



Cahiers d'études africaines

177 | 2005
Varia

KONINGS, Piet & NYAMNJOH, Francis B. — *Negotiating an Anglophone Identity. A Study of the Politics of Recognition and Representation in Cameroon*. Leiden-Boston, Brill (Afrika-Studiecentrum Series, Vol. 1), 2003, 230 p.

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Édition électronique

URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesafricaines/4977>
ISSN : 1777-5353

Éditeur

Éditions de l'EHESS

Édition imprimée

Date de publication : 1 janvier 2005
ISBN : 978-2-7132-2047-0
ISSN : 0008-0055

Référence électronique

Emmanuel Yenshu Vubo, « KONINGS, Piet & NYAMNJOH, Francis B. — *Negotiating an Anglophone Identity. A Study of the Politics of Recognition and Representation in Cameroon*. Leiden-Boston, Brill (Afrika-Studiecentrum Series, Vol. 1), 2003, 230 p. », *Cahiers d'études africaines* [En ligne], 177 | 2005, mis en ligne le 11 avril 2005, consulté le 22 avril 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesafricaines/4977>

Ce document a été généré automatiquement le 22 avril 2019.

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- 1 One of the paradoxes of the neo-liberal drive, otherwise referred to as globalisation, has been the resurgence of the identity question, that is, "...the gradual unravelling of identities based on the state, a decline of identities based on political ideology — and identities based on culture"¹ as the streamlining effect of the ideological and political context of the Cold War has given way resulting in a radical questioning of the very basis of the modern model of the nation-state. The conjuncture of globalisation with its call for less of the state and the politics of identity of a fragmentary nature has had the effect of discrediting the very fragile basis of post-colonial arrangements in nation-building in the South² although not confined to it³. While the politics of identity in the majority of cases has been predicated on primordial historic/ethnic communities, the Anglophone community in Cameroon joins the rare cases of Eastern Timor, Eritrea and even the Western Sahara in a politics whose very basis can be traced to the colonial reshaping of the political configuration of parts of the South. Piet Konings, of the African Studies Centre of the University of Leiden and a well-known researcher on the contemporary sociology of Cameroon and Francis Nyamnjoh, formerly Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Botswana and currently serving as head of one of the departments of codesria (Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa), have

presented a detailed description and analysis of the problems of the Anglophone community in their union with a French-speaking community in Cameroon.

- 2 The book being visibly a synthesis of their previous journal and book publications as well as the fruit of documentary research and interviews with some key informants, the authors are clear from the beginning that they intend to focus on the “ethno- regional protests and demands for the rearrangement of the state” during the process of political liberalization in Cameroon. This does not imply that the resistance to strategies of domination by the French-speaking elite has been exclusively facilitated by the spate of democratic reform engineered by the neo-liberal drive consequent on the end of the Cold War. Far from being a mere alternative to the absence of viable social programmes in the aftermath of the collapse of the national unity project as Amin would have it ⁴, the “Anglophone” movement is presented here as the prototype of the consequences of the failures to arrive at consensual constitutional arrangements between elites of different colonial backgrounds. As the authors show the political union of peoples from the former British – administered and United Nations – mandated territory of Southern Cameroons with an independent Republic of Cameroon which has an official French-speaking tradition was fraught with difficulties from its very inception. In this regard the various mechanisms of arriving at a *modus vivendi* within the union namely two-state Federalism with a high degree of centralization, unitary state styled United Republic (evidently named after the Tanzanian model but lacking in the essential points of that model) accompanied by the slogans of national unity, reversal to the label of Republic of Cameroon (a name used to refer to the ex-French mandated territory) with the invention of a slogan of national integration, have been continuously lived with suspicion by an Anglophone elite. This is all the more so as the latter finds itself pushed to the fringes of national life or split between, on the one hand, an in-group, pro-government elite integrated into the hegemonic alliance within the power blocks in existence within the Francophone community and, on the other, an out-group elite which finds itself excluded from the power sharing arrangements.
- 3 The substance of the first introductory chapter is an examination of the development of the key issues of the Anglophone question and description of the historical background. In the second and third chapters the authors describe the situation of Anglophones within the politics of de-colonization-via-reunification and the “Federal Republic” and “United Republic”/post-“United Republic” arrangements. Chapter 4 examines the rise of radical reform movements within the Anglophone community within the period of political effervescence and restiveness that characterized the early 1990s and well beyond, while Chapter 5 examines the reaction of the central government to the call for reforms or dialogue to resolve the problems that bedevil the political relations between the two communities. Chapter 6 moves away from the focus on the views of the political class that characterizes the analyses in the previous chapters to interrogate the civil society (writers, the clergy, the press, academics) and the radical opposition parties (often themselves marginalized in political life), all actors of a politics of alternative (in opposition to the official politics of the successive post-colonial regimes). Chapter 7 examines what is styled Anglophone defence of its “educational and economic legacies”. These legacies are restricted to the General Certificate of Education (gce), a secondary school sanctioning certificate, and the Cameroon Development Corporation, a problematic agro-industrial complex whose very existence has been the source of suffering for local land-owners and an overexploited labour force for nearly a century.

