

## The Origins of the Last Nso'-Mum War of the 1880s: The Other Side of the Coin

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### ABSTRACT

The last Nso'-Mum War of the 1880s had both remote and immediate causes. The remote causes included: the inhuman treatment of a Nso' princess and royal wife of Mum, Yəəṅə', by the Mum; general Mum's hostility toward the Nso'; the problem of empire-building which inclined the Mum to uncautiously want to conquer and annex Nso'; the Nso'-Mum contest for the possession of certain borderlands; and Nsa'ṅgu's decision to solve his internal difficulties through the instrumentality of war. The immediate cause began with the death of Fon Tamanjo of Nso' which set in motion a chain of events of sorts that finally led to the outbreak of the war. There is no hard content to the already widely propagated view that Fon Nsa'ṅgu of Mum decided on a suicidal war in order to eliminate himself and his two half-brother-rivals, Milliom and Njikam, to secure the throne for his minor son, Njoya, or for any of his other descendants.

**Key words:** Nso', Mum, War, Western Grassfields, Cameroon

### RESUME

La dernière guerre entre les Nso' et les Mum des années 1880 avait eu des causes à la fois reculée et immédiates. Ces causes comprenaient: le traitement inhumain infligé par les Mum à une princesse et reine des Mum appelée Yəəṅə'; l'hostilité générale des Mum à l'égard des Nso'; le problème de la construction d'un empire qui incitait les Mum à chercher imprudemment à conquérir et à annexer les Nso'; le conflit des Nso' et des Mum pour la possession de certaines frontières; et la décision de Nsa'ṅgu de régler ses difficultés internes en se servant de la guerre. La cause immédiate avait commencé avec la mort du Fon Tamanjo des Nso' qui déclencha une série d'événements différents qui conduisirent finalement à l'éclatement de la guerre. L'opinion déjà largement répandue selon laquelle le Fon Nsa'ṅgu des Mum avait décidé d'une guerre suicidaire pour s'éliminer et ôter la vie à ses deux demi-frères rivaux, à savoir Milliom et Njikam, afin d'assurer le trône pour son fils cadet Njoya ou l'un quelconque des ses autres descendants, n'a aucune consistance.

**Mots clés:** Nso', Mum, Guerre, Hauts Plateaux de l'Ouest, Cameroon

## Introduction

The former Nso' *fondom* (kingdom), a composite polity of more than a dozen chiefdoms,<sup>1</sup> with an area of about 2,300 square kilometres, is today represented by Bui Division of the North West Province of Cameroon. Its population in 1953 was estimated at over 50,000 and in 1971 at 105,000. The national census of Cameroon put it at 142,015 in 1976 and at 189,361 in 1987. To its southeast lay the former *fondom* of Mum, a composite polity of about a dozen chiefdoms, with an area of about 8,000 square kilometres. It is today represented by Noun Division of the West Province of Cameroon. The national census of Cameroon put its population at 197,529 in 1976 and 258,016 in 1987 (Chem-Langhe'e' 1989:6-7; Tardits 1985:67).

These two kingdoms, whose founding dynasts are alleged to have been the siblings of the Fon (King) of Rifem or Kimi in present-day Ban'kim, were constantly at war with each other in the 19th century. The last of these wars, in which the Mum were soundly defeated and their Fon decapitated in battle, occurred in the 1880s.<sup>2</sup> But its causes so far have not been properly propounded. The purpose of this paper is to carry out this task and examine the view that one of the causes of the war, often presented as the main or the only cause, was the determination of Fon Nsa'ngu of Mum to destroy himself and his two half-brother-rivals in battle and so secure the throne for his minor son, Njoya, or for any of his other descendants.

