



Cahiers d'études africaines

171 | 2003
Varia

Levels of Historical Awareness

The Development of Identity and Ethnicity in Cameroon

Emmanuel Yenshu Vubo



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesafriaines/217>
DOI: 10.4000/etudesafriaines.217
ISSN: 1777-5353

Publisher

Éditions de l'EHESS

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 January 2003
Number of pages: 591-628
ISBN: 978-2-7132-1810-1
ISSN: 0008-0055

Electronic reference

Emmanuel Yenshu Vubo, « Levels of Historical Awareness », *Cahiers d'études africaines* [Online], 171 | 2003, Online since 15 February 2007, connection on 02 May 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesafriaines/217> ; DOI : 10.4000/etudesafriaines.217

Emmanuel Yenshu Vubo

Levels of Historical Awareness

The Development of Identity and Ethnicity in Cameroon

The resurgence of the phenomenon of group identity awareness and of a politics built on this phenomenon all over the world has given rise to a variety of studies on the origins and process of identity. The problematics of identity itself within the modern nation-states and its persistence necessitates a different type of study, namely that of the formation of identity itself. Some key questions come to mind. Firstly, is it possible to learn from the process of identity formation in the ethnic group, which I choose to call elsewhere “historic community”, in the process of identity formation in the nation-building process? In other words, we are not looking at the process of identity formation at the local community level as essentially negative but as a social process whose internal logic merits careful study for its heuristic value. Why it is that identity formation is deeply entrenched at the local historic community level while it is still problematic at the modern state level? This implies that we study the factors that make for success at both the local and regional levels and the factors that make for failure at the global level. This also calls for a comparative cross-cultural analysis of identity formation. The hypothesis we will attempt to validate is that the central element in identity formation is historical awareness. We are drawing our inspiration from the definition of identity provided by Max Weber and by Chazan *et al.* (1992) and from the articulation of the concept of historicity by Alain Touraine (1974). Max Weber (1965: 306) defined ethnic groups as those groups that

“entertain a subjective belief in their common descent—because of similarities of physical type or of custom or of both, or because of memories of migration—in such a way that this belief is important for the continuation of non-kinship, communal kinship relationship... regardless of whether an objective blood relationship exists or not”.

Some useful deductions can be made from this definition. The first deduction is the idea of subjective belief in common descent that can be summarized in a legend or myth of origins, either with fictive or real apical ancestor, or in an idealized point of origins. The unifying history is often

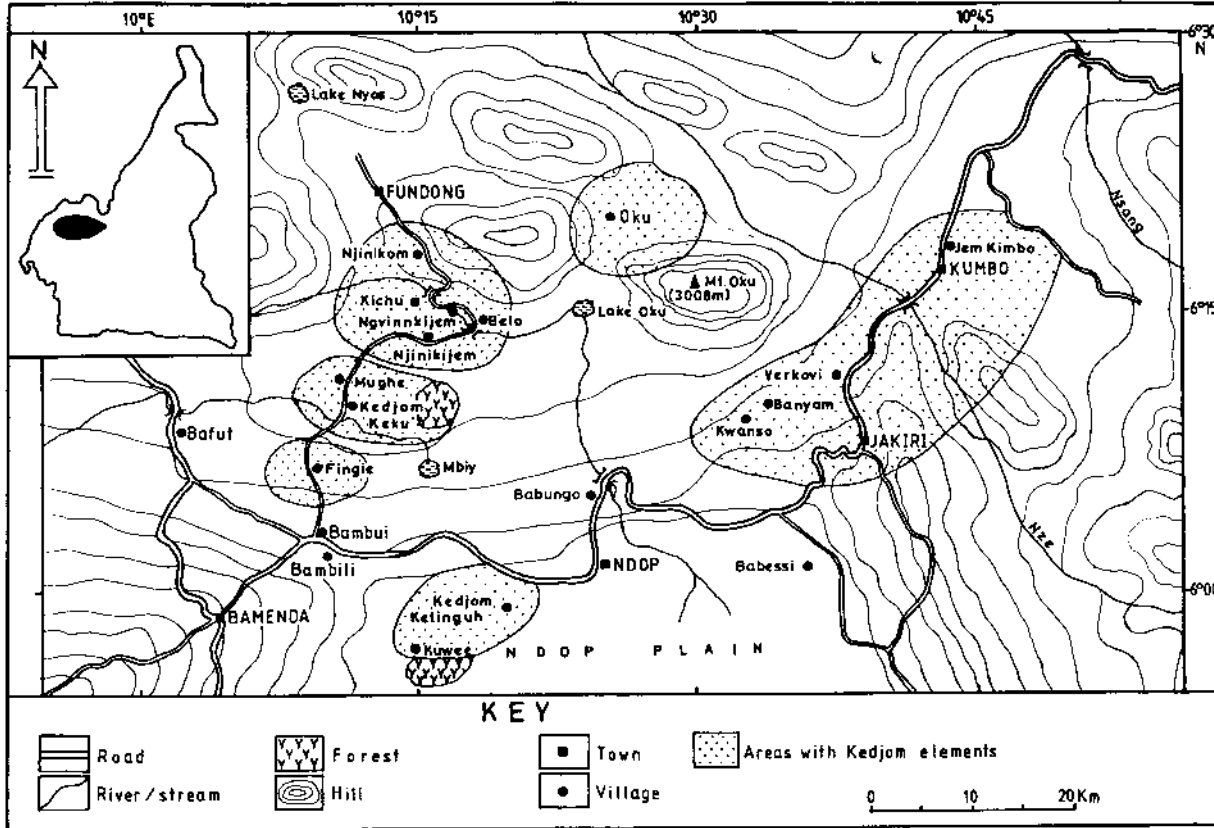
either the history of a dominant segment or class, or an objectified account of human occurrences which highlight the positive side of history. Identifying with the heroes or exploits of the dominant segment or class enhances the spirit of belonging and spurs current generations to similar initiatives. This corroborates the idea of collective history or memories of origins from a distant area.

The second idea is that of genetic or cultural similarities. The community is principally a community of shared culture and we need not stress the concept as very much has already been said about it. Sociologists and cultural anthropologists often overlook the former phenomenon for the obvious reason that it falls out of their scope but it merits close attention. Physical similarities arise out of continuous inbreeding over a very long period combined with high restrictions on exogamy. After several generations one can identify a common genotype shared by living within the same community, which only goes to reinforce cultural homogeneity. Of these two concepts, we decided to retain the concept of history as of importance since it is often evoked in identity formation. Chazan *et al.* (1992: 106) have underlined the centrality of the concept of history to the definition of ethnic group when they consider it a “distinct group in society self consciously *united around shared histories*, traditions, beliefs, cultures, and values, which mobilizes its membership for common political, economic and social purposes”. Ethnicity is thus a “subjective perception of common origins, historical memories and aspirations” (*ibid.*)

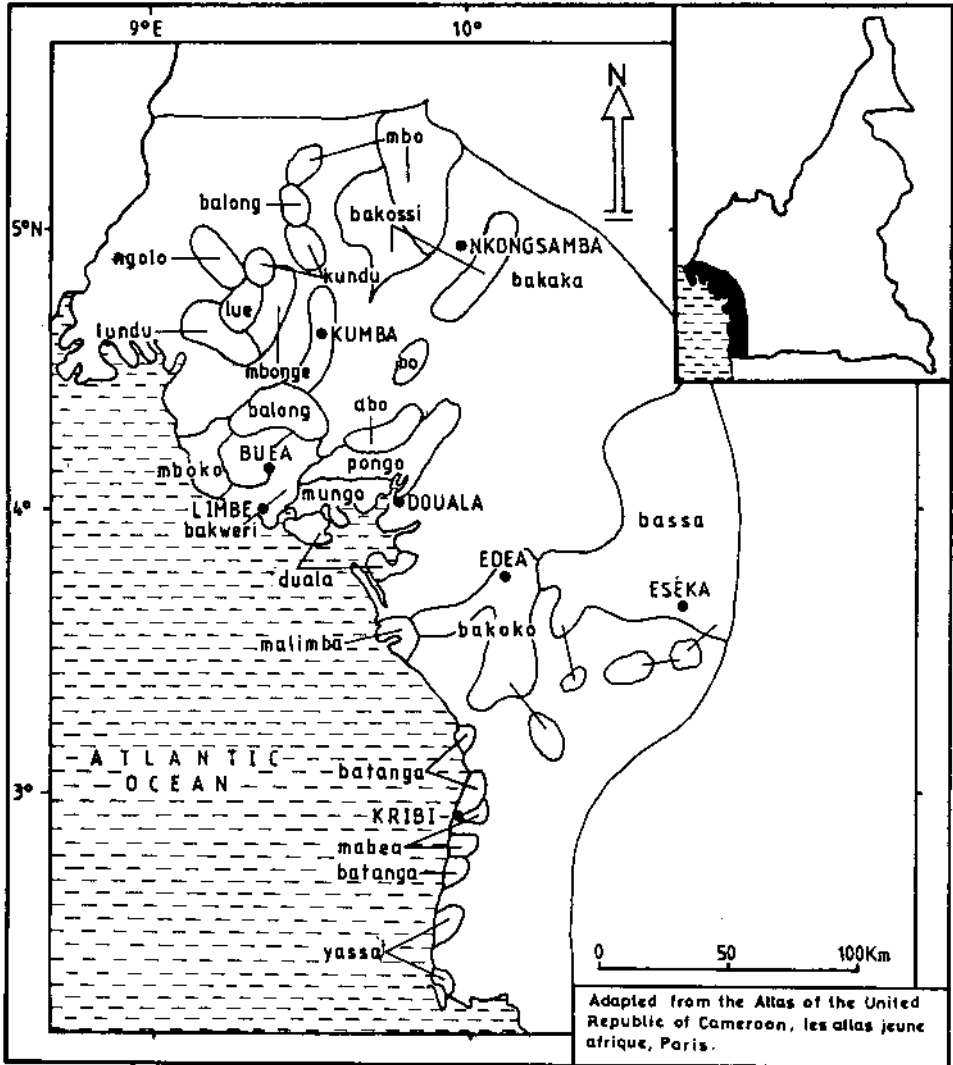
This statement appears so evident that it needs no verification. However, no consistent effort has been made to determine the exact relationship between history and the type of consciousness it breeds. Alain Touraine’s theoretical proposals on historicity and identity give a clue but are still lacking in empirical evidence (Touraine 1974). According to Touraine, all societies are characterized by a capacity to give meaning to their action, a capacity which is known as historicity. Defined as a process of society changing itself, historicity is characterized by three dimensions, namely the process of accumulation through a transformation of nature, a representation of the creativity of the social order through a cultural model and the cultural construction of the relationship between man and the environment/matter presented as a knowledge model. The social representation of history will definitely fall within the cultural model, which is presented as a set of objectives. It is presented as goals set by ancestors, as achievements made by ancestors and as what would inspire future generations. The relation of history to identity is mediated through the cultural model (*ibid.*: 182). Touraine (*ibid.*: 184) ties identity inextricably to historical consciousness:

“La conscience d’identité n’est jamais conscience du présent; elle est intervention de l’histoire, mobilisation des ressources données, de ce qu’on aime trop souvent à nommer la culture traditionnelle, pour reprendre le contrôle de l’avenir. Rien n’est plus important que cette dialectique du passé et de l’avenir, que ce zigzag qui unit la tradition et l’innovation par la révolte, le conflit et l’espérance.”

