



## ARTICLE

## THE UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE IN CAMEROON: Between tradition, bilingualism and openness

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### Abstract:

A close look at the different universities found in the former French zone of influence of the French Colonial Empire in black Africa, Cameroonian universities fully and structurally responded to the French university paradigm once inspired by Napoleon Bonaparte. From all indications, there is ample evidence that former students of the first Cameroonian university benefited enormously from its former and triple Negro-African, French and Anglo-Saxon heritage. Created immediately after independence, universities became centers through which global methods were used for the de-africanization of all universities. From then henceforth, universities became indispensable actors of the Cameroonian diplomacy. Apart from the multilateral cooperations that proved to be so dynamic, the scientific and cultural know how of Cameroonian universities were thanks to the exceptional leadership of talented men. The main objective of this article therefore is to bring to the limelight the various methods used by Cameroonian universities to teach the general history of Cameroon within the post Mai 68 context, to enumerate available resources and information found in those institutions turning them to become veritable centers of acquiring knowledge.

Keywords: Bilingualism, Cameroon, tradition, University.

### INTRODUCTION

For most African States in general and those of the French sphere of influence in particular, the year 2010 represents an important moment. Most of them celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of their access to national sovereignty. Beyond such festivities folkloric character, it appears essential to assess a sample of this sovereignty's yeast: the university. From an overall point of view, higher training question constitutes a major problem

within African historiography. If universities found nowadays in Africa directly result from historical contingencies between colonial powers and African states, it is obvious that university, grasped as a medium of production, transmission and diffusion of knowledge, proved to be quite an ancient and well known phenomenon in Africa.

This threefold side of knowledge:



production – transmission – diffusion sends back to its management's paradigm; a process for which by no way Africa was left at the edge; each people of her having masterminded its own operating mechanisms. The fruition of these learning mechanisms led in several places to the rise of genuine academies; the most outstanding example in Sudano-Sahelian area being the University of Timbuktu within the Songhai Empire which evolution was concomitant to that of its mother country. The appearance of great scholars of the XVth century as well as the erection of the Sankore and Sidi Yaya mosques provided both outlook and structures to that university as seen in the XVIth century. It was, as Cissoko Sekene Mody states it, a gathering constituted by free and mosque schools wherein being preeminent, Sankore ended up in giving its name to the whole.

## I. THE TRADITION

The existence of a university institution codified not in African society's norms but rather in Western's with corollary: the writing was remarked in the equatorial area in general and in Cameroon in particular. We are talking here about the Bamum Royal Academy. Yet, out of the process leading to these norms and this specific case, there was an endogenous

model whose understanding helps better grasping the black Africa university problem.

### 1. SURVEY OF THE ENDOGENOUS EXPERIENCE OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN CAMEROON

Each people sets a training system endowed with an intrinsic dynamism so as to insure a proper management of its knowledge. For Western peoples who share a common culture, basis of formal education was set in Antiquity by Pythagorean sophist communities, Plato's Academy, Aristotle's High School amongst others; to which superimposed various middle age schools, all leading to the emergence of the first universities in the early XIIIth century [Bastit, 2007 :13-17].

South Saharan continent as for it remained typified by oral character [Ki-Zerbo, 1986 :99-112]. Therefore, the passing of knowledge, be it in lineage or in centralized societies, was done through sketches of daily life, play activities and above all through initiation whereby growth could be perfected and the learner, operating an inner mutation. He would therefore cross from a single individual stage to that of community member [Mveng, 1985 :13-15]. Two South Cameroon lineage-societies give the best illustration of this.

Among the Beti and the Basaa in ef-



fect, the rite appeared as the characteristic item of initiation process. Rigobert Mballa Owono classified the rite within the former into three sets: brotherhood, cleansing and crossing-over [Mballa Owono, 1990 :96-106]. Crossing-over perfected the tribe member's training through the destruction of his old personality for the benefit of a new one they would strengthen; making of the rite a school of social morals. Thus, crossing-over rites by excellence among the Beti, circumcision and Sō rite (which female equivalent was the Mevungu) carried within a oneself overrun. The one initiated learnt how to live in harmony with nature and his fellow-creatures. Located at the edges of the Beti cultural area, the Basaa possessed the Mbog as the managing institution of ancestral powers. Graduating from such a school, the learner reached the level of Mbog Mbog.