The book ends with an examination of options for the solution of the Anglophone problem, in a style that is bereft of novelty as it echoes the very proposals that have been made by the actors themselves.

- 4 A narrative of the perspectives and strategies of the various protagonists of the Anglophone campaign for redress (autonomy, equality, independence/secession) within a state in which they feel their identity has been alienated and their community subjected to suffering has led the authors to describe in a comprehensive manner what the Anglophone problem in Cameroon is as the protagonists see it. More than anything the study establishes the nefarious role faulty historical antecedents are likely to have in the destiny of peoples in an era where the choices are determined by dominant systemic forces over which local people have no control. It is a study of elite activism as the authors declare from the onset (p. 21) and one would therefore expect to find more of high politics⁵ than mass political mobilization at work. The sense of historical awareness is therefore presented primarily as a matter of the leadership class carrying within itself a conflicting dichotomy of idealized states of either bliss (pro-government elite) or hell (anti-establishment elite) as if to confirm Touraine's observation that "le modèle culturel [. . .] emprise de la société sur elle-même, ne [peut] jamais être [géré] par l'ensemble de la société [. . .] La classe dirigeante est l'agent du modèle culturel [. . .]"⁶. This explains why the struggle takes on an intra-class character, an approach in which the analysis may suffer from class bias as little is found of the views and strategies of the popular classes and categories (workers, peasants, women, youth, trade unions etc) as the focus is on the discourses and practices of the local upper and middle classes⁷.
- 5 The dominant Anglophone perspective of the authors (which is that of the actors themselves) also renders the authors oblivious of developments within the Anglophone community which have led to the reversal of Francophone perceptions of the Anglophone in Cameroon. The attempts to balance the dominantly Anglophone perspective with a francophone perspective is limited to the few persons who have given a public opinion on the issue. The authors attribute this to the fact that "most Francophones have no idea what Anglophones are complaining about" (p. 153), an evident overstatement in a country where all classes of people across the political/linguistic divide are in touch with each other on a daily basis. The argument by some Francophone elite that the Anglophones are just one of the many problems that need to be attended to in Cameroon (p. 156) is a clear indication that beyond the elite struggle for "recognition and representation" there are attendant social problems that transcend the linguistic divide.
- 6 Although it might not have been one of the authors' objectives, it might have been instrumental studying what we may call the problematic of the impact of the Anglophone presence and culture in Cameroon, a presence regarded in an ambivalent spirit of official acceptance on the one hand and unofficial resistance/rejection from segments of the francophone community on the other. This factor had the effect of remodelling the geopolitical arrangements of Francophone Cameroon that would otherwise have taken its own direction. More recently political and cultural developments in the Anglophone community have had a significant impact on the Francophone community which cannot be underestimated — even if these developments have been accidental rather than the result of official policy. This would tempt one to agree with Marx and Engels that conquerors are often forced to adopt the "language, culture and manners from the conquered"⁸. The birth of the Social Democratic Front party with a clearly defined message of social democracy appealing to all people across the linguistic divide (to the

point of influencing the party's leadership on the Anglophone question, Chapter 6), the institution of the University of Buea (along an English-speaking tradition) which attracts about a tenth of its students from the French-speaking community (absent from the analysis) and other processes of a reverse acculturation type (as opposed to the attempts at the cultural integration of Anglophones into a predominantly Francophone national life observed in earlier times, Chapter 3) or even the effervescence of competing identities within and across the linguistic communities that are deconstructing the linguistic/political divide are developments that need detailed scrutiny in their own right as well as in the analysis of the Anglophone question. This may just probably be what the authors mean when they caution against the oversimplification of the divide on the basis of self-idealization and demonisation of the Other.

NOTES

1. A. MAZRUI, *Cultural Forces in World Politics*. London, James Currey Ltd; Nairobi, Heinemann; Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 1990, p. 250.
2. J. M. VIDAL VILLA, "Ten theses on Globalization". UNESCO Chair on Sustainable Development (ed.) *Social Development: Challenges and Strategies*, Rio de Janeiro, UFRJ/EICOS, 1995, pp. 154-158.
3. See Samir AMIN, *Africa and the Challenge of Development*, Essays edited by C. Uroh, Ibadan, Hope Publishers, 1998, p. 54.
4. See Samir AMIN, *ibid.*, especially Chapter 3 "Ethnicity: Assault on the Nation", pp. 48-72.
5. For a discussion of the concepts of "high" and "low" in African politics, see P. CHABAL, *Power in Africa. An Essay in Political Interpretation*, Basingstoke-London, The Macmillan Press, 1992. He remarks a disproportionate preoccupation with the state in the analysis of politics in Africa, an attitude characteristic of high politics which he treats as mirage.
6. Alain TOURAINE, *Pour la Sociologie*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1974, p. 114.
7. Witness the low participation in signature referendum (p. 92).
8. Karl MARX & Friedrich ENGELS, *The German Ideology*, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1976 [1845-1846], p. 94.