MAP 1. — A section of Cameroon showing areas with Kedjom elements.



MAP 2. — A section of Cameroon showing people who have of recent claimed Sawa identity.



What, therefore, is the empirical value of this affirmation especially when he affirms that this is not only true of western societies, but of all societies characterized by historicity (*ibid.*: 185)? This question is all the more important in a world where the process of globalization is accompanied by the rise of individual group identity awareness and of a politics based on it. In other words, which history breeds which type of historical awareness? This is the central question that we are going to address in this study.

Methodology

The study sets out to examine the impact of the social formulation of history on identity formation processes at the local, regional and national levels in Cameroon. At the local level, we will be dealing with the Kedjom people, variously known by that same name in Mezam Division, as Jem in Nso in Bui Division and Kijem in Oku, Kom and other peoples in Boyo and Mentchum Divisions of Cameroon (See map 1). The core elements of this group are organized principally into two kingdoms, namely Kedjom Keku and Kedjom Ketinguh and the chiefdom of Fingye in Mezam Division. Other groups identifying themselves with this group are organized as class or lineages in Nso, Kom, Oku and Bafmen. At the regional level, we will be studying the Coastal Bantu variously referred to of recent as Sawa (Yenshu 1998). This will include the Duala, Bakoko, Bodiman, Ewudi, Pongo Songo, Pongo, Bakweri and other related peoples of the South West, Littoral and South West Provinces (See map 2).

The data used for the study at local level was collected principally during a study on the history of the Kedjom between July and September 1996 (Yenshu 2001). In this study, we tried to elicit data on the history of the Kedjom group in Kom and Nso, the markers of their identity, the relation to the other Kedjom and the actions undertaken as a result of their awareness of a similar identity. This data will be compared with data we gathered over a long time between 1988 and 2000 amongst the Kedjom communities in the form of interviews with key informants, mimeographed notes on the history of the Kedjom by literate Kedjom persons and colonial records by administrators cum amateur historians.

This will be complemented, for comparative purposes, with data on regional phenomena from published and unpublished material on the coastal Bantu by indigenes (Dumbe-Moulongo 1968; Mbake 1975) and the Sawa movement of recent years, which we tried to analyse (Yenshu 1998). We analyse this data with a qualitative inference of the relation between historical reconstructions and the actions of the actors. The shortcomings are to be found principally at regional and national levels since we are not dealing with interviews but with the analysis of global actions that can be related to identity or social movements which are motivated by identity awareness.

We will start by presenting the political background of ethnicity in Cameroon and the historical reconstruction at the various levels, and then proceed to analyse the type of actions that derive from this process ending with conclusions as to the process of identity formation.

The Political Context

The country, Cameroon, is the product of geopolitical processes consequent on the interplay of European political forces in the 19th and 20th centuries as well as internal dynamics resulting from decolonisation and attempts at nation-building. Originally created as a German protectorate during the Berlin conference on the partition of Africa, it was later divided after Germany's defeat in the First World War and placed under a League of Nations mandate administered by France and Britain. France administered its portion in association with its colonies grouped under the territories of French Equatorial Africa (bringing together what is known today as Chad, Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville and Gabon). Britain administered its two patches of the unconnected territories of Southern and Northern Cameroons with its colony of Nigeria. The decolonisation process in the French Cameroons was marked by an insurrection in the Bassa and Bami-leke areas, led by the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC) which, though not successful, affected the way power was transferred to the successor state. When Ahmadou Ahidjo took over power as Premier of the internal autonomy government of 1958, it was more the colonial regime's choice of an accommodating party than the outcome of the struggle for independence by the most popular forces. This explains the persistence of the UPC insurrection for around a decade after. The task of "pacification" undertaken by the colonial state thus devolved on the new regime which developed an autocratic and coercive style of government and tough centralization that went far beyond the insurrection, despite the experiment at a federation between 1961 and 1972. When the British territory of Southern Cameroons opted to join the independent République du Cameroun in 1961, it was simply integrated into this precarious situation. Promises of autonomy were more out of political expedience than out of a genuine political arrangement that could survive the drive towards the tough centralization and the political monolithism that lasted four decades. The task of nation-building was thus characterised by the management of an already extremely diverse ethnic situation¹, the banishment of political dissent and the co-optation of a dominant faction of the Anglophone elite. Such a style of governance implied a combination of repression and an obsession with the concepts of unity/integration and peace.

1. According to BRETON & DIEU (1983) Cameroon is made up of 230 linguistic groups which correspond to the same number of indigenous cultural groups.

Five decades of experimentation with such a situation have not ushered in a united nation where the conditions for citizenship have meaning above the local groups or peoples. Levine's statement that once Cameroon acceded to nominal statehood it did not automatically become a nation is as relevant today as it was then (Levine 1964: 218-22). Despite the persistence of the coercive ideology of national unity/integration and an anti-tribalistic discourse, attachment to ethnic groups is strong among the administrative and political elite. The socio-political order has thus been organised as the domination of successive tribal elites over the whole country leading to the evident marginalisation of all others and the subordination of the masses occasionally used as a support to the system.

Fulbé elite evidently dominated Ahidjo's regime while Beti elite dominated Biya's with the social contract in this case being the association of elite from other ethnic groups and regions to the elite of the dominant ethnic group. This has gone under the terminology of regional balance which has now been substituted with the concept of integration. With the banishment of multiparty politics in 1966, the ethnic groups and regions were perceived to be represented through political appointment. Even representation in parliament followed the same logic.

Centralization was used as the major instrument in this strategy, that is, as the administrative counterpart to the coercive nature of the one-party state structure. By appropriating the public sphere, this process led to the marginalisation of all forms of social expression, while the only safety valve was provided by the ethnic group: witness the proliferation of ethnic-based associations and the paradoxical exacerbation of tribalism². Any attempt at proposing any form of decentralization was interpreted as plans to dismantle the "nation" and promote tribalism. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that the official argument against the institution of multiparty politics was the latter's propensity to revive and exacerbate tribal sentiments, given the strong attachments to groups of origin (Biya 1987). In fact this assertion gained some truth when the party in power (the CPDM) was perceived as based on the head of state's ethnic group, both by persons from this ethnic group and its opponents. Since the official endorsement of multiparty politics, the competition between the opposition and the governing party has been largely modelled along the demarcation of ethno-regional cleavages, which strongly influenced the colour of voting (Nkwi & Socpa 1997).

The ethnic factor has also continued to influence the equilibrium of administration and appointment to high office. It has also persisted in the popular imagination as the motive force behind all social phenomena within the political sphere. Inter-ethnic conflicts of an armed or violent nature

2. For an analysis of the paradoxical development of ethnoregional feelings in an era of tough centralization, see YENSHU (1997: 133-134).

(Baya-Fulbe, Shuwa Arab-Kotoko, Bali Nyonga and its neighbour, Bali-kumbat—Bafanji, Kedjom Ketinguh-Bambili, Kedjom Keku—Ndawara) are often perceived as representative of the political divide of the ruling party and the opposition, with one of the ethnic groups acting with the connivance or under the instigation of one of the parties in competition. It is commonplace to hear of ethnic groups being tagged as belonging to one political camp or the other. This makes the idea of political participation an extremely delicate one. One is tempted to ask whether it is party ideology or ethnic affiliation that determines political action in Cameroon. It is however important to note that ethnicity without a distinct political ideology or programme is an important fact in politics in Cameroon (Burnham 1996; Takougang & Krieger 1998; Nkwi & Socpa 1997). The interest in the motive force behind ethnicity gains its importance from the persistence of the vitality of ethnic cultural diversity as well as the ethno-regional drift in political life.

Levels of Historical Reconstruction and Awareness

The reconstruction of history in Cameroon is not the same at all levels. It is shaped by specific social and historical imperatives. At the local level it is driven by both internal needs and external forces. As such, two levels of history can be observed: a history closely related to its internal social and political structure on the one hand, and another closely related to the globalising influences of the colonial experience and nation state building on the other. One can also add a scientific level whose motives are not identical with the two others.

The History of the Kedjom

Kedjom internal history is presented as fluctuating between an internal history which presents the Kedjom as evolving as an independent group of smiths, herdsman, highland farmers and craftsmen (principally wood sculptors) of remarkable skill. Their pre-colonial history shows them as integrated in a regional economy characterized by exchange at both short and long distances and a regional political system characterized by petty-conquest state-building to which it was partially integrated by way of its own system of alliances and matrimonial exchanges (Yenshu 2001). The pressure from petty-conquest states such as Kom and Balikumbat and Bali Nyonga, the principal Grassfields kingdoms, accounts for constant shifts in population, a strong spirit of independence and resistance as well as its own system of alliances with Nkwen and Bafut. At the same time, the internal dynamics of political struggles accounts for dispersion of a people over a

wide area, either as founders of new polities (Bafut, Kedjom Ketinguh, Fingie), as important components of some polities (Nso, Oku) or simply as segments within other groups (Mmen).

The external dynamics imposed by the globalizing influences of European colonization and the nation-building process has introduced new concepts in the process of historical reconstruction. The most important is the classification of groups in dichotomous terms of superiority and inferiority. This dichotomy owes its own origins to the concept of progress. As such, in the attempt to carve out administration districts, the administrators, schooled in colonial ethnology, attempted to classify groups not according to the possibilities of peaceful co-existence and co-operation but according to a history hastily reconstructed. In the case of the Kedjom, they were classified within a so-called "Tikari" group whose history was highly simplified in terms of a migratory model transposed from an "English mania for migrations" (personal communication 6/5/1996 from Mrs E. M. Chilver). This reconstruction therefore sought to streamline Kedjom history to tie in with the principle of regularity which would account for carving contiguous areas into administrative units. As such, the peoples brought together with an administrative unit would be presumed to have the same history so as to ensure co-operation (Yenshu & Ngwa 2001). The alliances of co-operation that existed between Kedjom, Bafut and Nkwen were thus transformed into relations based on common ethnogenesis. This was not without consequences as each group had its own version of this common history which it sought to project in the competition for leadership or protocol in the British colonial Indirect Rule framework and the budding of a post-colonial state. It is definitely this type of reconstruction of history, which we have shown to be at the basis of ethnicity (*ibid.*). The Kedjom are also mentioned extensively in the oral histories of a variety of groups which are at the heart of the Grassfields (Kom, Bafut, Mankon, Oku, Nso, Ndop, Bamum, Ndop plain, Nkwen, Mmen, Wum, Bum, Noni). These mentions are mostly in relation to the Oku deluge story (Yenshu 2000, 2001), the role of Kedjom elements in the foundation histories of its neighbours, Kom and Bafut, and the inter-community relations with all neighbours. Such mentions have crept into the historical narratives collected by ethnographers, anthropologists and historians dealing with these peoples. Chilver & Kaberry (1967b: 20) gives a short note of Kedjom history when tackling the history of the so-called Bafut group, a colonial invention in British attempts at organizing the administrative units in what was known during the mandate years as Bamenda Division (Yenshu & Ngwa 2001). This narrative, which is predicated on the already contested model of ethnogenesis in Tikar country (Jeffreys 1964) was repeated in other publications relative to the history and ethnography of the larger neighbours of the Kedjom viz. Bafut and Kom. They are simply mentioned as having been expelled from Kom in Chilver and Kaberry's study of the political organization of Kom (Chilver & Kaberry

1967a: 131). Chilver's synthesis of Oku, Kom, Kedjom and others (evidently speakers of central Ring of Grassfields Bantu) gave a sketchy outline of the history of the material culture of the Kedjom. It is still preoccupied with the claims of common origins from the Tikar country that has become a puzzle for researchers since the question was first posed by Jeffreys (Chilver & Kaberry 1967a; Price 1979; Engard 1988; Zeitlyn 1996; Fowler & Zeitlyn 1996). Working along the same lines, Kedjom traditions in Nkwi and Warnier's brief regional survey (1982) are mentioned only in relation to other places, in particular Kom and Oku, and inclined to attribute Kedjom movements to conquest or pressure, not without internal contradictions as to place and time. For example we are told that:

"The Ndop plain achieved its presents state when Babanki Tungo (Kijem Ketinggo or Kijem of the Rocks) moved to their present location following a chieftaincy dispute in Njinikijem, in the Belo valley of Kom, around 1845" (Nkwi & Warnier 1982: 129).

