

## ON “AUTOCHTHON” AND “ALLOCHTHON” DIVIDE: ETHNIC STEREOTYPES AND SOCIAL CONFLICT IN CAMEROON

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**ABSTRACT** In Cameroon as elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s, the re-institution of multi-party politics gave renewed impetus to the antagonism between so-called “autochthons” and “allochthons”, and led to an awakening of ethnic stereotypes. Inevitably, these new developments resulted in flexible and violent social conflict. Major clashes occurred between the ‘Arab Choa’ and the ‘Kotoko’, the ‘Beti’ and the ‘Bamileke’, and the ‘Fulani’ and the ‘Kirdi’. The first two instances of conflict are based on ethnic differences while the third represents a religious cleavage involving Islam versus paganism and/or Christianity. Beyond these primary divisions, ethnic or group disparities in access to, or control over resources appear to serve as the common denominator in all episodes of conflict, whether historic or recent, and whether psychologically experienced or manifest in the form of non-violent or violent confrontations. In this paper, I rely on data collected from the 1990s onward, a review of the pertinent literature, and my own daily observations of political developments, to map out some of the informal mechanisms or agreements that were—and continue to be—established as a way to resolve ethnic identity-based social conflict, with the primary goal of creating peace within communities or among members of different communities. Some of these local solutions include the *land dowry* practice and joking about ethnic stereotypes.

**Key Words:** Autochthons; Allochthons; Ethnic stereotypes; Belonging; Conflict; Cameroon.

### INTRODUCTION

Beginning from the 1990s, Cameroon’s transition from a single political party system to multi-party politics, has been marred by social and ethnic exclusion. The focus here is not only on political developments during the 1990s but also on earlier political developments in this country that may help us understand the present situation. Several factors account for the sudden upsurge of social and ethnic tension in major cities such as Yaounde, Bamenda, Bafoussam, Kousseri and Douala. These factors include the multiethnic composition of urban populations, unequal access to political, administrative and economic resources, and the role of newly created political parties, religious groups, and cultural and civil organizations.

In contrast with prevalent ideas that posit a direct link between the establishment of a multi-party system in the 1990s and the outbreak of ethnic conflict, I question in this article the directness of this relationship arguing instead that the transition from a one-party to a multi-party system was merely one ingredient that fertilized existing ethnic antagonisms that were previously dormant or more or less veiled. The democratic transition was, therefore, a pretext for inter-ethnic conflict that had been waiting for an opportunity to break out. This article is struc-

tured around the political developments in Cameroon since 1990, the re-institution of multi-party politics, the origins and characteristics of ethnic conflict in that country, debates regarding the notion of belonging, the construction of stereotypes and the ideology of belonging and, finally, theoretical discussions regarding ethnicity and politics in Cameroon.

## POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN CAMEROON DURING THE 1990s

After multi-party politics was officially launched on December 19, 1990, the number of political parties vastly soared from one political party prior to 1990 to more than 149 in 1997. In addition to political parties, various “apolitical” associations also saw the light of the day. Despite their label, almost all of these associations were deeply involved in political debates at local, regional and national levels. Perfect cases in point include cultural associations promoting the traditional values of the main ethnic groups. Famous among them are *Laakam* for the Bamileke, *Essingan* for the Beti, and *Ngondo* for the coastal Sawa people (primarily Duala and Bakweri).

This proliferation of cultural, civil and political associations may be seen by some observers as proof of the vitality of democracy in Cameroon. However, a serious concern with the various political parties is that most of them, including the major ones, have clear ethnic affiliations. This is worrisome because of the vast ethnic diversity found in this country, with more than 200 identified ethnic groups. The major groups are the Bamileke from the western grassfield area, the Beti, Boulou and Bassa from the southern forest area, the Sawa and the Bakoko from the coastal area, and the Pullo, Choa Arabs, Kotoko, Kirdi and others from the northern part of Cameroon.

Political activity in the southern and western parts of Cameroon is increasingly dominated by rivalry between the ruling party, the CPDM (Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement) and the Social Democratic Front (SDF), the leading opposition party. The CPDM—whose founding father, Paul Biya, is of Beti origin—is strongly associated with the Beti of the southern forest area. The SDF, in turn, is mainly supported by people of the grassfields and thus represents primarily Anglophones of the North-West Region as well as French-speaking Bamileke of the West Region, the region from which the founder of the Social Democratic Front (SDF), Ni John Fru Ndi, originates. In contrast, Bello Bouba Maigari, the founder of the opposition party called National Union for Democracy and Progress (NUDP), hails from the northern part of Cameroon.