## Remote Causes of the War

### a. The Treatment of Yeenə'

Anxious to avoid war and ensure peace with the Mum, an unnamed Fon of Nso' betrothed his daughter, Yeenə', to an unnamed Fon of Mum. He reasoned that their marriage would foster peace and friendship between him and the Fon of Mum. Since issues from that marriage would have both Nso' and Mum parents, there would be reciprocal sacrifices between him and the Fon of Mum on behalf of those children and this would consolidate peace and friendship. The Fon of Mum gladly accepted Yeenə' for a wife and had many children with her. But his subjects who were anxious for war with the Nso' for whatever reason gradually induced him to find fault with her as a prelude to such a war. He thus accused her of having contracted leprosy and, pretending to send her back to her parents, had her killed on

the Nso'-Mum frontier at Mbokam. Nso' hunters who had heard a woman screaming in Lamnso' (Nso' Language) as she was being killed came to the scene, found her corpse lying on the ground, buried her there and reported the matter to the Fon of Nso' (Interviews with: Mfoome Gham; Shuufaay Koongir; Shuufaay Sov; Fon of Nso', Səmbum III).<sup>3</sup>

This treatment of a Nso' princess gravely strained Nso'-Mum relations and led to the constant minor wars which prepared the ground for the major war of the 1880s between the two groups of people. This in itself might not have led to that war had it not been for the other reinforcing factors, one of which was the general hostility of the Mum toward the Nso'.

### b. General Hostility of the Mum toward the Nso'

In the Central Grassfields of pre-colonial Cameroon, in which the Nso' and Mum Kingdoms were located, neighbouring polities, polities with complementary products, or polities sharing a common trade route or involved in common commercial activities usually had friendly or hostile diplomatic or trade relations between them. For example, Bali Nyonga had friendly diplomatic and trade relations with Babessong and with Babungo. Bum was in intermittent hostility with Kom but had pacts of friendship with Nso' and Ndu, who were hostile to each other for the most part. Nso' was in friendship with Bali Kumbad and Bambalang but not in alliance with them. She was however in alliance with Kom who was competing with Bafut for the allegiance of neighbouring tiny village chiefdoms (Chilver and Kaberry 1967:127-8).

Friendly diplomatic and trade relations in the region involved, among other things, mutual exchange of gifts, wives and royal pages, the return of runaway wives and slaves, and reciprocal royal mortuary embassies, the absence of which suggested indifference or inclination toward hostility to each other between those concerned. They also required that the nationals of those concerned be treated in each other's territory hospitably, the reverse of which was a sign of hostility. Furthermore, the person of diplomatic envoys, diplomatic bags and diplomatic gifts in whatever form were sacrosanct, the violation of which denoted hostile relations between those concerned (Nkwi 1983:106-13).

It is within this background that the Fon of Nso' betrothed his daughter to the Fon of Mum and his successors made it their duty to arrest and repatriate rebel Mum princes and runaway wives and slaves found in Nso'. It is also within this context that Mum traders were usually treated hospitably in Nso'. But the Mum did not respond in like manner. We have already indicated how Yeena' was treated. Nso' wives and slaves who escaped to Mum were either retained, sold into slavery, or murdered. Nso' traders in Mum were sometimes seized and sold into slavery by their Mum debtors. Nso' royal envoys, including those who bore emblems of a peace mission, were often murdered or maimed in Mum in the most barbaric manner (Jeffreys 1946:57, 58, 59, 60; Koelle 1954:21; Nkwi and Warnier 1982:135-6; Mzeka 1990:70; Interviews with: Jacob Sa'nguv; Sombum III; Shuufaay Koongir; Shuufaay Sov).

This treatment of Nso' nationals in Mum further strained Nso'-Mum relations and not only increased the frequency of minor wars between the two groups but also made a major confrontation between them, such as that of the 1880s, almost unavoidable. This was particularly so because they were both engaged in empire-building at the same time.

### c. The Problem of Empire-Building

In the 19th century, some polities in the region were engaged in empire-building. Notable examples of such polities were Bafut, Kom, Mum and Nso'. At first, these kingdoms increased their strength by acquiring allies who eventually became virtual integral parts of their more powerful allies. Reinforced by immigrant groups of persons or individuals from other polities, or by fugitives from other areas escaping slave raids, they felt strong enough to embark on the conquest and annexation of weaker neighbours.