This contradicts the latter mention that:

"The Kijem (the two Babanki groups) were displaced in about 1845. Kijem had come under pressure [from Kom] that they were forced to abandon NggvinKijem (farmland of Kijem) and especially Njinikijem (the other side of Kijem). When the Kom pressurized them, the group took to the hills and split into two separate units—Kijem Keku and Kijem Ketingo" (*ibid.*).

More recently, in an examination of the development of the pre-colonial history of Bafut, Engard (1988: 58) returns to a critique of the claims of common ethnogenesis for Bafut and the Kedjom. He dismisses them either as a Kedjom "attempt to strengthen their assertion of autonomy from Kom" or as a Bafut attempt to prove its claims for origins in the Tikar group. None of this is surprising since none of the researchers, as far as I can ascertain, spent any length of time in the Kedjom Kingdoms. It may be explained by a *déformation professionnelle* on the part of non-native scholars (Chilver personal communication 6/5/96). This is also the result of local researchers' quest for what Dika Akwa (1982) calls "ideological history" i.e. a type of history that deforms reality with the sole objective of showing the primacy of one group over another: "L'histoire idéologique déforme systématiquement les données dans l'unique but de vanter un clan au détriment d'un autre" (Dika Akwa 1982: 62).

Such an attitude was also born out of a certain *folie des grandeurs* or out of imperial claims that were put forward by chiefs of some petty-conquest states during the colonial era (Chilver personal communication 12/5/96). Others studies of a regional/global character make reference to the Kedjom wherein they are noted for their carving traditions (Ermonts 1927: 220-221; Baumann & Westermann 1967: 331-340; Baumaun & Vajda 1959; Harter 1986; Warnier 1982, 1985). S. E. Diduk (1987), who has spent

considerable time in the Kedjom communities, unfortunately did not focus much on the question of history, probably because of her own research interests. This may explain why she treats this question only as the background for pre-colonial politics. Her work also suffers from its reliance on pre-colonial sources, whose use has been put into question (Kuklick 1978). She is, however, struck by Kedjom attachment to their history, although she wonders whether mentions of sojourn in Nso and Kom would not be attempts to identify with these much larger, petty-conquest states. In this regard, the history of the Kedjom is still treated only as an adjunct to the history of other peoples in the area. This explains why she expresses surprise at Kedjom claims to have never been “militarily defeated by larger neighbours nor to have been in a dependency relationship to a larger chiefdom” (Diduk 1987: 69-70). She thus considers such views as an idealization of history. She is obviously oblivious of the category of mountain people who were “unwilling... to find refuge in a confederacy” (Warnier 1975: 408), irrespective of the climate of insecurity that characterized the area in the immediate precolonial area.

My more recent collection and analysis of the historical traditions of the Kedjom (Yenshu 2001) have led me to be less judgmental. For this reason, I have called for the analysis of historical traditions only in relation to social, economic and political practices. As such, inter-community relations are only practically a function of “diplomatic” ties of the type described by Warnier (1985) and Nkwi (1987). Claims of common origins for neighbouring peoples could thus be interpreted in the light of histories of co-operation within a regional setting over a considerable period of time. References to the Kedjom in the historical charters of other peoples are, therefore, to be taken as only one aspect of their histories that might diverge considerably from Kedjom traditions.

The Historical Traditions of the Sawa

Regional level reconstruction of identity in the coastal region were probably prompted by cultural homogeneity and built around that concept. Doumbe-Mouloungou's (1968) version examines the history of the people going under the name Sawa by subsuming them under the appellation Duala. In terms of race, he brings under this group the indigenous inhabitants of Douala town (Duala stricto sensu, including Bassa and Bakoko minorities), Pongo, Mungo, Wuri, Bodiman, Malimba, Dibongo, Pongo Songo, Batanga, Bapuku, Yasa, Abo, Kôle, Subu and Bakweri (Kpe). Using oral traditions, he links the groups to the various offspring of Mbédi, son of Mbongo, supposed apical ancestor of the group. He can only establish links for nine groups amongst which one finds peoples that are linguistically unrelated such as the Ewondo, Longahe and Dibongo. He excludes the Bakweri and the Abo from this scheme since, according to him, oral

traditions do not point to any kinship relations with the Duala. He classifies part of these Abo with a certain Bakundu group, which would stretch from parts of the present Mungo Division to the present Kupe-Manenguba and Meme Divisions. An analysis of three other versions of the oral history links the Duala to other peoples such as the Ewondo, Bassa, Jebale, Longahe, Babimbi and Abo. This history is fraught with contradictions and lacking in objectivity as it relies exclusively on Duala sources without cross-checking with reference to the other peoples mentioned. It is a reconstruction with an evidently ideological intention: that of reconstructing Duala relations with other peoples through history without necessarily verifying their own history. The reconstruction of the history does not dissimulate its ideological intention. Doumbe-Moulongo hopes to use this work in the process of identity formation.

“Notre but d’ailleurs, on le sait, n’est pas d’écrire un livre d’histoire. Il est autrement plus modeste: nous découvrir et nous identifier à travers l’histoire d’un peuple. Oui, son histoire, c’est notre histoire. Ses origines sont nos origines. Ses haines et ses amours sont aussi les nôtres. Il y a longtemps que ce peuple aurait dû se ressaisir, se consulter, se concerter, et faire sortir d’une assemblée autrement réfléchie et agissante, des souvenirs communs du passé, authentiques, irréfutables, dépouillés de polémique stérile. Un tel regard sur le passé lui aurait permis, nous en sommes convaincus, de mieux entrevoir son devenir” (Doumbe-Moulongo 1968: 90-91; Emphasis added).

Mbake (1975), writing seven years later, presents versions of Bakweri history which echo Doumbe-Moulongo’s (*ibid.*). One of them points to common origins with the Duala and Balondo in Bakota country. It contains elements of migration and sojourn in Bassa land and descent from the apical ancestor Mbedi as well as links the three groups historically. A second version brings the Bakweri group with the Bakole and Bamusso from the lower Sanaga area cradle, and presents them as having a common ancestor with the Duala. The third version presented by P. M. Kale presents the peoples of the South West, the then Centre-South and Littoral provinces of Cameroon, as having common origins. The apical ancestor of the Bakweri, Duala, Bassa, Bakoko, Bakundu, Balondo, Bulu, Bakossi, Ewondo, Bakossi and Bamboko is presented as Nambongo. As one can see, the Bakweri versions reflect the Duala versions, even in the attempt to associate the Coastal Bantu with the Pahouin group. In this regard, the impact of the post-literate effect is very evident. One can also read attempts at legitimating Duala hegemony over a large group of people at a time when, the aura exercised over these peoples at an earlier time through the use of Kingala (Douala language) and the display of elitism, was waning.

Kala Lobe (1977) describes the history of the resistance of Douala Manga Bell to expropriation of native land by the Germans, evoking in a romantic manner the tragic events that surrounded this heroic act. The value of the work that is obviously meant for a wider audience is that it

can be situated within the general context of anti-colonial struggles and not the limited scope of local political practices.

Dika Akwa (1982: 68-78) presents a critical synthesis of the historical literature on the Duala dismissing, as it were, traditions of an ideological nature such as those of the Bell clan produced in a document entitled *Idubwan a Belè-Belè* (lit. the key of the Bell clan). He considers the latter as typical of ideological history, whose aim is "servir une cause donnée dans le cadre des rivalités dynastiques, ou des hégémonies ethniques" (Dika Akwa 1982: 69). Relying on a variety of oral traditions collected by both colonial authorities and local researchers such as Doumbé Moulongo, Dika Akwa attempts a realistic presentation of the history of the Duala, indicating how it structures the relations between the clans. However this synthesis is only situated at the level of a clarification of the inter-community relations and the resultant power relations between the Sawa of the immediate Wouri estuary and its environs. Written within the context of a scientific treatise, this clarification does not however have any ambitions of the type exhibited by Doumbe Moulongo (1968). We can also find in the treatise attempts to link the Sawa, which he calls Ngala Duala, either to ancient Egypt in the style of Chiekh Anta Diop and Theophile Obenga, or to the peoples of the Congo Basin. However, neither of the two theses has found an echo in the popular mind although this is reflected in some pseudoscientific literature. This is notably the case of Matute (1990), whose synthesis of Sawa traditions only goes towards codifying local traditions without a critical analysis. It is interesting, however, to find in this work a rapprochement between the Bakweri, popularly associated with the Duala, and groups to the West of Mt. Cameroon with whom they share the same cultural traits.

Works by non-native researchers (almost exclusively of non-Cameroonian origins) also merit attention. Ardener's monographs (1956) are more concerned with cultural and social anthropology than with historical traditions per se. They thus rely more on the documentary evidence of explorers, traders and missionaries and the European travellers in determining the history of the coastal area from the period of first European contact till the dawn of the colonial era. Such an approach leads to local oral traditions being generally glossed over. The synthesis presented within the context of the 1973 colloquium, which is admittedly "skeletal", provides a chronology of the events along the coast from the late 13th century to the early years of the German colonial period (Ardener & Ardener 1981: 563-571). Historical movements towards the coast, which later give the Sawa character, are interpreted here as a "reaction to trading penetration" (*ibid.*: 570). A scientific examination of historical traditions leads the authors to break them up into legendary/mythical and political strata, the former referring to foundation histories and the latter "expressing the emergence of significant politico-economic groups". In this regard, the synthesis lays the groundwork for an objective analysis of the evolution of coastal peoples and, in

the case of political manipulation, for an objective interpretation of historical traditions.

The work of Derrick (1989: 106-136) describes the evolution of the Duala in the French colonial period, especially in the 1930s, and shows how the intermediate position between the Duala, the French colonial authorities and other peoples had already put them in a vantage position creating a feeling of elitism. We are also brought face-to-face with the rise to prominence as well as the decline of the Duala in relation to other Cameroon peoples. I have shown elsewhere that recent Sawa protests fall in line with historical trends of an ambivalent “perception of modernization on the one hand as essentially destructive and alien, and on the other a provider of scarce beneficial resources” (Yenshu 1998: 34). I have shown that, ever since the coastal peoples came into contact with Europeans, Duala/Sawa attitudes towards modernization have been shifting from collaboration when there were benefits to be reaped, to protest and opposition when this modernity was invasive (*ibid.*: 34-36).