In the two initiation processes, didactic music tools were found: the Mvet (Beti) and the Ilung (Basaa) both conveying beyond philharmonics, the sapience of their respective cultures. In these cases, knowledge would make sense only so far as understood in Bourdieu's perception of the habitus; talking of all process aiming at knowing how to say, to be and to do [Bourdieu, 2008]. Here, knowledge blossomed in culture terms, was resti-

tuted within the daily life and weighed in community wealth. Opened for known as know-how, such a cultural process of transmission and preservation of knowledge, inveterate in all African societies, would prove able to adapt to a new knowledge spreading mechanism [Ela, 2006:21].

It was instituted in a West Cameroon centralized State by a monarch of exceptional personality: Sultan Njoya. In fact, with the Bamum Royal Academy, one could speak of an endogenous experience. The Bamum king's feat is the proof of a continuum of endogenous management of constituted knowledge in Africa. To summarize, we would say Ancient Egypt through its houses of life was the first civilization to inaugurate knowledge management both in Africa and in the world through writing. The following endogenous example was the no less famous University of Timbuktu [Cissoko Sekene, 1975:203-206]. Historical mishaps did not allow to actual African University to be set while leaning on these former experiences though. It rather became a transposition of the former colonial countries' models. The black African French speaking countries naturally inherited the French conception which could be labeled as Napoleonian University.

## 2. THE BAMUM ROYAL ACADEMY

The history of this institution is nar-



rowly linked to that of the Bamum kingship in general and to the singular destiny of king Njoya, XVIth monarch of Nsharə dynasty in particular. The interest drawn from this question leads us, as a prologue, to dwell on striking facts of this kingdom.

The word *ba* is the plural of *pa* and the term *mum* means “man” as in several bantu tongues. Bamum therefore literally points out “the men”; name which the kingdom founder once gave to his people. It has turned to designate the twofold reality of the land and its inhabitants. The former is located within the western grasslands of Cameroon, in an area revered Henri Martin places in the 11th longitude east and between 5th and 6th latitude north. The land covers an area of 7300km<sup>2</sup>. It was once conquered by a Tikar leader named Nsharə who originated from a place named Rifum located northwards.

This is what Njoya reveals on his ascendancy and consequently on the origins of the Bamum kingdom. Once upon a time, Bamum people lived at Rifum where their king had three sons: Nsharə, Mfom Mbən, et Mfo Shəm. These princes went about creating a farm which each of them surrounded by a pit and lived within in a fortified camp. Having heard this, their father summoned them. Frightened,

they ran away from him rather than coming as promised they would. As they arrived nearby a river bank, Nsharə urged his brother to let him cross first; which they agreed, allowing him to go with his whole family. They henceforth destroyed the canoe. He established himself at Nziindu Saasa. Some times after, he declared war to Mfo Shəm whom he defeated. He further waged war against Mfom Mbən who shared the same fate. He thus left Matam where his headquarters were set after his first victory and settled in the palace of Mfom Mbən. He became the first king of the dynasty he created. The fundamental step of his kingdom’s creation was the conquest of his capital Fouban. This name dates from the German period since it’s nothing but the deformation of the expression Mfo-Mbən, literally “the grave of the defeated”.

After Nsharə, ten or so kings without fame forerunning an illustrious sovereign ruled. Fierce warrior, Goliath endowed with herculean strength, Mbuəmbuə took the throne after Kouotou, tenth monarch of Nsharə dynasty. Njoya who was his great grandson asserts that these were the first words he uttered the day of his enthronement (XVIIIth century): “I will set the borders of this kingdom with blood and black iron. War is my concern. Limits always are erased whenever set by



mouth". This warlike attitude allowed him to extend the kingdom and subjugate all neighbors. Joseph Ki-Zerbo underlines that it enabled a vigorous originality of a national type [Ki-Zerbo, 1972:292].