It was thus that the Nso' embarked on a systematic conquest and annexation of Ijkar to the south and the Nooni village chiefdoms to the west. Before taking this step, however, they entered into an alliance with the powerful kingdom of Kom to the west of the Nooni villages and endeavoured to avoid the invasion of the powerful kingdom of Mum to the southeast of Ijkar. Their attempts to subdue the Wimbun chiefdoms to the north met with stiff resistance and were finally halted by the

new conquerors of the region, the Germans. Like the Nso', the Mum also embarked on a systematic conquest and incorporation of their weaker neighbours. But unlike the Nso', who were at pains not to antagonize their powerful neighbours and indeed sought alliance or peace and friendship with them, the Mum felt strong enough to challenge their northern powerful neighbours, the Nso', whom they invaded and raided many times. Although the invasions and raids were easily repulsed, they prepared the way for a more serious confrontation between the Nso' and the Mum, particularly as both parties were involved in serious boundary disputes (Chem-Langhe'e' 1989:6-7; Nkwi and Warnier 1982:134-6; Mzeka 1990:61-3, 69-72, 76-87; Tardits 1985:67).

### d. Disputed Borderlands

There were certain borderlands between Nso' and Mum whose ownership was in dispute. These were the fertile, hunting lowlands of Mbokam, Mbo'kighvəm and Kiyuɔndzən.<sup>4</sup> These areas housed, among other much-desired animals, buffaloes, elephants, leopards, lions and tigers. Having passed through these areas and having sojourned at Mbokam for quite some time before continuing their migratory journey from Rifəm to Kɔvviɔm, their ancient capital, the Nso' staked their claim to these areas. Likewise, the Mum who had established a settlement at Mbokam, after the Nso' had departed from there to Kɔvviɔm, began to lay claim to the same areas. This claim and counterclaim led to numerous border clashes which prepared the ground for an explosion which some incident might bring to the flashpoint. This incident was provided by the decision of the Fon of Nso', Sombum II (d.1907), to attack, sack and loot the Mum settlement at Mbokam at the time Fon Nsa'ngu of Mum was eager to use war to solve his internal problems (Jeffreys 1946:57, 58-9; Nkwi and Warnier 1982:135-6; Mzeka 1990:69-70).

### e. Nsa'ngu's Desire for War

Prince Nsa'ngu, son of a Mum princess, successfully escaped the hand of death of Fon Ijguwuo, the slave-usurper who had embarked on the elimination of the male members of the royal house of Mum in order to secure his position. After that, he led a successful insurrection that ended in the death of the usurper, and was installed Fon of Mum. But he had to contend with the opposition of the followers and supporters of Ijguwuo. Moreover, at

least two of his half-brothers, Milliom and Njikam (Ndam in other sources), with the support of their mother, who was also Nsa'nggu's mother, thought they could make a better Fon than he and thus began to plot against him. Worse still, when he was wounded almost fatally during an invasion of a weaker neighbour, Milliom, it was alleged, began to have affairs with some of his wives. His attempts to eliminate Milliom failed and he came to the conclusion that a successful war, particularly one with a powerful neighbour, would be the panacea for all his internal problems: it would increase his popularity as ruler to the detriment of Nguwuo's followers and supporters and destroy the machinations of his half-brothers. The opportunity for such a war came when, in an effort to use war to revenge all Nso' grievances against the Mum after Nsa'nggu refused to repatriate the runaway royal wives of Nso', Sombum II attacked, sacked and looted the Mum settlement at Mbokam, the last incident connected with the death of Tamanjo which sparked the war (Jeffreys 1946:57, 58; Njoya 1952:33 microfilm; Mzeka 1990:69-70).

#### Immediate Cause of the War

When Fon Tamanjo of Nso' died in the second half of the 19th century, some of his wives and Nso' slaves of Mum origin escaped to Mum for fear that they would be required to commit suicide or would be hanged as would have been the case in Mum.<sup>5</sup> His son and successor, Sombum II, a man with a knack for war and warfare and with a determination to put his word into action, sent two emissaries to Nsa'nggu to request the return of the runaway royal wives. Nsa'nggu, who was eager for war with Nso', instead killed one of the heralds, and cut off the hand of the other and sent him home to tell the story. Furious at this act, Sombum II decided that war would have to settle all the outstanding problems between Nso' and Mum.

But, before embarking on such a war, he had to complete the task begun and bequeathed to him by his father, namely, the conquest and annexation of Din, the last Nooni village still outside the Nso' orbit (Mzeka 1990:70). To this effect, he arranged with the Fon of Kom to have Nso' forces pass through Kom to invade Din from the rear. This they did during the night and by dawn the Din, who were expecting an attack from the opposite direction, had been overwhelmed and an-

nexed. Thereafter, he reorganized and prepared his forces for the pending encounter with the Mum.