The most comprehensive study in this regard is the recent work by Austen and Derrick (1999), which traces the history of the Duala and other related peoples from inception until the contemporary period. Using a combination of anthropological and historical data, they resituate Sawa historical traditions in proper context. They trace the Sawa’s evolution from fishermen (originally practicing inland river fishing) in search of fertile estuary and high sea fishing spots to middlemen in slave and commodity trade with successive European traders (Portuguese, Dutch, English) in the period c. 1600-1830. From the latter period they are reported to have gained ascendancy over peoples of the immediate hinterland as indigenous planters of export crops and the legitimate trade that followed the abolition of the Slave Trade. The middleman position became more ambiguous, because less comfortable, with the confrontation with German authorities over the question of land (Austen 1996: 63-80). Elitism, as indicated above (Derrick 1989), reached its apogee in the French colonial period, but was short-lived and eventually led to decline. Finally, attempts at playing a role in the politics of decolonisation were unsuccessful. The merits of this approach is that it highlights the high value of the external dynamics that has driven the evolution of Sawa societies, especially the politics of inter-clan rivalry within a segmentary society that was determined largely by the middlemen position in which the Sawa people (especially the Duala) found themselves.

What characterizes the three levels of historical construction (local, colonial and scientific) is the low level of communication between them. Although colonial models had been fed back into the popular memory, the contradictions that they generated have led to their abandonment in a context where the politics of identity is on the rise (Yenshu & Ngwa 2001). On the contrary, pseudoscientific literature predicated on imperial claims has only gone to poison the already uneasy relations that colonial attempts at carving out administrative districts generated. In this regard, some of the

colonial literature has been echoed in work of a scientific nature and, in the context of conflicts with origins in the colonial or even pre-colonial period, has extended into the post-colonial era. Genuinely, scientific literature has remained an ivory tower business with little impact on popular imagination, still partly under the lingering influence of colonial experiences and partly attracted by pre-colonial traditions. Ideological histories themselves are on the decline as the issues of paramountcy that characterized the colonial regime are totally absent and as traditional power structures are playing a less prominent role than in post-colonial politics³. The recourse to local-level histories is symptomatic of the decline in the nation-building project consequent on globalization⁴. One has to note that the nation-building project was also a project in the construction of a single historical vision.

Kedjom Historical Awareness, Identity Formation and Historical Action

Two remarks made by scholars about Kedjom historical traditions are strikingly revealing. Chilver & Kaberry (1967b: 20), writing about the history of the Grassfields, indicated that “The traditions of the Kijem Keku [Kijom Keku] (Babanki) dynasty are fortunately well preserved”. Later Diduk (1987: 69-70) also noted that: “The Kedjom speak of their chiefdom with a tone of enduring permanence. Not infrequently, while conducting interviews, I found people speaking of a virtually timeless present, one unbound to the past and uncommitted to alterations in the future.”

The rest of the statement is an idealization (to use Diduk’s own term) of Kedjom history. We are brought face-to-face with the question of why this history is “well preserved” or why the sense of history is so fresh and acquires a “permanence”. In a general study of the history of the Kedjom, I have explored some of the functions this history has served (Yenshu & Ngwa 2001; Yenshu 2001). I have shown that the formulation of history was largely affected by, and had an impact on, modern political developments, especially in the context of colonial and post-colonial competition for resources and with regard to the position between the Kedjom and other groups in the so-called “Bafut” group. This shows that Kedjom identity has been affected by the British attempts to reconstruct the histories of the people of the Grassfields as a basis for carving out administrative districts.

-
3. Chiefs are officially categorized only as auxiliaries of the post-colonial state’s administration.
 4. Vidal Villa (1995: 156-157) has shown that this process is universal and should not be dismissed as local “folklore”. AMIN (1998: 54) holds that the “dissolution of ‘national’ unity in Africa gave way to ethnicity as the basis for the legitimacy of competing forces”, a process that is not specific to Africa.

The conflicts emanating from this process led to a modification of identities with intensity in political competition.

When we come to the Kedjom, whose history and historical consciousness identifies them with the Kedjom, the situation differs considerably depending on the demographic weight of the group within its setting. The common denomination is historical awareness (although of a different level) and descent. These are essentially people who have been scattered over a wide area as a result of constant shifts in settlement and dynastic disputes. I have indicated elsewhere that there is an amazing tendency to stick to the Kedjom identity and to promote it in the various contexts. The Kedjom of Kedjom Keku have notably striven to assert their seniority over all existing Kedjom peoples and the dynasties of Bafut and Kom. Kedjom princes set up the Kedjom Ketinguh kingdom in a context where they could have adopted a different identity or decided to merge into one of the Grassfield chiefdoms. Kijem elements in Kom quickly point to their seniority to the other clans. They claim that the royal lineage stands in a relation of “child” to their clan (*wain ndo*). The concentration of power in lineage that derives from a Kijem male ancestor gives to their clan head the title of Bofon (lit. Father figure to the king). Finally, the Jem in Nso failed in setting up a rival Kingdom at Kishiy but got integrated into the Nso political set-up as important members of the Ngwerung, the vibai ve Kpu (greater nobility involved in royal burial rites) as in the case of Jem Kimbo, Jem Njavnyuy and/or important Mtaar (Commoner) Lords. Claims of having captured power in Bafut also reveal this tendency.

When we look at the Kedjom who have been integrated into the polity of Nso, we find a heightened awareness of their identity and strength within the polity. They point out the fact that they have been integrated into the polity of Nso through intermarriages and through their classification as Mtaar lords and their association with certain religious and political functions. This integration, however, is only as Kedjom (Jem). Their position within Nso is therefore lived only in relation to the history of their once great Kedjom. Their belief in their position as Veka-ah (lit. valiant men) is thus a celebration of a once glorious past. However, what dominates is the element of Nso identity as there is no attempt to link up with the other Kedjom. One of our informants’ attempt to link up with the Kedjom did not meet up with the welcome he had hoped for. We can say that the identity here is diluted by a dominant Nso identity.

The Kedjom of Kom (pronounced Kijem in Kom) have a much more heightened sense of identity than the Jem of Nso, probably as a result of their numbers and the relatively recent nature of their separation with the main Kedjom polities. Given the historical ties that have existed between the Kedjom and the Kom (Yenshu 2001), the integration of Kedjom into the Kom polity has acquired a peculiar character. In terms of kinship structure some families and classes have been integrated into the Kom matrilineal

system, while others have maintained the nucleated patrilineal kinship system characteristic of the Kedjom (Anjang, Aboh). They have also been integrated into the political structure through marriages and the attribution of the position of “father figure to the Fon (Bofon)” to the Kedjom clan through a descendent of the genitor of one of the most influential Fons of Kom, Yuh I. According to one of our informants, Rita Kidio (53, Ashing) the Kedjom have come to be ranked third in the Kom polity. According to another informant, Henry Kinni, they constitute nearly half of the population of Kom or are even the largest clan in Kom (Linus Sangtum, 47, Fuli).

The expression of Kedjom identity in Kom is mediated through a variety of claims, practices and positions within the polity. The most important ones are the claim to first settler status and historical memory. Most informants interviewed were of the opinion that the Kedjom were the original inhabitants of the area. This claim does not however lead to other claims of the autochthony type although this bears striking similarities. Historically informants pointed to the instrumental role played by Kedjom elements in the constitutional development of Kom political structure⁵. Prince Kinni (>80, Njinikom) and the Queen mother (Nafoyen Theresia Mumbenaghaskom, 52, Sho) felt that the Kedjom class was so instrumental to Kom political structure that if it were to break away, the kingdom would collapse. This has led to a situation where the Fons are classified as children of the Kedjom clan (*wain Kijem*)⁶. In fact some informants identify patriliney as a marker of Kedjom identity within a situation of a generalized matriliney.

This leads to a positioning of Kedjom elements within the Kom polity. One informant (Linus Sangtum), illustrates the importance of the Kedjom clan in Kom in reference to the crucial role that is still played by the Abei Aboh (lit. Aboh compound), seat of the titular fathers of Kom Fons and successors to the Father of Yuh, Ayeah (Kedjom) in the following terms:

“The compound is one of the most important Kedjom compounds. The Fon is obliged to visit it. Fon Yibain refused to visit it but he was pleading to be taken there when he was on his deathbed. The compound head gave him wine to drink

-
5. Oral tradition attributes the origins of the present Kom dynasty to the narrowing down of the reigning Ekwi clan to offspring of Ayeah (Kijem man) and Funkwin (Ekwi woman starting with Kom’s greatest king (foyn), Yuh I. After this period the dynasty ceased from being the preserve of the whole Ekwi clan and became restricted to a lineage (Ekwi-Kijem) deriving from this marriage that brought together the two clans. The Kom kinship structure ascribes two status to a person: that of the children of a clan (*wain* (child) *ndo* (clan)) and members of a clan (*wul* (person) *ndo* (clan)). Persons will be members of their mother’s lineage/clan but are children of father’s lineage/clan. Kom foyns will thus be *wul Ekwi* (i.e. members of Ekwi clan) and *wain Kijem* (children within the Kijem clan).
 6. For implications in terms of the conjunction of matrilineal and patrilineal kinship systems, see YENSHU (2001).

from his cup and he got well. He had asked to be taken to see his father before he died. He lived for some time again before he died”⁷.

The practices that make for the Kedjom identity within Kom are varied. The first one is associative life. Although isolated by distance and living in clusters likened to clusters of raffia palm bushes (Kwosi a lu’). Kedjom elements congregate in associations of both traditional and modern nature. Traditional associations are those organized as mukum (sing. Kikum). Important Kedjom associations cited are Muguoh, Tohnain, Uvung (Sama’s compound), mussi (Belo), ifel (Anyanjua), Mukong (Anjang), Nantang (Kichu), njang⁸ njufatuh (Njinikijem), njang Songbei (Kichu), Falangang (Kichu), ilung, Nkweingh (Ashing) and njang Atsiwum. Some of these associations, which play mortuary functions and bring together male members of the Kedjom clan, can also be found among the main Kedjom communities of Kedjom Keku and Kedjom Ketinguh. It is worth noting that these associations also exist in the main Kedjom polities. Association life also transcends the male associations to embrace all members of this clan in an all-embracing Kijem Clan Association. According to the Queen mother, who considered herself a member, this group has the royal unction, as it is presented to the Fon every year. Other associations of a less global nature also exist. One of the informants, Linus Sangtum, cited above, had an association with an entertainment function. This association was named Adeng (lit. Pride), which the owner translates as the pride of the Kedjom people. He sums up the predicament of the Kedjom person in the following terms:

“I have come to realize that the Kijem man has something that attracts as well as repels some people. Many of them have suffered before they are what they are today. These sufferings are part of their collective heritage and that is what other people admire. That is why I decided leave a land mark before I died by introducing the association (mukum) called *adeng* and that is why I am referred to as Bo Adeng [i.e. owner of *Adeng*].”