Thus, most of Bamum kings made the founding principles of their authority out of war and despotism. The sixteenth king of the dynasty, Njoya, instead clung on more subtle mediums. He opted for the works of mind. His thirst of knowledge and huge intellectual curiosity led him in creating what is convenient to call Bamum Royal Academy; an institution leaning on a scripture and a language which the king himself set; a structured organization with programs.

From his enthronement in 1883, Njoya ventured inside the quest of knowledge. The first outstanding feat of his kingship was therefore the invention of a scripture which, according to Dugast and Jeffreys' works, must have been prior to 1900. Such an invention was believed to have sprung from the king's desire to appear as a *nga rane*; which means a scholar [Martin, 1951:16]. It was revealed to the scientific community by the German missionary Goehring in *Der evangelische Heidenbote* under the title "Der Koenig von Bamum und seine Schrift". This scripture had five cursives. It was at first ideograms

of 510 signs which ended up to be a set of phonograms of 83 signs endowed with a grammar, a lexicon, and an alphabet labeled after its first letters a ka u ku.

Phonetics were so elaborated that Idelette Dugast was forced to admit genuine linguistic talents to the king. According to the latter, possessing a scripture, his people had to have his own tongue. This might be difficult to understand without having in view that Nsharə had adopted the *shü pa-mben*, tongue of the defeated, after he conquered Fouban. So, Njoya decided to create a special tongue: the *shü mun*. Several of its words are yet to be translated. Some came from African tongue, the *shü pu mun* of course, but also the *fufulde* (Fulani) the Duala of Cameroon, the Hausa, Ibo or Yoruba, tongues from Nigeria; and also words from Dahomey and Togo. The new tongue borrowed also from European tongues, especially German, English and French. The following graphs are samples of the scripture and the tongue invented by king Njoya.

The organization of this academy was set as follow: palace was the main intellectual center where the king trained the first intellectual lecturers to whom he conferred the grade of *tapone* meaning "masters". They were further on transfixed in the various schools of the kingdom. In



1918, 20 schools scattered throughout the kingdom were numbered.

Students received history teaching recorded in the king monumental history work Libanor pantü di isang konig mak Rifum reverend Henri Martin translated under the title Bamum History and Customs. It would not be proper to further this analysis without speaking about this great masterpiece. In order to write this history, the king summoned all notable liable either by their age or their function to master oral tradition. The following informants have been so far identified: Nziməku, Nzimoshu, Ngomshe, Nzifonanguə, Nzimombət, Nziyü'mfon, Nzimombe, Nzingamie. The old age of the latter did not allow him to personally go to the palace. The king sent heralds. He cross-checked the information through a rigorous critical apparatus allowing us to as if it's not possible to see in this king, one of the first historians to see oral tradition as a reliable source.

Learned received also geography teachings based on Bamum kingdom maps established by the king himself, didactics lessons extracted from fairy tales et myths written by king Njoya, teachings of medicine based on treaty of traditional healing. The arts were not left aside. Theological teachings based on the king

religious considerations were also taught which resulted from a syncretism of Islam and Christianity on one hand and ancestral beliefs of Bamum people on the other. The question one could rightfully ask is that of the functionality of both the tongue and the writing. The king first objective aimed at instructing and teaching his people. According to Pastor Henri Martin, king Njoya might have imagined this scripture in order to record outstanding feats of Bamum history. Another objective was linked to administrative contingencies. Following a tradition inaugurated by the European medieval monarch Charlemagne who considered learning as provider of technocratic elite, the Bamum Royal Academy was the very institution that allowed king Njoya to administratively train his civil-servants Tardits, 1980]. Through this institution, he created the emerging conditions of an endogenous administration.

Through his writing, his tongue, his school, the teachers he trained and his scientific productions, king Njoya could set an endogenous system of knowledge in Bamum land. This original work without equivalent was toppled by Cameroon French learning process that granted to the country, following its independence, a national university institution. Created in 1962, it was thought as a reference model





devoted to parting away from traditional methods of knowledge management. It entails symbolic survivorship of African realities: its emblem and motto.