This was not long in coming. Before Din was subdued, one of his wives, who had been having secret affairs with a Tsəndzəv slave of Mum origin, had eloped with her lover to Mum. As soon as he completed his preparations for war he again sent two envoys to Nsa'nggu to recover his estranged wife and her lover. This time, Nsa'nggu pretended to grant the request, but had the royal wife, her child and one of the heralds killed at the boundary. The arm of the other herald was cut off and he was again sent home to tell the story, while the slave was retained. Sombum II now had good reason to attack the Mum settlement at Mbokam, which incident also gave the war-anxious Nsa'nggu the excuse to invade Nso'. Thus began the last Nso'-Mum War of the 1880s (Jeffreys 1946:57, 58; Njoya 1952:33 microfilm; Mzeka 1990:69-70; Interviews with: Jacob Sa'nguv; Shuufaay Koongir; Shuufaay Sov; Shuufaay Taankum).

#### Conclusion

The last Nso'-Mum War of the 1880s had both remote and immediate causes. The remote causes included: the inhuman treatment of a Nso' princess and royal wife of Mum, Yeəno', by the Mum; general Mum hostility toward the Nso'; the problem of empire-building which inclined the Mum to uncautiously want to conquer and annex Nso'; the Nso'-Mum contest for the possession of certain borderlands; and Nsa'nggu's decision to solve his internal difficulties through the instrumentality of war. The immediate cause began with the death of Fon Tamanjo of Nso' which set in motion a chain of events of sorts that finally led to the outbreak of the war. In the discussion of these issues above there is no suggestion or indication that Nsa'nggu decided on a suicidal war in order to eliminate himself and his two half-brother-riivals, Milliom and Njikam, and thus secure the throne for his minor son, Njoya, or for any of his other descendants. Yet some informants and authors have sought to make this view look like a historical fact. Examples abound.

According to the informants of Reverend Henri Martin,

Nsa'nggu feeling himself to be the object of the implacable hate of his brothers, hesitated at dying outside the palace. The three

brothers also sought the same woman, Njapu. Nsa'ngu declared war on Nso'. Before the battle he called his children together at Ɔkugangu to tell them, 'I go to meet a certain death but with the satisfaction of leaving behind a number of descendants (Tardits 1980:196).<sup>6</sup>

This suggests that Nsa'ngu contemplated dying and was certain he would die in battle but was satisfied that he would leave behind descendants who would continue his line, although he did not name the successor.

A similar but more elaborate view was expressed by Sultan Seidou Njimoluh Njoya, grandson of Nsa'ngu and son and successor of Fon Njoya, to Tardits during his fieldwork in 1960 and 1961. According to him,

The King [Nsa'ngu] decided that an end must be put to it [his problem with his brothers] and that they [he and his brother-rivals] would all go and die at Banso, and he opposed his mother who loved Milliom. They prepared for war against Banso and left. The first evening they camped at Matapit. They had brought *mbansie* [royal war dance] with them. The great noblemen all knew that they would not return from the war and had their children with them. When they stopped at Matapit it was the children who did the war dance, not the warriors. To those who wondered at this scene it was replied, 'These are they who are going to run the country.' All the great nobles designated their heirs. That night, Nsa'ngu left Matapit to see the queen [his mother] and say farewell. She could not understand why he had come to do this and said, 'It is another of Nsa'ngu's madness.' He wanted to warn her that neither he nor those she preferred to him [his two half-brother-rivals] would return. An old man called Nji Moku said to her, 'You should listen to what Nsa'ngu says' (ibid.).

As Tardits (ibid.) has remarked, "This version of events shows the desire of the King to leave the throne to a son while leading his brothers to death at the same time as himself," a view which Tardits' other informants—Nji Məwo, Nji Yanguo and Nji Nsanze—identified as contemporaries of the event confirmed (ibid.).

But the son or descendant for whom Nsa'ngu's suicidal expedition was intended to secure the

throne was not named. It was left for Nkwi and Warnier (1982:136), perhaps taking their cue from Wuhrmann (1917:36), to provide the name: "This suicidal expedition [of Nsa'ngu into Nso'] was primarily to eliminate Milliom and Ndam [our Njikam] and secure Nsa'ngu's succession by Njoya, his son," a statement which Mzeka (1990:70) later incorporated into his own work approvingly.