This concept of pride is echoed by most informants. Common initiative groups with a self-help function also exist. Members are required to contribute on a monthly basis to a fund that will be shared out to members at the end of the year. Interest on loans is also distributed to members. A certain amount called “fresh bag” is left as a residue to be used for assisting needy persons. There is also a show of solidarity during funerals, weddings and other events that involve Kedjom clan members. Coming together thus serves to reaffirm and maintain identity.

-
7. In the ritual symbolism of Kedjom and Kom, vitality or the life force is transmitted from father to offspring through the sharing of a drink from the same cup, with the father drinking first and then handing the cup to the son.
 8. Njang is the generic term for dance. In this case dance and association life are intertwined.

Other practices identified by informants as tending to maintain identity are naming and cultural contributions to the Kom polity. They cited names such as Chia, Atemnkoh, Kecha and Kimbi as specifically Kedjom names that could be found within the Kedjom clan in Kom. In this way, collective identity is reinforced by individual identity. Institutions that informants identified as being specifically of Kedjom origin are itukijem (lit. Kijem day), which one informant traced to the day when Kedjom people pledged allegiance to Kom, the sacra of kwifon⁹, said to have been seized from the Kijem compound at Anjang, the ngang Kijem rite, and the institution of celebrating the birth of twins (iking). According to one informant,

“It takes place when a child is born and the parents decide to dedicate it to the gods. The symbol of the gods is a clay pot with three white lines and eyes marked with chalk. Dancing also takes place. When the Kedjom were in their settlement in Komland they celebrated births for at least one week during which they put corn beer in the clay pot and danced as they drink from it. At the end this pot was dedicated to the gods of the child through a special rite. Kom people borrowed this tradition from them”¹⁰.

In brief, as the Kedjom were being integrated into Kom, they maintained their identity through a variety of associations and practices which have in turn influenced the culture of Kom, thereby modifying it in the process. On the other hand, informants showed little concern for geographical markers of identity. No historical site or monument was mentioned as being of importance to Kedjom identity. The relationship with the Kedjom kingdoms of Kedjom Keku and Kedjom Ketinguh has not been very close or strong. While most informants indicated that they maintained relations with other Kedjom across borders (principally in the major settlement chiefdoms), other informants stressed their difference from the other Kedjom outside Kom since they are attached to Kom traditions. The latter indicated that they had no relations with these people since it was a new generation. This implied that, in the past, practice was for people to reaffirm their identity through contacts across political boundaries. They claimed that they had a different life style from affines in Kedjom Keku and Kedjom Ketinguh.

The Kedjom of the two kingdoms always refer to their affines elsewhere, probably to show their belonging to a large racial group, which cuts across ethnic boundaries. One Kedjom informant in Kedjom reports that Fon Vugah I made an unsuccessful bid to federate all Kedjom elements in the early half of the 20th century. Disagreements about the headship of this group seemed to have foiled this attempt. This was at a time when disagreements over issues of paramountcy in the British colonial period were rife, and one can

9. Principal regulatory organ and executive arm of traditional government in Kom as in other Grassfields polities. In some areas it is referred to as *kwifo(r)*; in others it is known as *ngwerung* or *ngumba*.

10. Data collected in the main Kedjom polities confirm this assertion. See also DIDUK (1993).

easily understand the underlying political motives. More recently, one can observe a rapprochement between the two Kedjom Kigdoms. For the moment, the Kedjom identity is lived in plurality in different contexts, under different practices and at different levels. It is ethnicity at two levels, namely the local community level, as can be observed in the Nso and Kom cases, and intercommunity level, as can be observed in the two chiefdoms. In the former case, the identity question is defined in relation to the other clans in Nso and Kom, where there are marked differences between clans federated into one overarching structure. In the latter case, the identity question is linked to other surrounding historic communities. In this regard, although all Kedjom elements share a common historical past and historical awareness, they have differing historical practices. As such, history would not be bound to produce the same awareness and the same practices.

Sawa Historical Awareness, Identity Formation and Historical Action

According to Austen and Derrick Duala (1999: 141), ethnicity and historical consciousness developed during the 1930s at a time when they had lost their predominant position as middlemen and had become “an ethnic minority in their city”. It was at this moment that historical consciousness developed from a mere collection of past events into a corpus of knowledge forming part of what Touraine calls a cultural model:

“By the 1930s all basis for... claims to economic and political hegemony over any portion of Cameroon had severely receded and, with reduced role of chieftainship, the divisions among the Duala had become less important. The Dual now became aware of themselves as a group with a history of interposition between Europeans and the rest of Cameroon. What remained of the middleman role, however, was precisely in history and the cultural advantages which derived from it” (*ibid.*: 169).

The recent upsurge in identity politics among the Sawa was organized on essentially different lines against marginalization within their “home-land”. It seemed to demonstrate that the process of democratization, which reduced the issue of leadership in these areas to a one-man-one-vote issue, was going to complete the process of alienation triggered by the expropriation of land for plantation agriculture and urbanization as well as by demographic expansion as a result of an influx of non-natives during the colonial period. In other words, indigenes were going to be the greatest losers in the game of democracy predicated on universal suffrage. The spontaneous organization of the coastal peoples into a social movement immediately after the local elections of 1996 was therefore a reaction to specific historical circumstances which were not necessarily related to the consciousness of history itself. It was inscribed in the logic of the protests and petitions that lasted the entire colonial period, starting with the expropriation crisis

and ending in sporadic opposition to French urbanization plans. It also sounded like a defence of the ambiguous middleman role, which fluctuated between collaboration and protest during the colonial period (Yenshu 1998). This consciousness was a creative process, isolated from a primordial history but referring to a modern process of historical formation which dislocated the peoples in question¹¹. One can wonder why peoples who had been separated and who had lost most of the contact that used to exist in pre-colonial times were able to mobilize and have a rallying point. Lacking a label for common identity, these peoples quickly identified with the Duala term Sawa. From the conception of seashore dwellers that this term referred to initially, this concept came to refer to all groups inhabiting the coastal provinces of the Littoral and South-West, bringing together peoples whose only rallying point was the threat of political alienation. It is a reference to history of a different type, i.e. of a negative appreciation of history. It is not a formulation of identity from common memories of a glorious past. It is a reference to a history of dislocation and disintegration under the push of modernization. That may account for its spontaneous, sporadic and ephemeral nature as it died out after certain political arrangements were effected by the Biya regime.

The historical awareness here is both latent and manifest, and is provoked occasionally by existential crises. Other markers of common identity thus overshadow historical awareness in this regard: dress, food habits, language, music, dance, religion/ritual, in short, culture. The threat of a revived Duala hegemony through a Sawa consciousness has provoked a feeling of cultural revivalism in this heterogeneous group. The heightened sense of specific cultural identity has thus arisen among peoples who had spontaneously identified themselves with the Sawa during the 1996 protests. Each group has thus fallen back on itself to stress its specific identity. One thus finds a proliferation of groups based on cultural similarity. One can identify the following examples:

— the Bassa-Mpoo-Bati movement, which brings together the Bassa, Bakoko, Bati and all culturally related peoples, e.g. Association d'Actions Positives Mpoo-Bassa;

— non-Duala elites, who identified with the Duala, have returned to their areas of origin and provoke a sort of cultural revivalism (Malimba, the Yabassi, Ewudi, Bafaw, Abo, Bakweri, and Bakaka).

These other identities are thus predicated on their primordial histories through which they trace ancestry and common experience. One can therefore say that these peoples participate at two levels of historical awareness and action: the level of the primordial historic community¹² and at the level of the regional transethnic movement, known here as the Sawa movement.

11. For details of the relation of this process to history, see YENSHU (1998).

12. For a detail on the use of this concept, see YENSHU (2000). I have borrowed the term from ZIEGLER (1980: 123-147), who uses it to refer to communities with roots in a very distant past.

History and Different Levels of Identity Consciousness Experiences

In attempting to establish a link between historical awareness and the development of identity, we need to look at history at two levels. The first level is the latent level where history is an accumulation of experiences lived by individuals, but which are not formulated into a body of knowledge to form part of what Touraine (1974) calls a model of knowledge. At this level, it is not yet part of the “capital informationnel” (Morin 1994: 132). It is translated and transmitted as bits of data from generation to generation as individual experiences within micro-level units such as the family, the clan, the neighbour or friendship cliques and other networks. It is this type of historical awareness that leads to sporadic movements which lack coordination. It is this type of latent consciousness that is at the basis of the Sawa movement.

The second level of historical awareness is manifest and is inscribed in a body of knowledge more or less formalized and systematically held together by a complex of mechanism-myth, ritual, legend and social practice. The Kedjom history would fall within this category. In terms of the link between the history of the Kedjom and social practice, it has been demonstrated that various inscriptive and incorporative practices derive from this history. According to Connerton (1989), there is an aspect of memory that is social. Such memory is either a dimension of political power or a dimension of the unconscious elements in social memory or both. The control of social memory largely controls the hierarchy of power because the control and ownership of information is largely a political issue. Connerton goes on to argue that “images of the past legitimate a present order. It is an implicit rule that participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory. To the extent that memories of a society diverge, to that extent its members can share neither experiences nor assumptions... We may say that our experiences of the present largely depend upon our knowledge of the past and that our images of the past commonly serve to legitimate a present social order” (*ibid.*: 3). This is because “[the] production of more or less told narrative stories turns out to be a basic activity for the characterisation of human actions” as “a feature of all communal memory” (*ibid.*: 17).

Such historical images would be “conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances” (*ibid.*: 3-4) which are pregnant with meaning. Connerton argues that if there is such a thing as social memory, one would likely find it in commemorative ceremonies although they are only commemorative through performance, which relies in the final analysis on habits. However, social memory would be distinct from the practice of historical reconstruction. Knowledge of the past is present in knowledge of their traces which may be material or non-material. It is not dependent on social memory. Historical reconstruction would still be necessary when social memory preserved direct testimony of an event. This practice could

receive “guiding impetus” from, and in turn give shape to, the memory of social groups (*ibid.*: 14). In other words, we can use what is conserved in practices, whether such practices are bodily or inscriptive, to establish historical fact (albeit not relying exclusively on it) although the process of reconstruction itself would serve to shape new forces of social practices.

Connerton (1989) has identified both incorporating and inscriptive practices as the object of hermeneutic interpretation, although hermeneutics has tended to thrive more on inscriptive activity. This is so because “whatever is written, and more generally whatever is inscribed, demonstrates, by the fact of being inscribed, a will to be remembered and reaches as it were its fulfilment in the formation of a canon”. However, Connerton argues that the mnemonic importance and persistence of what is incorporated should not be underestimated. This is very significant for fundamentally non-literate societies such as the ones we are dealing with.

Bodily (incorporated) practices therefore tend to acquire the same characteristics as commemorative ceremonies because they are all performative and because they have been preserved in “a habitual memory sedimented in the body” (*ibid.*: 102). They are preserved in categories such as the rhetoric of enactment, verbal repetition, and gestural repetition, while commemorative ceremonies preserve facts in ritual and occasion. “Interpretation is now seen as the explicit, conscious understanding of [. . .] meanings under conditions where an understanding of these meanings can no longer be presumed as a self-evident process but is viewed as intrinsically problematic” (*ibid.*: 95).