The rapid ethnicization of politics is one of the most worrisome aspects of recent political developments. The increasingly open emphasis on ethnicity in politics has led to the unfortunate exclusion of other ethnic groups—not only at the local and regional levels but also at the national level—. As Schilder and Binbersgen (1993: 10) conclude, “The recent upsurge of ethnic tensions in Cameroon in the wave of multiparty system illustrates that ethnic identification

has remained an implicit but major concern of the national elite”.

Thus, one major consequence of democratization has been the crystallization of ethnic tensions (Champaud, 1991; Collectif Changer le Cameroun, 1992; Conac, 1993; Tiokou Ndonko, 1993; Sindjoun, 1996). But the recent upsurge of ethnic conflicts in the 1990s cannot be blamed solely on the re-introduction of multi-party politics. On the one hand, the tribal basis on which new political parties have enlisted their followers does indeed seem to have created the conditions for ethnic tensions. On the other hand, most tribesmen who identify with a particular political party tend to register en masse with that party. Moreover, they consider this political party as belonging to them, as their tool for accessing State power. In this context, each ethnic group identifies with a given political party, setting the group, and its party in opposition to other parties. This climate of competition between “our party” and “their party” has rekindled ethnic tensions, especially in urban settings such as Yaounde.

In Yaounde, “over the past years, the opposition between the West (Bamileke, Grassfields) and the Centre-South (Beti) often marks political debates. And the construction of this opposition is dominated by blinded but tenacious notions on the different forms of access to state power or trade by these groups” (Geschiere & Konings, 1993: 10). Indeed, since the onset of multi-party politics in 1990, Yaounde has become the site of fierce ethnic battles between the Beti and the Bamileke. This tension was created and fuelled through the dissemination of stereotypes aimed at instilling feelings of hatred, anger, and envy (Collectif Changer le Cameroun, 1992). In short, a major aspect of the political developments in Yaounde is the sudden emergence of debates about “belonging” and of references to historical stereotypes of the Bamileke and the Beti.

Who are the Beti and the Bamileke? What are their origins, and the specific features that distinguish one group from the other? Below is a short overview based on recent academic literature.

## ORIGINS AND SPECIFIC CULTURAL FEATURES OF ETHNIC GROUPS IN CONFLICT

### I. The Bamileke ethnic group

The Bamileke ethnic group belongs to the semi-Bantu cultural area of Central Africa. The name “Bamileke” appears to have emerged in colonial times. It is probably a distortion introduced by the Germans, the first colonial rulers, of an expression used by their coastal interpreters to refer to the “people of the mountains” in West Cameroon. Before German colonization, Bamileke territory comprised the present-day West and North-West Regions of Cameroon. Under German colonial rule, which lasted until 1916, this part of Cameroon was referred to as the “Grasslands”. When the French and British colonial masters took over the German colonial positions in Cameroon after Germany’s defeat in World

War I (1914–1919), they divided the Grasslands into two parts, one of which was under French direct rule, while the other was under British indirect rule. In the literature of that period, the term “Bamileke” is still used to refer to peoples from both of these, now divided, regions (Dugast, 1949). But when Cameroon became independent in 1960, the term “Bamileke” gradually came to be applied only to the people of the North-West, whereas people of the South-West (another province under British colonial rule) became known as the “Anglo-phones” because they were colonized by the British and, therefore, adopted the English language. In the literature of this period (cf. Hurault, 1962; Dongmo, 1981), right up to the 1980s, there is a tendency to consider only those from the French-speaking province of the highlands of West Cameroon as Bamileke. During the 1970s and 1980s (and even more recently), some authors (Warnier, 1985; 1993) used the term ‘Bamenda’ to refer to people from the North-West Province.

In recent years, the term “Anglo-Bamileke” has emerged during political debates, and is currently used by politicians and social scientists alike (Sindjoun, 1996; Nkwi & Socpa, 1997). This term is a cultural, linguistic, political and economic hybrid; it represents a political reality constructed by political actors for the purpose of integration or as a strategy to exclude people originating from West Cameroon. In short, the evolution and varying uses of the terms “Bamileke,” “Bamenda,” “Anglophone” and “Anglo-Bamileke” are closely linked to political developments in Cameroon from independence to the present time.