## **2. THE UNIVERSITY EMBLEM: A HALF-WAY SYMBOL BETWEEN MODERNITY AND TRADITION**

In order to speak about the emblem notion it is opportune to set preconditions allowing a better grasp. Etymologically, the word derives from the Greek *emblema* literally meaning “incrustation”. It is a symbolic language going back up to Egyptian antiquity [Erman, Ranke, 1963]. It is in the course of the XVth century that it crossed European academic universe as it imposed itself on the model of allegoric exegesis, appearing as a form of pictured discourses mainly with the *liber emblematum* of André Alcat at Augsburg in 1531. It's a collection work of Latin epigrams partially extracted from the Greek Anthology where each object, plant, animal is endowed with a precise meaning. In this language, the dove symbolizes peace, the stork love and the lute, covenants. This language was elaborated on the clue that the picture of a type represents a principle. Thus Jesus amongst Christians symbolizes salvation and everlasting life. From there appeared several types of emblems with their messages: love, religion, politics, corporations and so on.

From the XVIIIth century, it was proposed to call emblem, every item endowed with symbolic significance and forming a well delimited whole, detachable. In several respects, the emblem sends back to the symbol. The usual sense attributed to the symbol goes back to analogy; it's what justifies the fact that one finds it useful to escort this symbolic figure by a motto.

From there, it was practically never found no social practice, cultural conduct nor organization not being impregnated by symbols which field appears almost boundless. Almost all institutions and structured trades equipped themselves with an emblem often escorted by a motto. The young Cameroonian university was no exception to this. Its emblem taken while still being the Federal University of Cameroon remained the one of the University of Yaounde 1.



It was conceived by Reverend Father Engelbert Mveng. It took the appearance of the Abbia, a divinatory game used in the Beti cultural area. In the heart of this pattern, the spider which the Beti call ngam is found, four kola nuts are stuck on horizontal and vertical edges. This symbolic figure is accompanied by a motto: *Sapientia Collativa Cognito* [Bella, 2010 :171]. What meaning could such symbolic items get? The answer to this interrogation will be seen through the light of the emblem threefold function: show, unite and order.

Spider and kola nuts are African realities; the former symbolizes wisdom and the latter friendship. Their position in the

four corners marks the universality of this institution. The Latin motto comes from a Duala saying “*Dubié e side njangui*” proposed by William Aurélien Eteki Mboumoua, which means “knowledge is a collection, each one brings his share”. Being the symbol of wisdom, the spider shows that the institution is concerned with the production and spreading of knowledge. Kola nuts – friendship symbol at the four corners – testify that the Federal University results from a cooperation aiming at promoting universal knowledge in an African country. The Latin translation of a Duala proverb asserts that the author wanted to respect a university tradition that went back to the middle ages.

The second function that of uniting and the reference to the four corners is the proof of the universal factor of the university. It speaks of a community of masters and pupils from all corners of the globe. This emblem sets the bilingual character of this institution which name is written in the two official tongues: English and French.

The third function, order, is more or less self-explained. Such a symbolic representation goes back to the production of knowledge, to a framework of learning, etc. So, as regards to what was said, one can assert that the university institution in





Cameroon was the corollary of a cultural Western-African syncretism. The university rooting in African traditional values was not solely limited to symbolism. It manifested itself through research structures, works and teaching programs in some departments.

The Centre de Recherche Africaniste (CRA) of the Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences of the Federal University has been the main structure at work towards that goal. It was created by the Fondation Française de l'Enseignement Supérieur au Cameroun which benefited of the help of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). This prestigious learning society aimed at encouraging and coordinating research on traditional societies in Cameroon in general and in tongues in particular. It was composed of linguists, ethnologists, sociologists and jurists; so to say, of researchers in social sciences interested in pre-colonial Cameroon cultural realities. However, if ever was a realm in which CRA achieve fame as learning society was linguistics. Descriptive, phonological and grammatical studies were carried on Cameroon languages; most of them by students in view of the obtainment of their Diplôme d'Etudes Supérieures (DES), their Maîtrise or the Master Degree. Due to practical reasons, I restricted myself to just select a few on them to the prejudice of other no less relevant.