We could apply such a framework in the Kedjom historical traditions and their relation to social practices. In this regard, we can start by asserting that the disagreements over historical facts reflect political disagreements, each version striving to legitimate notions of superiority, seniority or authenticity. It is in such a perspective that we can situate the quarrel over ritual procedure that leads to the formation of two Kedjom communities, the disagreements over historical tradition relative to the peace pact with Kom and the divergence over itineraries of migratory movement evident in Bafut and Kedjom versions.

As to the political implications of the historical traditions, one can say that the discourse is largely affected by modern political developments¹³. The design of new administrative structures with the colonial experience and the development of the post-colonial state have brought together peoples who might or might not have shared a common pre-colonial history. The British colonial attempt to use historical tradition to define administrative units within the Indirect Rule framework evidently affected the mode of historical construction among the peoples of what is now called the North-West Province of Cameroon. This was especially so when Native Authority areas were heterogeneous and lacked a clear-cut paramount chief, as was

13. For more details, cf. YENSHU & NGWA (2001).

the case with the area that comprised Bafut and Kedjom. If historical narratives always have a political intention such as keeping people together in a political group, the obvious political objectives of the historical tradition are hardly as glaring as the ones generated by the British experience. It is true that people living together must entertain one form of relation or other which may or may not establish common historical origins. The distortions and contradictions observed in narratives about the past of people in the North West Province are testimony of the introduction of alien categories by the British. In this regard, categories such as Tikar (Tikari, Tikar, Ndop), Ngemba, Chamba and Widekum either correspond to virtually nothing in the primordial versions of the local histories or become an enigma to the researcher (Fardon 1996) although they have formed the basis of new social histories. Any analysis of the histories must bear in mind the influence of the colonial and post-colonial experience which brings with it competition between ethnic formations.

Coming back to commemorative ceremonies as well as inscriptive and bodily practices, we may say that Kedjom people lack foundation myths or legends, as one may find elsewhere with the Bamum, Bansa and others in the Grassfields (Tardits 1980; Mohammadou 1971). On the contrary, one can observe myths and legends which inaugurate social practices and are therefore inscribed (at least, not in writing), incorporated or institutionalised in commemorative ceremonies.

The most important of these narratives is that of Fon¹⁴ Mbuwain (lit. the childless one) and the Abankembong myth (Chilver 1963). The activities related in these narrative inaugurate core ritual activities and practices such as the KebenKendong (Hawkesworth's nyinksy) festival and rites of purification. The narrative of this childless king that we collected during our fieldwork runs thus:

“Early in Mbungeng’s reign the latter noticed a young wife of his late father behaving in the manner of women (i.e. being frivolous). He immediately administered her the sasswood ordeal (*gwu*) and killed her. Her blood was consequently spilled on Mbungeng’s head. He was cursed and never bore any children till he died. He was therefore also referred to as Mbuwain (lit. he who has no offspring). On his death his mother was so aggrieved that he wondered what would become of the kingdom since her son had died without offspring. After consultation, it was agreed that his brother... should take over his property i.e. succeed him”¹⁵.

Chilver (1963) records from a manuscript prepared by the reigning Kedjom Fon at the time of her research that “Mbungeng [. . .] had no child and for this reason is called Fon Mbuwan (Fon who lacks a child) and every monarch after him maker a celebration for his death”. Harter (1986)

14. Local term for king.

15. A similar version was collected by king Njoya of the Bamum, probably from Kedjom traders and reproduced as part of his *Histoire et Coutumes des Bamoum* (translated by Pastor Martin) under the title *L’histoire de mfon Benzam*.

strikingly describes the inscription of these events preserved in a Kedjom sculptured pillar carved by foyn Phuonchu and preserved in the Geneva Ethnographic Museum. The execution scene is presented in the following manner:

“At the top sentence of death is announced by a high dignitary by means of a two-tone double membrane drum-probably he is a member of *Kwifon*, since he has a leopard on his head. Below an executioner fires a trade gun into the ground, thus celebrating the death-ceremony of the condemned man. He, to judge by his two bracelets and his *Ndop* cap, is of high rank and is seducer of a recognisable queen, shown below him, wearing many bracelets and carrying an infant. Below her is another member of *Kwifon* striking a double gong, doubtless one of the judge” (Translation by Mrs Chilver).

Another scene is presented of a pillar preserved in the Basel Ethnographic Museum of “a hanging” wherein “Two executioners are shown, one holding a rope in both hands, the other pushing at the victim’s feet. Both turn their heads away as they are forbidden to watch death” (*ibid.*). Harter remarks that these “two scenes may refer to an historical event but they are also a sort of advertisement to palace visitors who may entertain some lubricious intention, since a recent copy was placed at the entry to the present palace at Babanki-Daso [i.e. Kedjom in short]”. One would be more inclined to the thesis of a historical presentation since the two communities could simultaneously make such presentations independently of each other. Besides, we may paraphrase Connerton by saying that what is engraved or preserved is meant to be remembered. In this case this incident is obviously remembered: in historical narrative, commemorative ceremony, engraving (carving) and more recently in writing.

There is a commemoration of *pfu foyn mbuwain* (lit. death of the childless king), meant to remember the unfortunate incident and the fate of this king. It marks atonement for the shedding of innocent blood and the cleansing of a monarchy which risked being cursed. The significance of Fon Mbuwain’s death is the break in the dynastic line, royalty being supposedly an unbreakable chain. With this break one would notice a sort of drying up of dynastic substance which is expected to be the source of vitality and prosperity (Diduk 1987: 137). The childless death of the king thus meant pollution and a virtual end to the dynasty. The transfer of power to a brother followed the principle of sibling brothers being custodians of each other’s property (symbolised here by the image of the bag) since, in the Kedjom tradition, brothers do not inherit each other, the principle of direct father-son descent being the rule. The perpetual commemorative ceremony for the death of Mbuwain signifies his perpetual father status to all Kedjom kings (although from the land of the dead). It also implies a permanent caretaker status for all Fons. In metaphysical terms one would present temporal monarchs as not actually divine but only really occupying a temporal status as opposed to Mbuwain who is the perpetual monarch and father

to all who only exercise power through him. Confining this commemorative ceremony to the dry season symbolises the dryness provoked by the act of wrongful execution and an appeal for renewal when the earth becomes fresh again. I am also tempted to indicate that, in a way, this incident *represents* an original sin for the Kedjom for which they periodically expiate in the commemorative ceremony. The inscription in Njoya's *Histoires* only goes to add to the importance of the incident and the spread of its significance in foundation history.

The other myth, which has received less or no attention in historical narratives, is the story of Abankembong, who is often presented in the Kedjom as the "culture-hero" (Chilver and Kaberry 1967b: 43). Menang (n.d.) describes the Abankembong legend in the following terms:

"Abankembong, this god of music [. . .] is said to have bequeathed the ndong dance to the Kedjom people. Famed musician and endowed with supernatural powers, Abankembong is said to have come from nowhere to live among the Kedjom people. He spent his time either playing his harp or performing miracles. Many unsuccessful attempts were made by his enemies to kill him. When at last he believed he had lived with his people long enough to accomplish his mission, he then handed down the dance [Ndong], instruments and all, to the Kedjom people and afterwards offered himself to his enemies who finally killed him..."

Chilver and Kaberry's informant (1963 field notes) said he brought all kinds of seeds and masks, carvings, "music and could play himself. He never ate anything ordinary people do". This is when he is talking about the ironworkers who he claims "suddenly appeared" among the Kedjom after being sent by a God. They liken Abankembong to a "kind of Jesus". Some versions of the legend point to his betrayal and assassination by enemies and his eventual resurrection before he endowed the Kedjom with the elements of material culture and arts for which they are reputed¹⁶.

This legend is situated at a less temporal plane than the Mbuwain narrative, which is overtly situated at an identifiable period, even though in a less precise manner. One can start by observing the murder and resurrection towards creativity as a motive. Murder is generally a polluting act which is likely to destroy the essence of community, but this one is committed as a way of purging the community of an element that is considered disruptive¹⁷. The innovative one becomes a hero when he overcomes death. He is still a kind-hearted individual who returns to bequeath his knowledge to the community that finally adopts him and his marvels as theirs.

16. Martin Viyu Bumuh has given us a slightly dramatized version, which owes very much to the fertility of creative imagination (personal communication). More recently Neku (n.d.) has also proposed another version.

17. This bears striking similarities to the Hebrew argument that it is better for one man to die for a nation than for a nation to die for one man. This argument was used to deliver Jesus over to the Roman authorities for crucifixion.

Chronologically, this narrative would be pointing to a proto-historical period and symbolise events at a time when rudimentary inventions were circulated. The visit of strangers (at times assimilated to gods) with innovations would represent the circulation of knowledge through population movements. However, as in our case, the stranger is not always welcome and has to go through the ordeal of martyrdom before becoming a hero. This period then marks the concomitant introduction of iron metallurgy and Asiatic complex of cultigens suggested elsewhere (Warnier 1984: 10). The commemorative ceremony that celebrates this event is the *KebenKendong* (lit. dance of flutes [in allusion to Abankembong's flutes]). It is a period of festivities and renewal as the Fon makes yearly sacrifices to his ancestors and a period when the community is renewed through "constitutional dance", to borrow the term used by Engard (1989) for Bafut. The dance, here, acquires the status of a constitutional ceremony because Kwifon has to reaffirm the powers of the Fon by renewing its support. Beyond this, Kwifon has to honour the Fon, the lineage heads—descended directly from the founders themselves—(Diduk 1987: 67-68) and the smith as the most important craftsmen of the community. One can now discover the link between Abankembong, smith, dance and the Fon. Once this ceremony is enacted, the inauguration myth is revived and with it can be remembered the inauguration of the cultural era that is identified as Kedjom¹⁸. It is also significant to note that it is around this commemorative ceremony that a disagreement occurs, leading to a fundamental rupture between the proponents of the primacy of this rite and those who argue for humane considerations (*ibid.*: 57). In terms of incorporative practices we can notice the centrality of dance as a complex of social, religious and constitutional practice. It is not only a period of refreshment and holiday, but it also marks a renewal in social relations:

"The 'Ndong' Festival variously known among the Kedjom people of the North West Province as 'keben-ke-nong' or 'Ndu-nyunsi' is a folk festival that usually takes place once a year between the months of January and March. The festival provides a break from the tedious farm work and, immediately preceding the planting season, is also an occasion for the performance of certain fertility and purification rites that are believed to ensure a plentiful harvest. The Ndong festival is also an occasion for cementing social bonds through the settlement of disputes and the exchange of gifts that precede it. While various rites are performed in secret by 'initiés', the dancing and re-enacting of famous battles won by the Kedjom people take place in public and both activities are attended by the clansmen who generally seize this unique opportunity to mix and rub shoulders with the chief and noblemen" (Menang 1998: 52).

18. DIDUK (1987: 67-69) has also suggested that this festival celebrates the history of the Kedjom, although from a less mythical perspective. She is more concerned with the process of political incorporation that is re-enacted.

Practices linked to this occasion have thus become an integral part of the lives of the Kedjom, which link them to inauguration ceremonies at foundation. Could they be the very myths or legends that are replicated in the Bafut case with the legend of Agha'anjoo or Nkim (Engard 1988)?