We find it difficult to accept this view. For one thing, it was by no means certain that Nsa'ngu's half-brother-rivals, Milliom and Njikam, would of course perish during the war or that they had the same determination or desire as that of Nsa'ngu to die in battle: the Nso' could surrender or be defeated while Nsa'ngu, Milliom and Njikam were all still alive or at least one of them was; and, either one or both of Milliom and Njikam could abandon the war and return home, perhaps to make himself Fon if Nsa'ngu had been killed in battle. For another, war was not the only or the best means, given its cost in all aspects, by which Nsa'ngu could eliminate his troublesome half-brothers, although it is alleged that attempts to kill Milliom had failed. For yet another there was no guarantee that war would eliminate all the non-troublesome brothers of Nsa'ngu, who might change their mind, and possible usurpers. The suggestion here is that one of Nsa'ngu's non-troublesome, surviving brothers who might not have been interested in the throne as long as Nsa'ngu lived could develop an appetite for it on his death or that another usurper, as had happened in the past, could crop up.

Indeed, the succession of Njoya, after the death of Nsa'ngu and his two troublesome half-brothers, was not as smooth as this view would have us believe. This is what Anna Wuhrmann (1917:36-7)<sup>7</sup> has to say about it.

Nsa'ngu was still a youngish man when he fell in battle and had only given passing thought to his successor. Before departing for these unlucky days he had specified that in the event of his death in battle his little boy Njoya should succeed. Njoya's mother, a favourite wife, was herself of noble birth. [Then follows a description of the efforts of Njabnduke, Njoya's mother, to carry out Nsa'ngu's wishes and the jealousy of other wives]. There arose, as often in Bamum, a bloody civil war which lasted a long time

and only ended when Njoya's claim [to the throne] was recognised. Then his mother ruled on behalf of her minor son and her hand lay hard on the land [until Njoya came of age to take over, although his mother remained on his side]. In the very first years of his independent rule one of the 'king's fathers' (*titamfon*) rose against him and a great civil war broke out. This war lasted two years and was finally decided in the young king's favour when the Banyo came to the help of the beleaguered remnant of loyal fighters. Revenge followed in a gruesome and thoroughly pagan manner.

There was thus no guarantee that Njoya would of cause become the next Fon of Mum after the death of Nsa'ngu and his two half-brother-rivals in battle as the view in question would have us believe.

We are therefore more comfortable with the views individually expressed by Wurhmann and Sultan Ibrahim Njoya, son and successor of Nsa'ngu. According to Wurhmann, as we have seen above, Nsa'ngu "had only given passing thought to his successor," and, before departing for war, "had specified that in the event of his death in battle his little boy Njoya should succeed." Nsa'ngu had not thus decisively made up his mind as to who would be his successor. Moreover, any person determined to die in battle would no longer condition his will with the phrase, "in the event of my death in battle." This phrase suggests that he was not sure he would or was willing to die in battle, and there was no guarantee that if he survived he would not change his mind about his successor, an issue to which he had only given passing thought.

According to Njoya, when Nsa'ngu was installed Fon, "there was plotting against him by some of his half-brothers [and] he decided to lead the Bamum to battle to see if a successful war would not make him a popular ruler and so defeat the machinations of his half-brothers" (Jeffreys 1946:57). It was thus the desire to gain popularity as a ruler in order to destroy the machinations of his half-brothers that led Nsa'ngu to war with the Nso' in the 1880s. The view that he embarked on that war in order to eliminate himself and his two half-brothers and so secure the throne for his minor son Njoya is to us little more than a post-mortem rationalization of the sonorous defeat the Mum suffered in the hands of the Nso' in the

course of that war.