We therefore learn that the tikù appears to be a variant of the ati; being itself the proto-tongue of the Southern-Cameroon Ekang. The ewondo was studied by Jean-Marie Essono. Jean Emile Eko on the other hand carried a study on phonetic description of the fang tongue; while Pierre Lemb did the same with the ngumbà tongue. Michel Simo and Yameni Françoise Yameni respectively worked on linguistic sketches of Bali Kumbat and identified a reference speech of the ngèmbà tongue. This center owes its radiation to several organizers; among others, the following Cameroonians: Henri Marcel Bot Ba Njock, Prosper Abéga, Francis Mbassi Manga, Maurice Tadadjeu but also to some Westerners among which Ursula Wiesemann, Jean-Roland Deltel and last but not least, Patrick Renaud.

In History Department, several studies were laid on pre-colonial Cameroon pertaining:

- Migration and settlement process of actual Cameroon populations;
- Political, economical, social and cultural institutions of pre-colonial Cameroon.

These themes provided important research works. Oral literature became an important factor rooting the Cameroon-



nian university. The Mvet found among the Ehang of the South proved to be the main medium of this literature. It's chiefly a polysemous word describing a musical tool: namely a 1.40m bamboo harp on which by longitudinal cutting of the stalk, was removed four to six fibers as strings and three to six half calabashes fixed as sounding drums. The Mvet recalls also epics, lyrics sung under its rhythm. To crown it all, it's an institution that initiates young learners to life mysteries. Samuel Martin Eno Belinga carried out several works on it [Eno Belinga, 1965]. He proceeded to the collection of several Mvet Epics within the Ehang cultural area. Following his steps, Charles Belinga B'Eno defended a thesis on the relation of iron metallurgy and Mvet oral-character.

Beyond what has been said, one of the main characteristics of this young institution is undeniably its bilingual character.

## II. THE BILINGUALISM

Bilingualism is the sum of situations in which two languages are in relation either with a nation or with an individual. It constitutes a peculiarity that distinguishes Cameroonian university institution in Africa as much as in the whole world. My speech aims at pointing out its reality within the Cameroonian university institu-

tion on one hand and how it works in order to promote bilingualism in Cameroon on the other. The point will be analyzing bilingualism at the Cameroon Federal University to see what role it plays in order to vulgarize it within the population.

### 1. FEW HISTORICAL MARKS FOR BILINGUALISM IN CAMEROON

In order to have a better grasp of what was earlier said; it might be convenient to go back to the bilingualism genesis in Cameroon. Bilingualism is a historical inheritance. It is a direct consequence of the First World War on Cameroon, a former German protectorate after the victory of the Allied Powers over the Hind Reich forces in 1916. France settled in the eastern part whereas Great Britain established in the Western part where each one promoted its own tongue. The reunification of both entities in 1961 favored the emerging of bilingualism while consecrating French and English as official languages. It's therefore the birth of the Federal Republic of Cameroon the 1st October 1961 that led to bilingualism. From then on, the mission of promoting bilingualism became a State royalty. This political will figures in good place in the various Constitutions: 1961, 1972, 1996 and 2008.

The creation of the Federal University of Cameroon is one of the symbols of



the bilingualism promotion in Cameroon. In his General Political Report at the Congress of 1980, president Ahidjo was considering the university as an active center of promotion of bilingualism. In order to allow such a vocation, Cameroonian authority took several measures both political and administrative. The constitutive texts of the university grant a bilingual character to it. Cameroon authorities approached British government which upheld the university by sending English teachers in the university so as to concretize it.

On the academic plan, many measures were taken. The university bilingual orientation was backed by the recruitment of English and French speaking lecturers in all schools. Did the training system become bilingual thus? Lectures taught in the language they chose but students could write exams in the tongue he would feel at ease. The teaching of the second language was reinforced by a bilingual training in compulsory course of four hours a week consisting in teaching in the other language to English and French speaking students. It was a concrete measure which prompted bilingualism in that it allowed the mastery of the two languages by students; if not, to master at least one while possessing good no-

tions of the other.