What then is the epistemological value of myth and legend? Dika Akwa (1987: 58-87) has amply demonstrated the value of these forms of social imagination in the production of knowledge:

“Le mythe, la légende, l'épopée, et le conte étant la sublimation, l'idéalisation, la poétisation et la caricature du réel vécu et ne s'opposent pas de manière intrinsèque au monde de l'imaginaire.”

They preserve in imaginative form what Connerton (1989) referred to as social knowledge unlike social memory *stricto sensu*. Hence knowledge which, neither explicitly nor implicitly, seeks to legitimate a present order may actually carry with it vestiges of the past which could be used in eliciting historical facts. In this category of apparently useful narratives would be folk tales, rhymes, poetry, proverbs, sayings, figures of speech, short stories, etc. which have been preserved over the years. In one case, we may be looking at the content of these forms of orature (Tala 1984, 1989) to determine the historical epoch to which they belong. In other cases, we may be looking at forms of literature belonging to specific groups to determine a common historical experience. In this regard, we would be using incorporated linguistic practices to probe into histories. An example can be provided by references to the Ntur in Kedjom folk tales although the Oku polity has replaced the Ntur as a group. Some of these folk tales are common over a certain geographical and linguistic area (Ring Group of Grassfields Bantu) (Lantum 1964; Neku n.d.), thus pointing to either a common historical experience at some time or the circulation of these forms of literature within this space at a specific period. A careful study of some of the objects (inscriptive practices) and the orature would be of historical value.

If we look at the data in hand, we find that the identity of the Kedjom elements in Kom is boosted by their organization into a strong civil society component. Their organization into modern and traditional associations may be instructive of the vital link with history.

The manipulation and management of multiple-level identities is common to both peoples under study. The Kedjom in the Diaspora (Kom, Oku, Nso) consciously live these multiple identities without there arising a problem of double allegiance. They are integrated into their particular settings while maintaining their age-old identities. At one level, they point to their Kedjom identity that would identify them with other Kedjom and, at another level, they stress on their Kom, Nso or Oku identity. This is lived as an ambivalent situation. On the one hand there is this attempt to link up with the Kedjom Keku that is found in some informants of Kom who affirm that

relations with the Kedjom of Mezam Division are alive and the attempt by Shufai of Jem Vikovi to link up with the main polity of Kedjom Keku (Yenshu 2001). In fact, the latter proposes a reconciliatory meeting with the main body of the Kedjom. On the other hand, we find those who feel that these relations are of a different generation or those who assert that they are simply Kom or Nso. Whatever the case, there is a manipulation and management of multiple-level identities when people affirm both their Kedjom identity and their Nso or Kom belonging at different levels for different purposes. The same situation is true of the Kedjom of Kedjom Keku and Kedjom Ketinguh, probably in a different way. Although not perceptible, the differences between the communities are minimal but real. These differences are lived within a feeling of common identity, which would explain the affirmed intention to live within the same modern administrative and political unit whether it be Bafut and Bafut-Babanki (colonial), Bafut Area Council or Tubah (post-colonial). There is also a sustained attempt to identify with Bafut, despite the obvious linguistic and cultural differences¹⁹. This, thus, puts the question of identification at three levels (specific local, supra-local and regional). Here, the history of cohabitation and accommodation in the formation of historical consciousness becomes an important factor.

This can also be observed in the Sawa group. Sawa identity—especially its Duala component—is the result of two levels of historical awareness. Firstly, there is the ever-present assault of modernity characterized by expropriation, urbanization and relegation to a minority status in a modern “nation-state” setting, all this unfolding at different phases of global capitalism. This inspires a tradition of challenge to the modern order. Secondly, there is the history of privilege and elitism characterized by the middleman position. It was this history that was reformulated in the 1930s and spurred the Sawa protests of 1996 which projected the contradictory demands for a privileged position as mayors in their own homeland and for protection as an autochthonous minority (Yenshu 1998: 28). These apparently contradictory demands are derived from the “ambivalent perception of modernity on the one hand as essentially destructive and alien, and on the other as a provider of scarce resources” (*ibid.*: 34). The invention of the Ngondo, with apparently no historical roots prior to the late 1940s, is also an attempt to “evoke a history fraught with contradictions” and claim an “earlier political unity” in the face of “domineering political, economic and cultural forces” (Austen and Derrick 1999: 190). Even Dika Akwa’s reference to Egyptian origins for the Sawa was echoed in dress resembling ancient Egyptian style during his own funeral and is still replicated in some local rituals. This is, however, ephemeral.

19. For a detailed analysis of identity question resulting from this situation, see YENSHU and NGWA (2001).

As such, the multiple identities are premised on different measures of historical depth viz. short, medium and long range (*la longue durée*) to borrow from Fernand Braudel. As Berger and Luckmann (1967: 173-174) would have it, “societies have histories in the course of which identities emerge; these specific histories are, however, made by men with specific historic identities... specific historical structures engender identity types, which are recognizable in individual cases”.

We can therefore conclude this section by saying that historical narratives have inspired certain social practices. Some of these historical events have been preserved in fragmentary legend (as is the case with the Abankembong legend) and tragic narrative (Fon Mbuwain). The myths themselves have been preserved in commemorative ceremonies (regular rituals or festivals), bodily practices (rituals, folk tales, dance) and inscriptive practices (carvings). One can thus go beyond the surface of narratives to elicit fact in the content, form and meaning of these practices.

Managing Identities in the Modern Setting

The analysis seems to be attractive as a model for the modern setting where the crisis of identity seems to be leading to a catastrophe. The principal question is whether it is possible for various communities to live their individual identities at their level and at the same time live the identity of citizens within a nation-state. The pertinence of this question is prompted by the crisis of identity and the corresponding attitude of the modern state whose manifest intentions have been to transform or kill local identities perceived as problematic or antithetical to national construction. The latter attitude has been expressed overtly by architects of the nation-state predicated on the modern European models where the process involved the transcendence of ethnic identities (Morin 1994; Ziegler 1980). One needs to observe the vehemence with which local identities have been fought by the monolithic regimes to understand the animosity between the modern state and local historic communities (Yenshu 1998: 38). This model of universal dimensions has, however, not succeeded in creating this one-identity nation-state even in areas where this has been an ideal (Amin 1998). One is therefore left only with the model of identity pluralism to experiment with. One proposal has been partially premised on an integration of values derived from local historic identities (Yenshu 2000). In this regard, we may add the management of multiple levels of identity: rather than seek to obliterate the identities of historic communities, one may need to recognize and integrate these identities in the modern context. This will definitely exploit the values of tolerance, accommodation and cooperation that characterize regional-level groups in replacement of savage competition, conflicts and animosity.

Again, the historical factor will have to come into play. Just how history will be instrumental cannot be predicted exactly at this moment. What we can say is that it will take time for the formation of the overarching structure of African national identities to be realized. The note of caution that can be learnt from the identity formation process under study is that success can only be achieved when people are directed to manage the various levels of identity themselves. In this process, the short-term consciousness of Cameroon's identity will definitely be ephemeral while in the medium and long term the manipulation and management of the plural situation will be more crystallized and become part of subjective reality. In other words, this is only possible when the people can, for example, freely consider themselves as Nso, English-speaking Cameroonian and Cameroonian at the same time without any of these statuses constituting a problem. This is just one lesson learnt from the local-level identity formation.

*

The study has analyzed the maintenance of deeply entrenched identities and the reformulation of new ones built around historical processes. We have demonstrated that identities are not undifferentiated and one-dimensional social realities. Neither are historical experiences, the awareness of which secretes identity. We have indicated that the force of the historic communities lies in their capacity to manipulate and manage this situation of identity pluralism. We are proposing that this type of experiences serve as a model for co-existence between communities in the modern setting. Our argument is that, in the final analysis, the success of the model will depend on how long the experiment of co-existence in tolerance, accommodation, co-operation and collaboration will last.

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Buea, Cameroon.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

AMIN, S.

- 1998 "Ethnicity: Assault on the Nation", in Chris UROH (ed.), *Africa and the Challenge of Development. Essays by Samir Amin* (Ibadan: Hope Publications): 48-72.

ARDENER, E.

- 1956 *Coastal Bantu of the Cameroons* (The Kpe-Mboko, Duala, Limba and Tanya-Yasa Groups of the British Cameroons) (London: International African Institute).

ARDENER, E. & ARDENER, S.

- 1981 "Preliminary Chronological Notes for the South", in C. TARDITS (ed.), *Contributions de la recherche ethnologique à l'Histoire des civilisations du Cameroun*, Colloques internationaux du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, n° 551, Paris, 24-28 September 1973 (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique).

AUSTEN, R. A.

- 1996 "Mythic Transformation and Historical Continuity: The Duala of Cameroon and German Colonialism 1884-1914", in I. FOWLER & D. ZEITLYN (eds), *African Crossroads: Intersections between History and Anthropology in Cameroon* (Oxford: Berghahn Books): 17-44.

AUSTEN, R. A. & DERRICK, J.

- 1999 *Middlemen of the Cameroons River. The Duala and their Hinterland, c.1600-c.1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

BAUMANN, H. & WESTERMANN, D.

- 1967 *Les peuples et civilisations d'Afrique* (Paris: Payot).

BAUMANN, H. & VAJDA, L.

- 1959 "Benard Ankermann's volkerkundliche Aufzeichnungenim Grasland von Kamerun", *Baessler-Archiv*, N.F. Band VII: 298-299.

BERGER, P. L. & LUCKMANN, T.

- 1967 *The Social Construction of Reality. A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books).

BIYA, P.

- 1987 *Communal Liberalism* (Paris: Pierre-Marie Favre/ABC; London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Publishers Ltd.).

BRETON, R. & DIEU, M.

- 1983 "More than 300 languages in Cameroon", *The Courier*, No. 80 (July/August): 92-95.

BUMUH, M. V.

- 1985 "Abankimbong, the man from the Sky", *The Mould*, No. 5 (May).

BURNHAM, P. C.

1996 *The Politics of Cultural Difference in Northern Cameroon* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press).

CHAZAN, N. R., RAVENHILL, M. J. & ROTHSCHILD, D.

1992 *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.).

CHILVER, E.

1963 *A Brief Visit to Kújom Keku 0 (Big Babanki), 16-18 July - 20-22 July 1963*. Privately circulated notes.

1981 "Chronological Synthesis: The Western Region Comprising the Western Grassfields, Bamum, the Bamileke Chiefdoms and Central Mbam", in C. TARDITS (ed.), *The Contribution of Ethnological Research to the History of Cameroon Cultures*, Colloques internationaux du CNRS, No. 551 (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique).

CHILVER, E. & KABERRY, P. M.

1967a "The Kingdom of Kom in West Cameroon", in D. FORDE & P. M. KABERRY (eds.), *West Africa Kingdoms in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford University Press for the International African Institute): 123-151.

1967b *Traditional Bamenda. The Precolonial History and Ethnography of the Bamenda Grassfields*, Vol. 1 (Buea: Ministry of Primary Education and Social Welfare and West Cameroon Antiquities Commission).

1971 "The Tikar Problem: a Non-Problem", *Journal of African Languages*, 10 (2): 13-14.

CONNERTON, P.

1989 *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

DERRICK, J.

1989 "Colonial Elitism in Cameroon: The Case of the Duala in the 1930s", in M. MJEUMA (ed.), *Introduction to the History of Cameroon: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Macmillan Publishers).

DIDUK, S. E.