According to the literature, Bamileke social structure is hierarchical (Delarozière, 1949; Tardits, 1960; Hurault, 1962; Dongmo, 1981; Warnier, 1993). Tribal groups are headed by chiefs (*fon*), who are assisted by sub-chiefs and servants (*matchinda*). The chief reigns over all the land, human beings, animals and goods found in his territory of command. The economic behavior of the Bamileke has been characterized as demonstrating an “enterprising spirit” (Warnier, 1993: 49) as well as “dynamism” (Dongmo, 1981).

## II. The Beti ethnic group

The Beti ethnic group belongs to the Bantu cultural area in Central Africa. The name “Beti” is a generic term referring to people from several tribes including the Ewondo, Mbane (or Bane), Eton, Manguisa, Mvele and Bulu. The Beti people come from the central and southern Regions of Cameroon, which correspond to the equatorial forest areas. Historically, the term “Beti” originated within the Ewondo tribal group. According to Nekes (1911), the real indigenous peoples or “autochtons” of Yaounde (i.e., Ewondo) used the term “Beti” to “refer to people and things of the same cultural order as theirs.” Nekes (1911) and Laburthe-Tolra (1981) agree on the fact that the Beti people define themselves as lords or respectable people, in short, as *gentlemen* (*nti*) as opposed to slaves (*halo*). One example of how this ethnic appellation has been used as a political and ideological instrument can be found in a letter written by André Marie

Mbida to the French administration in 1956, in which he asserts:

“the name Beti signifies lords, masters... The Beti population that constitutes the political grouping of my electoral district are of the free lords race, nobles, loyal men, frank, courageous, unshakeable, determined, energetic and with an indomitable character, without fear and reproach” (La Presse du Cameroun, October 1956: 29).

Over time, the label “Beti” came to be more broadly defined, identifying linguistic, cultural and geographical similarities that appear to be part of what Laburthe-Tolra (1981: 49) calls “African mutual cultural knowledge... Beti unity is cultural, perhaps this unity has no other sense.” This characteristic is not limited to the Ewondo tribal group, but also applies to other tribal groups within the same cultural area. Because of this process of ethnic gathering and naturalizing, “an apparently ethnic appellation can have geographical and linguistic meaning rather than merely clannish significance” (Laburthe-Tolra, 1981: 45), with the practice of adopting ethnic names extending even to whites residing in the country. German colonial administration played an important role in extending and adopting the Ewondo language as a means of communication for all the people of the region.

This strategy of rallying a large number of tribal groups around one politico-ethnic pole under the Beti name is definitely inflated today by the political usage of this name and by its imaginary construction as an “ethnic complex” with a mixed sociological composition (Nlep, 1986: 215). The Beti name thus serves as an umbrella term for a wide array of ethnic groups from the Southern Forest Area. In the 1970s, the Beti umbrella name came to be applied not only to the Ewondo and the Eton, whose homelands are in the vicinity of Yaounde, but also to groups such as the Bulu, the Manguissa, the Fang and the Mvele (Neba, 1987). These groups come from far away but, nevertheless, consider themselves as the “autochthons” (or natives) of Yaounde, in contrast to the “strangers”—the “allochthons” or non-natives from the West and the North-West.

Beti social structure is generally presented as segmented (Quinn, 1973: 132–165; Laburthe-Tolra, 1981: 356; Joseph, 1986: 31). This means that the Beti are acephalous communities (i.e., societies without chiefs). According to several authors, including those cited above, the economic behavior of the Beti is characterized as demonstrating a weak spirit of enterprise. In fact, the groups of people now subsumed under the Beti name have been less than successful in commercial pursuits, supposedly because even in their own region, economic activity has been concentrated in the hands of Bamileke immigrants. Rather than engaging in commerce, the elite from the Beti group have, since colonial times, established careers in the civil service, profiting from their early enrolment in schools and the proximity of Yaounde, the administrative center of the country.