### 3. THE BILINGUALISM IN THE UNIVERSITY

Unique in Africa, the introduction of a BA Degree study program in bilingual letters within the course of study in 1964 is relevant. Were allowed to register in this section, French speaking students grading 14/20 in English or less than 08/20 in French at the baccalauréat; for English speaking, grade « B » in GCE – Advanced Level was requested. It was a course reserved to best students of language. In the first year, English speaking students would take more French courses while French speaking ones would take more English's. Later on, the number of course hours became more balanced. In the third year, French speaking students would benefit of six month training course in Great Britain whereas the English speaking students would go to France for the same purpose. The economic crisis hitting Cameroon in the eighties led the Cameroonian authorities to change their ways. From then on, students had to follow their training in the part of their country mastering the tongue – English or French – they were learning.

In the Faculty of Law, French law was taught in French and English law in English. However, Cameroonian law was taught in both languages. Some schools



of the university requested from students to be bilingual before admittance. Such was the case of the University Centre for Health Sciences. The synergy of both languages gave birth to a syncretism: the *camfranglais*. This multi-lingualism avatar is already the subject of studies in our universities.

Bilingualism in Cameroonian university is the fruit of the works of one man: Bernard Nsokika Fonlon. The university institution owes its bilingual character to this illustrious personality. Without ceasing to care for purely intellectual questions, Fonlon was a high State servant [Bella, 2010 :177]. In spite of his relation with the power of then, characterized by authoritarianism and unique thought, he remained an independent intellectual [Bandolo, 1986:253]. His quite singular personality gave an agitated character to his career. His intellectual opinions brought several warnings from the political police of the Cameroon National Union (CNU); the State-party on which Ahidjo's authority leaned. Fonlon was a Cameroonian outstanding figure in general and of Cameroonian XXth century intelligentsia in particular. Although not linguist by training, yet he made of the putting in place and promoting of bilingualism, the center of his preoccupations as a state man and an intellectual. As State man, it

was to him Ahidjo entrusted the elaboration of a linguistic policy and of bilingualism in Cameroon. As man of letters, beyond his teaching and research works, he published several essays on the matter, especially: *Pour un Bilinguisme de Bonne Heure* (1964) and *The Language Problem in Cameroon : a Historical Perspective* (1964).

Bilingualism in Cameroon remains sidetracked by several hindrances though. The 8/10th of the territory are French speaking. Besides, the university itself as fruit of the French-Cameroonian cooperation led most of lecturers, administrators and even students to be French speaking as well. A study conducted by W. Kenneth Thompson and R. Barbara Fogel during the year 1973/74 provides the following statistics: on a global amount of 344 lecturers, 292 were French speaking whereas only 52 were English speaking. During the same year, on a total of 5945 students, 4452 were French speaking and only 439 English speaking. At last, the fact of having built the university premises at Yaoundé, French speaking area became a serious handicap for the population mostly French speaking; the situation turned out to be advantageous for the English speaking minority who did extra efforts.

In spite of these hardships, bilingualism is indeed a reality in Cameroon. Its



promotion by the institution appears not negligible; its advantages being numerous. Bilingualism allowed Cameroon to define itself as a peculiar political entity both in Africa and in the world. Bilingualism also turned to be a determining factor enhancing national unity.

If French and English were held as official languages, it should be recall that other Western languages exist in the Cameroonian educational system. Such is the case of German, relic of German colonial inheritance.

German army's rout at Fort Lamy, actual Mora town, in 1916, sounded the beginning of the French and British presences in Cameroon. During three decades prior to the sharing of the land by the allied powers, Cameroon had been a German protectorate; a status it owes to the Germano-Duala treaty signed between the Woermann Brothers representing German trade firms and little kings of the coastal area of the actual Cameroon. It was the 12 July 1884.