## APPENDIX

### Other Versions of the Treatment of Yeena'

According to Shuufaay Koongir (Interview), the Nso' betrothed Yeena', the forebear of all the Mum, to the Fon of Mum with whom she had many children. When she was ill, her husband neglected and abandoned her at Mbokam where she died and was buried by the Nso'. Since the Mum did not bury her, they were visited by *njonsay* (abomination of the earth) and they began to die in great numbers. Faced with these deaths, the Mum searched in vain for the grave of Yeena' on which to atone for their wrongs and thus halt the deaths. As they did not discover the whereabouts of the grave, they continued to die as before. This forced them to approach the Nso' for information about the grave. Since the Nso' would not give them that information, they continued to die as usual. Consequently, the Fon of Mum decided on war against the Nso' who were anxious to be at peace with the Mum. Thus, when Fon Səmbum II of Nso' sent heralds to Mum to recover one of his father's wives who had eloped with a slave of Tsəngkar (the lineage of which Tsəndzəv is a sublineage in Nso') on his father's death, the Mum killed them. He again sent a second set of emissaries for the same purpose. This time, the Fon of Mum not only killed them but also used the skin and arm of one of them to make a drum and a drum stick. Greatly angered by all this, Səmbum II informed the Fon of Mum that he would capture an equivalent number of Mum to replace the Nso' he had killed. Thenceforth, whenever the Nso' were about to embark on a war against the Mum or were fighting them, they would invoke Yeena' to *koo foo ver* (catch the enemy for us, that is, intervene in our favour).

According to Shuufaay Sov (Interview), the Fon of Nso' gave his daughter, Yeena', in marriage to the Fon of Mum. During the time of Fon Tamanjo, one of the royal wives of Nso' escaped and became wife to the Fon of Mum. Thereafter, the Fon of Nso' sent two emissaries to Mum to find out if the Mum had seen his runaway wife. At the same time, Yeena' asked her husband whether it was possible for her and her mother (the runaway royal wife of Nso') to be wives to the same person. Angered by this question, the Fon of Mum sent Yeena' away. On her way to Nso', she was attacked and killed by the Mum at the Nso'-Mum boundary. Nso' hunters, who had

heard a woman screaming in Lamnso', went to the scene, saw her corpse lying on the ground and buried it there in a grave on which the Nso' thenceforth continued to perform sacrifices. After the burial of Yeena', the Fon of Nso' sent two envoys to Mum to protest the treatment of Yeena' and to again request the return of his runaway wife. This time, the Fon of Mum killed one of the heralds and peeled off his skin to make a drum with it. The other, he cut off his right hand and sent him back to Nso' with the message: "See what I have done." The Fon of Nso' was furious at this treatment of *ntum se Fon* (royal envoys, also royal messages) who should not only be sacrosanct but also bore the symbol of peace, the *kikéy* plant, and, when he also considered that his wife and daughter had been killed by the Mum, war started.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In the conception of the peoples of the North West Province of Cameroon, a *fondom*, usually composite in nature, is larger and more powerful than a chiefdom, a notion now widely accepted in Cameroon though resented by chiefs and their subjects.

<sup>2</sup>The exact date of this war is not yet certain. Dugast and Jeffreys (1950:1) put the date at a little earlier than 1880. In a later paper, Jeffreys (1962:112) rejected an earlier date of 1888 which he said he had established (and which we have not seen in the source to which he directed his readers) in favour of 1892. In reaction to this Jeffreys' new date, Kaberry (1962:140) argued that her own evidence "tended to confirm Dr. Jeffreys's dating for Nsaangu's death as occurring at least between 1882 and 1889, rather than at a later date (1898) reported in German official accounts," and that there was a "convergence of evidence for dating it between 1885 and 1889." Nkwi and Warnier (1982:136) later dated it at about 1885-88. Mzeka (1990:71) put it recently at about 1886. More recently, however, Njiasse Njoya (1994:9) has put it at between 1885 and 1887. For the various versions of the rise and evolution of this war, which are beyond the scope of this article, see B. Chem-Langheé and Ngum J. Lemven, "Nsa'ngu's Head: The Mythification of the Past in the Search for Importance, Identity and Excuses or Cover-ups," *Journal of the Cameroon Academy of Sciences* 1 and 2 (September 2001):62-8.