## DEBATES ABOUT BELONGING: THE DIVIDE BETWEEN AUTOCHTHONS AND ALLOCHTHONS

In Yaounde in the 1990s, ethnicity came to be expressed politically through a growing emphasis on the “autochthon” and “allochthons” labels, i.e., between those who belong and those who do not. Where do these labels come from? To what do they refer and how are they defined and used by elite groups and political parties?

Under Cameroon’s first post-colonial government headed by Ahmadou Ahidjo, inter-ethnic relations between the Beti and Bamileke were relatively harmonious. But this peaceful situation slowly degenerated, beginning in 1982 when Mr. Paul Biya became president (Tiokou Ndonko, 1993: 121; Geschiere, 1995: 4). Biya was a Bulu from the South Province. His government made concerted attempts to stimulate the emergence of a Beti economic force. However, despite concrete official support, such as huge government subsidies for Beti entrepreneurs, results were mostly disappointing (Bayart, 1991; Mbembe, 1993: 359). This has, over the years, reinforced existing stereotypes that place Bamileke “businessmen” in opposition with Beti “bureaucrats”.

However, one of the most dramatic changes in recent years has been the shift from using ethnic categories as labels for differentiating opposing groups to using the “autochthons/allochthons” labels. Between 1989 and 1992, when the struggle for genuine political liberalization took place, political debates between Bamileke and Beti elites were characterized by constant references to these two labels. On the whole, current public opinion is that the population of Yaounde is composed, apart from foreigners, of these two main groups: the “autochthons” are members of the entire Beti ethnic group, which, as we have noted above, is made up of numerous tribes, whereas the “allochthons” or “non-natives” are all those originating from other ethnic groups such as the Bamileke, Fulani, Bassa, Bakoko, Duala, Tikar and Bamoun.

Although Yaounde is situated in the Beti region, the Beti population now probably constitutes a minority within the city itself. Indeed, since the end of the colonial era, local inhabitants have been confronted with a growing influx of outsiders attracted by the urban environment and the job opportunities in both public and private sectors, seeking work in education, trade, etc. Moreover, the property rights of the “natives” became more and more precarious as the urbanization process progressed. The natives of Yaounde appear to have been surprised by the rapid growth of their city (Fédry & Owono, 1999: 165). I would argue that it is this rapidly growing competition for scarce resources, and the resulting feeling among the natives that their own interests are threatened, that have fuelled the recent upsurge of ethnic stereotyping and strife.

In particular, the native populations have labeled the Bamileke “strangers,” “invaders,” and “land hunters”. Among the various newcomers, the Bamileke have distinguished themselves by virtue of their leading role in economic life, especially in retail trade and in the budding informal sector (Bopda, 1997).

Ethnic tensions were particularly strong during the struggle for political lib-

eralization at the beginning of the 1990s and during the electoral campaigns of 1992, 1996 and 1997. The legislative and presidential elections of 1992 led to violent ethnic clashes, including the destruction of Bamileke property in Yaounde and neighboring cities such as Mbalmayo, Akonolinga, and Sangmelima (Tribus Sans Frontières, 1993). To justify these xenophobic actions, the Beti asserted what they viewed as their traditional and natural rights to their ancestral land. This assertion was strongly challenged by the Bamileke, who claimed that it was their right as Cameroonians to settle anywhere within the country.

## CONSTRUCTION OF STEREOTYPES AND THE IDEOLOGY OF BELONGING

The Bamileke-Beti opposition came to dominate the national political struggle very soon after the onset of multi-party politics, with powerful ethnic stereotypes exploited for political purposes. Geschiere (1995: 4) describes the situation as follows:

Ethnic discourse generally simplifies the complex struggles of the last years over the control of the State and national economy as being dominated by the tensions between these two groups. In view of the above, it seems characteristic that the vicious ethnic stereotypes of both groups refer especially to witchcraft, kinship and inequality. The Bamileke are often characterized as wealthy entrepreneurs who owe their success to their ‘famla’, the new witchcraft of the rich, which—as often stressed in such stories—one can only acquire by ‘selling’ a close relative. In contrast, the Beti are depicted as lazy, spendthrift bureaucrats—a ‘Pajeroocracy’, because of their obsession with beautiful cars—who have to ‘eat the State’ in order to satisfy their jealous kin... Such stereotypes, which now not only dominate ‘radio trottoir’ but appear also in print in the popular press, are clearly part of a political war of propaganda: they constitute political tribalism in its ugliest form. Of course, everybody knows that they do not ‘really’ reflect the truth: there are many Bamileke who are very poor and there are many hard-working Beti who feel cheated by the State. Yet, it would not be too easy to just ignore stereotypes.