University institution was the perpetuation framework of German colonial legacy in Cameroon. A German Department was created at the University of Cameroon. This is the sole German Department in an African university. All in all, it

welcomes all the Central African German students; number of studies being carried within concerning several and miscellaneous domains such as literacy, linguistics, history, etc. Although Cameroon is bilingual, his academic universe is characterized by multi-lingualism. All this allowed for its university openness to the world.

### III. THE OPENESS

Openness is an important a vast aspect that entails a huge variety of activities in which one would select but a few. University institution has henceforth to be analyzed according to Senghor paradigm of the "giving and receiving"; that is conducting a reflection on the place of the Cameroonian University as much as in Africa as in the world. It's the case of studying what the outside brought to the university; but also what in return it had given. The point is to auscultate the interaction among the university institution and the outside. Thus, two aspects dragged our attention: university cooperation and the Cameroonian intellectual's contribution in building the universal civilization.

#### 1. THE UNIVERSITY COOPERATION

From the onset, it should be underscored that the university institution is the fruit of the cooperation. The Came-





roon Federal University is certainly one of the most significant aspects of the Franco-Cameroonian cooperation signed after the independence in 1960. The colleges it entails were created in similar conditions. The Higher Teachers Training College was created thanks to a UNESCO special funding, to a European Development funding and Belgium Kingdom's help. The University Centre for Health and Sciences was created thanks to WHO and the support of the Canadian government.

The Council of Scientific Research and Higher Training of 1974 constitutes a hinge period for the University in Cameroon. It consecrates the effective cameroonization of the University as it inaugurated a cooperating policy with foreign universities, especially African and Western. It was done within the framework of the Cameroonian diplomacy characterized by principles of independence, non-alignment and friendship links between Cameroon and all countries of the world. The main objective of the university cooperation aimed at, as Foumane Akame underlines it, the safeguard of the necessary openness to the external world and the effective participation in building the universal civilization.

The year 1975 constituted a breaking point. Prior to this year, the university re-

mained satisfied in subscribing to regional and international associations, namely the Association of African Universities, the Association des Universités entièrement et partiellement de Langue Française and the International Association of Universities. From 1975, the university started its effective cooperating phase, which was varied and multiform. The University of Yaoundé (as it was then called) cooperated with regional and international organizations on one hand and with the universities from both the North and the South on the other hand. Four main streamlines constituted the directing principles of this new orientation:

- The exchange of lecturers and students
- The logistic support for young students and lecturers in research cycles
- The exchange of pedagogic and didactic documents
- The training of nationals to senior professoral ranks.

Many actions were undertaken. The vice-chancellor and some lecturers represented the university at the international conference of the Universities International Association held in August



1975. In November of the same year, an important delegation of the University of Yaoundé represented its institution at the general assembly of the Association des Universités Entièrement ou Partiellement de Langue Française – AUPELF – held at Lomé Togo. A few moments after, the University of Yaoundé welcomed the African Universities Association (AUA) conference of chancellors and its vice-chancellor was elected as president of this organization.

In 1978, the University of Yaoundé welcomed an AUPELF seminary on management and financing of universities. During the same year, a university important delegation took part at the general assembly of AUPELF at Bordeaux. Three years later, the University of Yaoundé is represented at AUPELF general assembly at Québec. The University of Yaoundé became henceforth a privileged place for organizing AUPELF seminars. Thus, the National College of Polytechnics sheltered a seminary on foodstuff conservation. The Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences welcomed a seminary on linguistics.

Such a dynamism was concretized by the signing of agreements and conventions between the institutes and the following universities:

- The Institut des Sciences Appliquées of Lyon

- The Universities of Bordeaux I & II
- The University of Poitiers
- The University of Toulouse
- The University of Marseille
- The University of Geneva
- The University of Sarrebruck
- The Université de Laval – Quebec –
- The Harvard University
- The Université Libre de Bruxelles

...just to name those. In Africa, the Universities of Dakar, Abidjan, Lomé, Marien Ngouabi of Congo were concerned...