<sup>3</sup> These and other interviews indicated in this paper were conducted by P.M. Kaberry and E.M. Chilver during their 1958, 1960 and 1963 fieldwork and generously placed at our disposal by the latter in conformity with the express views of the late former. We are very grateful to them for this precious gift. It should be noted, however, that this version is conflated from the individual convincing ideas expressed by the informants indicated, although it relies more heavily on the ideas put forward by Mfoome Gham and Səmbum III. For the other versions, see appendix. It should also be noted that when Yeena' was buried, the Nso' performed and continued to perform sacrifices on her grave to invoke her intervention in their favour whenever they were to embark on war against the Mum or on a royal hunting expedition at Mbokam or Mbo'kighvəm. Furthermore, it should be noted that the steepest hill overlooking the Mbokam plain along the motorway from Jakiri to Mbokam is called "Gwan Yeena'" (Yeena' Hill, also Hill of Yeena') in memory of Yeena', her grave and the circumstances surrounding

her death.

<sup>4</sup> After the decisive defeat of the Mum in the war of the 1880s, these borderlands became indisputably part of Nso'. But the German decision to use the stream to the west of Kiyuṅdzən as the Nso'-Mum boundary in that area rather than the one to its east, which was the real boundary, made Kiyuṅdzən part of Mum. The Fon of Mbiame, an important Fon in Nso', who saw in the move great territorial losses for Nso', protested vigorously against it in vain to the Fon of Nso', Ŋga' Bi'fon I (1910-47), who had had more than enough problems with the Germans to want more. For one thing, resistance to German designs in 1906 by his full brother, Fon Səmbum II, had cost the Nso' thousands of lives in six months, an experience he did not want to share. Nor did he want to share the experience of that same brother whose death in 1907 the Nso' had associated, rightly or wrongly, with German machinations. For another, he had just recently lost a half-brother predecessor, Fon Mapiri (1907-10), and did not want to inflict the Nso' with another royal death with its onerous celebrations. These considerations made him very cautious in his dealings with the colonial administrations. By 1945, he was already so gaga that Kaberry found him "not sufficiently strong in character to take a decisive action and settle a dispute which [was] prejudicial to the interests of the whole country" (Mzeka 1980:40, n 46). These considerations and the period of Ŋga' Bi'fon I's life involved in Kaberry's 1945 statement seem to have been lost to Mzeka (1980:40) who, in order to make the uncertain point that Ŋga' Bi'fon I missed becoming Fon on the death of his father, Tamanjo, because of his character, misleadingly described him as "weak and reticent [in] nature."

<sup>5</sup> Before the time of Njoya, and also for many years during his reign, the death of an important personality in Mum was customarily an occasion for his or her subordinate and servile dependents of any sex to commit suicide voluntarily in anguish at the event, failing which they were hanged. The death of the Fon or of a close relative who, by definition, had numerous subordinate and servile dependents thus engendered mass suicide and rampant clubbing to death of innocent persons and bystanders. Not aware that this was not the custom in Nso', the royal wives and Nso' slaves of Mum origin ran for dear life when Fon Tamanjo died.

<sup>6</sup> Quotations from this source were translated and made available to us by E.M. Chilver, to whom we are very grateful.

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### B. Oral Sources

These very old or elderly knowledgeable or strategically well-placed Nso' informants were interviewed by Phyllis M. Kaberry and Elizabeth M. Chilver in 1958, 1960 and 1963. They are presented here in their alphabetical order.

Mfoome Gham (Ibrahim Bamnjo). Fon's personal page and Commander-in-Chief of the Gham (Northern) Sector of the military establishment of Nso'.

Sa'nguv, Jacob. Graduated page of *ɲweron* (the regulatory society with powers to enforce state decisions and rules) and leader of *ɲkiy* (the military lodge in Nso' charged with intelligence service).

Səmbum III. Son and successor of Fon Səmbum II of Nso', who, as a boy of below fighting age, is said to have accompanied his father to view the war from a hilltop at Yer, about ten kilometres from Kimbo', the capital, and to have been present when Nsa'nggu's skull was handed over to the Germans in 1906.

Shuufaay Koongir. A great lord of death or of sacrifice and thus priest of the royal burial charged with reconciliatory functions and mortuary embassies.

Shuufaay Sov. A great lord and state councillor whose lineage member is said to have decapitated Nsa'nggu in battle, and whose predecessor is said to have been decorated and promoted to the rank of state councillor as reward for the decapitation of Nsa'nggu.

Shuufaay Taangum. The second in protocol among the ten leading great lords and state councillors of Nso'.

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