The following table attempts to map out, based on the existing literature and interview sources, some of the best-known socio-cultural and economic characteristics of the Bamileke and Beti as reflected in common stereotypes. What does the attribution of behavior to the members of the Bamileke and Beti groups suggest? Does it reflect a historical or contemporary reality? Do these categories merely represent prejudices that serve as tools for ethnic political propaganda? And are there ways in which these stereotypes contribute to the relieving of ethnic tensions through mechanisms of game play?

**Bamileke ethnic group**

Hierarchical social structure  
 Accumulation through personal work  
 Accumulation and thrift  
 Ethos of advanced enterprise  
 Under-consumption and investment  
 Ability to control the factors of non-accumulation  
 Economy of thrift  
 People with a “granary tradition”  
 Dynamic and hard-working

**Beti ethnic group**

Segmented social structure  
 Accumulation through inheritance  
 Accumulation and distribution  
 Ethos of munificence  
 Ostentatious consumption  
 Inability to control the factors of non-accumulation  
 Spendthrift economy  
 People without a “granary tradition”  
 Low in dynamism and lazy

Taken together, the diverging origins, social structures and economic characters of the Beti and Bamileke constitute the critical elements upon which current ideological stereotypes are constructed; these stereotypes are, in turn, used by socio-political actors. As we have seen, these stereotypes have a clear historical and economic background, but it is only in recent years that they have been expanded and have begun to exert a significant impact on political life. The labels in use change from time to time, indicating the versatility of the ethnic distinctions in question. Today, in many cases, these stereotypes do not reflect the reality. For instance, the Bamileke fellows can not longer claim to have the monopoly of “dynamism and hard working” character.

In the context of the political struggles of the 1990s—and especially during the presidential election of October 1992, the first election to involve several candidates—the main campaign slogan used by Bamileke politicians and intellectuals was that the Beti were a “people without a granary tradition”.

Moreover, the same Bamileke politicians insisted that people of the Beti ethnic group were lazy and extravagant spenders. Naturally, they were accused of having “eaten Cameroon State resources” and, thus, as being responsible for the economic crisis that affected the country. Bamileke businessmen, in turn, were accused of evading customs duties in order to bolster their wealth; moreover they were suspected of using *famla* (a form of financial witchcraft) for economic or financial gain.

While the political organization of the Beti and Bamileke follows ethnic lines, the patterns of their economic behavior are not as clear-cut and unchanging as presented in the literature, and expressed by public opinion. In my view, the general tendency to glorify Bamileke dynamism warrants criticism. The current Bamileke-Beti tension can be more fruitfully viewed as a conflict between the Bamileke’s *economic dynamism* and the Beti’s *political and administrative dynamism*. The Bamileke currently accuse the Beti of monopolizing control over the State administration, while the latter accuse the former of monopolizing control over the economy. This tension between politics and economy constitutes, as I see it, the root cause of the Beti–Bamileke conflict.

I argue that the construction of ethnic stereotypes and a parallel discourse



about natives versus non-natives are used as political tools in a situation of rapid social and political change, creating uncertainty about power and “who belongs”/ “who does not belong”. Exploiting ethnic identities can have serious repercussions for the process of nation-building and democratization, as is the case in Cameroon, with a potentially devastating interplay of ethnicity and politics. On the other hand, playing with ethnic identities simultaneously offers the opportunity for joking to take place between members of different ethnic groups who, instead of relying on these stereotypes for divisive purposes, use them as a form of gentle mockery. Given that each side is familiar with the positive and negative cultural traits associated with both ethnic groups, apparent ethnic opposition is transformed into a platform for ethnic conviviality and peace building.

