



Immigration and  
Refugee Board of Canada

Commission de l'immigration  
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## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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20 December 2004

### CMR43215.FE

Cameroon: Chieftaincy of the Bangou in the village of Bangou; how succession occurs, including the rituals; the consequences of a person's refusal to become chief; whether that person would be threatened and whether the state would protect him or her; the process that follows the refusal, in order to choose a new chief (2002-2004)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Little information on chieftaincy of and succession among the Bangou could be found by the Research Directorate within the time constraints for this Response.

A professor from the Department of Law at the University of Buea in Cameroon, who is an expert in human rights and traditional practices in Cameroon, provided the following information in 13 December 2004 correspondence:

The Bangous are a community with a strong chieftaincy tradition. They have an inner circle of traditional elders who select the chief in [the] event of a vacancy. This group claim[s] to consult the ancestors before making their choice. ... [C]hieftaincy is seen as a position which carries immense prestige. People therefore scheme to get elected when there is a vacancy. The state is directly involved in the making of a chief ... through its local district officers in all of Cameroon. ... No one can ... be compelled to be made a chief. When a candidate declines an offer to be made a chief[,] an alternative candidate will be selected. There is no rule that states that until a selected candidate dies a chief cannot be appointed. ... [I]t is possible to even dethrone an incumbent chief with the approval of the state.

The above information could not be corroborated by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The following more general information on the Bangous could also be useful. The Bangous live in the village of Bangou, in Cameroon (Bamileke.com n.d.a). The inhabitants also call this village Niep (ibid.; Carnets de voyages n.d.). According to a source, the Bangous live in the department of Hauts-Plateaux (La famille Bamileke n.d.). According to information on the Panos Institute Website, the village of Bangou is 260 km from Yaoundé (Institut Panos Sept. 2004).

The Bangous belong to the [translation] "Bamileke country in western Cameroon" (Le Cameroun culturel et touristique n.d.). Therefore, the following

general information on chieftaincy among the Bamileke could be useful.

The Bamileke are [translation] "one of the most important socio-cultural groups in Cameroon" (Carnets de voyages n.d.). Their society includes [translation] "many independent villages led by a chief" (La famille Bamiléké n.d.). In western Cameroon, [translation] "the Fon is at the top of the traditional hierarchy" (Le Cameroun culturel et touristique n.d.). The Website Bamileke.com indicates that the chief is called "fo'o" (n.d.b). The chief plays the role of [translation] "traditional preacher, guardian of ancestral customs, and sacred individual possessing divine power, who ensures the security of the people" (Le Cameroun culturel et touristique n.d.).

Within the Bamileke, succession is a sacred act (ibid.). However, it occurs differently from one village to another in western Cameroon (ibid.).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

#### References

Bamileke.com. n.d.a. "Bangou."

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Le Cameroun culturel et touristique. n.d. "Les chefferies traditionnelles de l'Ouest-Cameroun." <[http://www.batie.tpfcom.com/chefferies\\_b.html](http://www.batie.tpfcom.com/chefferies_b.html)> [Accessed 6 Dec. 2004]

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Institut Panos. September 2004. "Africentr@lemedias : Lettre d'information sur le pluralisme des médias."

<[http://www.panosparis.org/fr/newsletter\\_09\\_2004.php](http://www.panosparis.org/fr/newsletter_09_2004.php)> [Accessed 13 Dec. 2004]

Professor, University of Buea in Cameroon, Law Department. 13 December 2004. Correspondence sent to the Research Directorate.

#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Internet sites, including:** AllAfrica, Amnesty International, Bamileke.com,

British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Ethnologue, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Leland, *Le Messenger* [Yaoundé, Cameroon], Minority Rights Group International, Pan African News Agency, Stanford Junior University.

**Oral sources:** Centre of African Studies at Cambridge University, Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, Voix du peuple.

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