The role of the University of Yaoundé was determining in the process of regional and sub-regional integrations. This aspect of the university openness was perceptible within the framework of the students' mobility. Although national, the university was able to regulate the admission of foreign students. It happened then in the course of the 1977/78 academic year that, on 9058 registered students in the University of Yaoundé, 201 students were numbered; about a proportion of 2,1 coming from the following countries: Togo (41), Chad (30), Benin (25), Gabon (17), Niger (09), Ghana (03), Burundi (03), Ivory Coast (03), Central Africa Republic (05), Morocco (03), Tunisia (03), Nigeria (03), Zaire (11), Upper Volta (03), Mali (02), Senegal (02), Equatorial Guinea (02) Sierra Leone (01), Guinea (01), Sudan (01). Students did not



come only from Africa but also from the four corners of the world. For instance 07 French students were numbered, 03 American students, one Indian and one Haitian.

The École Supérieure Internationale de Journalisme (ESIJY) and the Institut des Relations Internationales de Yaoundé trained a considerable number of journalists and diplomats mostly originating from black Africa. Beyond the cooperation, the intellectual radiation of the lecturing corps remained an important aspect of the university. For practical reasons, our talk will articulate on Reverend Father Engelbert Mveng. The objective is not to establish a stock-list of their work but to set forwards their scientific radiation as lecturers-researchers in the university of Yaoundé.

## 2. OPENNESS THROUGH MEN

Reverend Father Mveng was a Pan-Africanist who defended his ideas through science and art. As scientific, Mveng was an archeologist, a theologian advocating for inculturation and most of all, historian by training. In 1968, this young senior lecturer of the Federal University of Cameroon was noticed at the Pan-African congress at Dar-es-Salaam. With T.O. Ranger, he was co-reporter of this conference. He reported for the French part of these works whereas Ranger cared for the Eng-

lish version. It was naturally that the redaction of the French version of the Acts was entrusted to him. He participated actively to the festivities of arts and signs held at Dakar in 1966 and at Lagos in 1977 and at several other scientific meetings on the national and international plans. His work stretched to history and archeology works, in the area of art in general and in the domain of black art in particular.

Mveng intellectual activity provided to him several distinctions in Africa as much as in the whole world. He exercised the presidency of the Arts and Culture Commission of the African Society of Culture. He was expert for UNESCO, member of the technical committee for the preparation of the first world festival of Black Arts and the reporter of that very festival. Reverend Mveng was member of the Egyptologist foundation Queen Elisabeth II, vice-president of Black World Writers. He occupied the functions of general secretary of the Christian African Intellectual Movement. He founded and supervised the Yaoundé Negro Arts Workshop. He also created a museum: the Alioune Diop museum; and actively participated to the study of Black Africa and Ancient World in a contribution to African History edited by the historian Henri Pirenne. In 1976, he was elected associated member of the prestigious Académie des Sciences d'Outre-Mer.



Not only did he take part to intellectual banquets, he also organized colloquia which last in date was *Moses the African*. Mveng was one of the first historians and one of the outstanding Black Africa intellectuals. His work contributed to the radiation and the discovery of the Cameroonian university institution.

Besides reverend Mveng, one can also quote the economist Joseph Tchuindjang Pouemi, the philosophers Marcien Towa, Ebénézer Njoh Mouelle and Fabien Eboussi Boulaga and the multi-disciplinary Samuel Martin Eno Belinga, etc. They favored the radiation and openness of the Cameroonian university; openness which made out of the University of Yaoundé, an important actor of the Cameroonian diplomacy.

## CONCLUSION

Reflection on university institution in Cameroon leads in suggesting a few orientations. The first is that the notion of university in the modern acceptation of the world is not alien to Black Africa and to Cameroon in particular. Although the post-colonial African university couldn't fetch African precolonial academies waters, it remains nevertheless the fruit of a Western-African cultural syncretism; at least in its outwards appearance. This uni-

versity singularized itself by its bilingual status which has allowed its relative easy openness to the world. This openness has been made possible through an active co-operation which took a decisive turning point as from 1975 and to lecturers' scientific contributions.

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