## ETHNICITY AND POLITICS IN CAMEROON: THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

The discussion of ethnicity and its relationship to politics has recently gained significance within the academic literature. The theoretical approaches used thus far by social scientists can be characterized as primordialist or essentialist, constructionist and neo-constructionist. In this article, I argue that the primordialist approach to ethnicity appears irrelevant to the issues at hand. In fact, as far as Cameroon is concerned, the Bamileke and Beti were not even in contact with each other before the colonial era, since one group settled in Western Cameroon and the other in the Central zone. It was only after their mutual encounter in the urban era that an interethnic relationship arose. Therefore, the present-day situation of conflict between the Bamileke and Beti is not the result of their cultural differences, nor due to any natural predisposition to exclude each other, but because they live within an environment where the resources necessary for survival are scarce. Hence, the competition for resources such as land and control of economic or political power in the city seems to have cleared a path for feelings of hatred and jealousy and, over time, reinforced these attitudes, eventually leading to ethnic exclusion and antagonism. It is this context that has led to the development of discourses and stereotypes that serve the purpose of rationalizing certain socio-political behaviors present in people’s daily scramble for scarce resources.

From this perspective, the neo-constructionist approach seems the most relevant for explaining the recent clashes among various ethnic groups. On the one hand, ideological stereotypes and discourses accelerating the antagonism between Bamileke and Beti have been constructed and reconstructed by socio-political actors to serve their own political and economic ambitions. On the other hand, the strength of the exclusive/integrative ideologies that have been thus used derives from their moral bent and their existential resonance within the different groups, reflecting their current situation of economic and social uncertainty. Actors who belong to the political, administrative, intellectual, economic and

religious elites use elements of the social and cultural repertoires of each of the major ethnic groups to construct stereotypes, which are then used to separate and distinguish the various groups. However, beyond the official ethnic divide depicted by politicians, peaceful indigenous mechanisms for avoiding tensions or reducing their intensity have been developed by members of distinct or officially opposed ethnic groupings. These mechanisms include interethnic marriages and interethnic friendship between members of different groups who interact within a common neighborhood or workplace.

## CONCLUSION

Since the 1990s, the shift from a single-party system to multi-party politics in Cameroon has ushered in a period of uncertainty in the political environment. In a situation involving competition for scarce resources, exacerbated by party politics along ethnic lines, tension between the Beti and Bamileke has increased. This expression of ethnic competition through party politics has turned out to be an unexpected and dangerous aspect of the democratization process.

The developments discussed in the current paper provide an example of how political parties and elite groups play an important role in constructing and shaping ethnic identities; elite groups have consciously constructed stereotypes associated with the Bamileke and the Beti to serve their political and economic ambitions, taking advantage of volatile ethnic constellations (Schilder & Binsbergen, 1993: 9). Members of these ethnic groups may be called “ethnic missionaries” or “ethnic intermediaries” (Abernethy, 1969: 108) (See also Kasfir, 1976; Rothchild and Olorunsola, 1983; Chazan, 1992). Thus, in Cameroon, as well as in many other African countries that embarked on a democratization process during the 1990s, ethnicity has proven to be the wild card in this process (Lentz, 1995: 304).

In summary, the stereotypes that are prevalent in Cameroon can be seen as examples of *derived ethnic conscience*, differing from what may be described as *spontaneous ethnic conscience* (Nnoli, 1989: 17). In the new urban contexts, people have sought to assert their identities in relation to their areas of origin, and in contrast to city dwellers from elsewhere. But these identities, with their underlying moral sentiments, have in turn been politically exploited within a growing urban population coping with a situation of increasing economic and social uncertainty.

In what ways can these theoretical debates help us to explain the emergence and effects of ethnic discourse and stereotypes in Cameroon’s political landscape? And how does the same ethnic discourse, and its associated stereotypes, simultaneously play a role in peace building mechanisms among members of different ethnic groupings?

I claim in this paper that a primordialist approach to ethnicity is irrelevant. I would argue that members of the two groups are “officially” in conflict, not because of their cultural differences, but because of the politicization and manip-

ulation of their cultural differences for political ends. A number of informal mechanisms for avoiding or preventing conflict or aggression clearly exist. Among these are jokes regarding ethnic stereotypes and the practice of *land dowry*. *Land dowry* is a local ritual ceremony organized by a land seller to transfer ownership of a piece of land to the buyer. This traditional ceremony is often organized between a Beti landlord and a Bamileke land-buyer. It should be noted that all the expenses related to the ceremony are borne by the new owner of the land, who symbolically becomes a member of the seller’s kinship group. Ethnic cohabitation practices such as these are developed at the grassroots level by ordinary people, to informally resolve small-scale conflict rooted in ethnicity.

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