1987 *The Paradox of Secrets: Power and Ideology in Kedjom Society*. Ph. D. Thesis Indiana University, The University Microfilm International (Ann Arbor, Michigan).

1993 "Twins, Ancestors and Socio-economic Change in Kedjom Society", *Man. The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 28 (3): 551-571.

DIKA AKWA NYA BONAMBELA, LE PRINCE.

1982 *Problèmes de l'anthropologie et de l'histoire africaines* (Yaoundé: Éditions CLE).

1987 "L'imaginaire social et la connaissance", *SA Bulletin de Liaison du CREA*, novembre/décembre 1987, Nouvelle Série 2 B: 58-87.

DOUMBE-MOULONGO, M.

- 1968 "Origines et migrations des Duala", *Abbia. Revue culturelle camerounaise/Cameroon Cultural Review*, No. 20 (June): 79-150.

ENGARD, R. K.

- 1988 "Myth and Political Economy in Bafut (Cameroon). The structural History of an African Kingdom", *Paideuma* 34: 51-89.
- 1989 "Dance and Power in Bafut (Cameroon)", in W. ARENS & I. KARP (eds), *Creativity of Power: Cosmology and African Societies* (Washington DC: Smithsonian institution Press): 129-162.

ERMONTS, J.

- 1927 *Ins Steppen-und Bergland InnerKameruns; aus dem Leben und deutscher Afrikamissionare* (Aachen: Xaveriusverlag).

FARDON, R. O.

- 1996 "The Person, Ethnicity and the Problem of Identity in West Africa", in I. FOWLER and D. ZEITLYN (eds), *African Crossroads: intersections between history and anthropology in Cameroon* (Oxford: Berghahn Books): 17-44.

FOWLER, I. & ZEITLYN, D.

- 1996 "The Grassfields and the Tikar", in I. FOWLER & D. ZEITLYN (eds), *African crossroads: Intersections of Ethnography and History* (Oxford; Berghahn Books): 1-15.

HARTER, P.

- 1986 *Arts anciens du Cameroun* (Arnonville: Arts d'Afrique).

JEFFREYS, M. D. W.

- 1964 "Who are the Tikar?", *African Studies*, 23 (2-3): 141-153.

KALA LOBE, I.

- 1977 *Douala Manga Bell: Héros de la résistance Duala* (Paris: Éditions ABC).

KUKLICK, H.

- 1978 "The Sins of the Fathers: British Anthropology and African Colonial Administration", in R. A. JONES (ed.), *Research in the Sociology of Knowledge, Sciences and Art. An annual compilation of Research*, Vol. 1 (Greenwich, Connecticut: JAI Press Inc): 93-119.

LANTUM, D.

- 1964 *Folk Tales of Nso* (Lagos: Nso History Society Publications).

LEVINE, V. T.

- 1964 *The Cameroons: From Mandate to Independence* (Berkeley/Los Angeles University of California Press).

MATUTE, D. L.

- 1990 *Facing Mt. Cameroon: An Ethnographic study of the Bakweri of Cameroon* (Milwaukee: OMNIPRESS).

MBAKE, S. N.

1975 *Traditional Authority among the Bakweri. An Historical Survey from Historical Times*, Dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the DES in History (University of Yaounde).

MENANG, T. M.

1998 "In Support of Indigenous Theatre. The Nakang as Actor", in B. BUTAKE & G. DOHO, *Théâtre camerounais. Actes du Colloque de Yaoundé* (Yaoundé: BET and Co. [Publishers] Ltd.): 52-65.

(n.d.) "A Special Language for a Special Speaker. The Case of Sukwe, the Language of the Nakang", in F. MBASSI MANGA, M. NOAH, J. LAMBO & J. TAMBİ (eds), *Occasional Papers of the Department of English*, Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences (Yaoundé: University of Yaoundé).

MOHAMMADOU, E.

1971 *Traditions d'origine des peuples du centre et de l'ouest du Cameroun: Mboum, Tikar, Bamoun, Bamenda, Banson, Bamileke et Vouté* (Yaoundé: Ministère de la Culture et de la Formation professionnelle, Centre fédéral linguistique).

MORIN, E.

1994 [1984] *Sociologie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil/Fayard).

NEKU, N. A.

(n.d.) *Two Tales from Kedjom Land, a Play and a Myth, Abankembong* (Mimeograph).

NKWI, P. N.

1976 *Traditional Government and Social Change. A Study of the Political Institutions among the Kom of the Cameroon Grassfields* (Fribourg: The University Press, Studia Ethnographica Friburgensia).

1987 *Traditional Diplomacy. A Study of Inter-chiefdom Relations in the Western Grassfields, North West Province of Cameroon* (Yaoundé: Publications of the Department of Sociology, University of Yaoundé).

NKWI, P. N. & SOCPA, A.

1997 "Ethnicity and Party Politics in Cameroon: The Policy of 'Divide and Rule'", in NKWI & NJAMNJOH (eds), *Regional Balance and National Integration in Cameroon. Lessons Learnt and the Uncertain Future* (Yaoundé: ICASSRT/Leiden: ASC): 138-149.

NKWI, P. N. & WARNIER, J.-P.

1982 *Elements for a History of the Western Grassfields* (Yaoundé: Department of Sociology, University of Yaoundé).

NORTHERN, T.

1979 *Splendour and Secrecy: Art of the Cameroon Grassland* (New York: Page Primitive and Ancient Art).

PRICE, D.

1979 "Who are the Tikar Now?", *Paideuma* 21: 87-98.

- TAKOUGANG, J. & KRIEGER, M.
1998 *African State and Society in the 1990s* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press).
- TALA, I. K.
1984 *An Introduction to Cameroon Oral Literature* (Yaoundé: The University of Yaounde).
1989 *The Oral Tale in Africa* (Yaoundé: BET and Co. Publishers).
- TARDITS, C.
1980 *Le Royaume Bamoum* (Paris: EDISEM/Publications de la Sorbonne/Armand Colin).
- TOURAINÉ, A.
1974 *Pour la Sociologie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil).
- VIDAL VILLA, J. M.
1995 "Ten Theses on Globalisation", Unesco Chair On Sustainable Development (ed.). *Social Development: Challenges and Strategies* (Rio de Janeiro: UFRJ/EICOS).
- WARNIER, J. P.
1975 *Precolonial Mankon. The Development of a Cameroon Chiefdom in its Regional Setting*. Ph. D. thesis. University of Pennsylvania.
1982 "Archéologie et Histoire au Cameroun: Le cas de l'Ouest", *Cahiers de Sociologie*, 1: 13-17.
1984 "L'histoire du peuplement et genèse des paysages dans l'Ouest camerounais", *Journal of African History* 25: 395-410.
1985 *Échanges, Développement et Hiérarchies dans le Bamenda précolonial (Cameroun)* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag).
- WEBER, M.
1965 "Extract of *Economy and Society*", in T. PARSONS (ed.), *Theories of Society. Foundations of Modern Sociological Thought* (New York: The Free Press/London: Collier-Macmillan): 305-309.
- YENSHU VUBO, E.
1997 "Balanced Rural Development in Cameroon within a Democratic Context", in P. N. NKWI & F. B. NYAMNJOH, *Regional Balance and National Integration in Cameroon: Lessons Learnt and the uncertain Future* (Leiden: African Studies Centre/Yaoundé: International Centre for Applied Social Science and Training [ICASSRT]), ICASSRT Monograph No. 1: 129-137.
1998 "The Discourse and Politics of Indigenous/Minority People's Rights in Some Metropolitan Areas of Cameroon", *Journal of Applied Social Sciences. A multidisciplinary Journal of the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences*, University of Buea, 1 (1): 25-41.
2000 "Cultural Pluralism and National Cohesion in Cameroon. A Critical Analysis", Paper presented at the colloquium on the topic "Dialogue of Cultures and the Culture of Peace. The Cameroon Model", Buea 17-23 December 2000.
2001 *Itinerant Craftsmen, Highland Farmers and Royal Herdsmen. An Interpretation of Kedjom Historical Traditions* (Limbe: Design House).

YENSHU VUBO, E. & NGWA, G. A.

2001 "Changing Intercommunity Relations and the Politics of Identity in the Northern Mezam Cameroon Area", *Cahiers d'études Africaines*, XLI (1), 161: 163-190.

ZEITLYN, D.

1996 "Eldridge Mohammadou on Tikar Origins", *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford (JASO)*, XXVI (1): 99-104.

ZIEGLER, J.

1980 *Main basse sur l'Afrique. La recolonisation* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil).

ABSTRACT

The development of a sense of history and collective identity that is consequent on it has tended to vary depending on whether this is situated at the local community or the level of the framework of the modern nation-state in the making. This affected the politics of identity in the colonial period and has continued to fashion that of the postcolonial situation. There is evidently a contradiction between scientific and ideological constructions of history. The paper explores the formulation or reformulation of history, the development of identity in the Sawa and Kedjom communities of Cameroon. The paper demonstrates that history inspires different types of practices at different level with the politics of identity being only one of the levels. Local level histories are thus essentially histories that ensure the cultural, psychosocial and political unity of a group while regional level histories tend to portray intercommunity relations. The impact of colonial and post colonial developments on the awareness of history with diverse groups obliged to cohabit within one single space is not to be underestimated as this triggers off tensions. The paper also describes how communities manage identity pluralism at different levels depending on the different meanings that are attributed to historical traditions and argues that this is quite possible in the modern nation state that brings together a variety of historic communities. However historical depth would be an important factor in the formation of historical awareness and the management of identity pluralism.

RÉSUMÉ

Niveaux de conscience historique. Développement de l'identité et ethnicité au Cameroun. — Le développement d'une conscience historique et de l'identité qui en découle tendent à varier selon qu'on se situe au niveau de la communauté locale ou au niveau de l'État-nation qui se forge. Cela a été à la base de la politique identitaire pendant la période coloniale et continue à influencer sur celle de la période post coloniale. Il y a contraction évidente entre constructions scientifiques et constructions idéologiques de l'histoire. L'article passe en revue des constructions ou des reconstructions de l'histoire, le développement de l'identité et la politique identitaire dans les communautés kedjom et sawa du Cameroun. L'argument principal est que l'histoire inspire différents types de pratiques à différents niveaux, la politique identitaire n'étant qu'un de ces niveaux. Les traditions historiques au niveau local sont donc essentiellement des traditions qui façonnent l'unité culturelle, psychosociale et politique d'un groupe, tandis que les traditions du niveau régional sont à la base des

relations inter-communautaires. Néanmoins, il ne faut pas sous-estimer l'influence du colonialisme et des développements au sein de l'État postcolonial sur la conscience historique. Ces processus sont d'ailleurs à la base des tensions entre groupes ethniques. L'article décrit comment des communautés gèrent le pluralisme identitaire à des niveaux différents selon le sens qu'ils donnent aux traditions historiques et soutient que cela est tout aussi possible dans un État-nation qui réunit diverses communautés historiques. Reste que la durée est un facteur majeur dans la formation de la conscience historique et la gestion du pluralisme identitaire.

Keywords/Mots-clés: Cameroon, history, identity, ethnicity, consciousness, pluralism, nation-state, historical depth/Cameroun, histoire, identité, ethnicité, conscience, pluralisme, État-nation, durée de l'histoire.