remain influential in selection of candidates during primaries, institutional factors also account for such political attitude. Using the example of the ruling CPDM in Mezam I constituency of the North West Region of Cameroon, and the conflict opposing two contesters, during the 2002 primaries, the intervention of a well known party elite in the process revealed cracks in the ruling party system. In this respect, parties are expected to attach great importance to the selection of their candidates by emphasizing on the democratic character of the process. This is even a political imperative given that primaries offer an incentive for parties to select the right and ripe people who will become a large part of the external image of the party in the sense that they will represent the party and talk in its name.

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