**Research Article**

# THE POPULATIONS OF NDE AND THE TRADITIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE: REJECTION, ALIENATION AND ATTEMPTS OF REHABILITATION

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## ABSTRACT

When French Cameroon gained independence in 1960, the cultural bases of the past of the people of Nde were threatened. The French government did not really want to leave the country, unlike England which organized an election in the Anglophone zone and respect the verdict of the election. The Francophone zone, on the other hand, was subjected to a civil war between nationalists and governmental neo-colonialist troops. Nde was then one of the most affected areas by the insurrection and the repression will aim at removing any psychological element likely to encourage the nationalists. It is in this perspective that traditional palaces were burnt and people displaced to be parked in concentration camps. At the same time, the churches, especially the Catholic Church, completed the harmful action of the neo-colonial government. Once the re-introduction of democracy effective, the populations kept the traces of oppression and their attitude towards the traditional material and immaterial archaeological heritage is greatly affected by the crimes of the neo-colonialist power of President Ahmadou Ahidjo and churches. It oscillates between the rejection of certain aspects, the alienation of others and the desire to rehabilitate it. Our article aims at presenting the behavior of the populations of Nde in relation to the traditional archaeological heritage of the region, historical reasons of this behavior, analysis of measures for better rehabilitation, protection and development of elements of this heritage.

## INTRODUCTION

The need to protect the elements of a culture is a behavior common to all social groups. Whatever the number of adherents to these groups, the preservation of the legacy of the previous generation is a common and usual phenomenon. Measures to achieve this may vary, but the desire to perpetuate the heritage of the ascendants is evident in all human communities. This is often unconscious but remains real. The region of Nde in Cameroon also applies this rule. The people of this region try to preserve the cultural legacy of their ancestors. Unfortunately, the analysis of the endeavors of the men and women of the region reveals ignorance on how to do it because of the ignorance of the legacy of their ancestors. Indeed, European colonization, and particularly French and Catholic colonization, has cancelled continuation of the traditional culture of tribal groups in the region. Special measures have been taken by these two entities to remove from the mind of individuals the cultural heritage of their ancestors. The result is that when democracy was re-established in the 1990s in Cameroon with an effective act in 1996 with the

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traditional material and immaterial archaeological heritage - which we regard here as cultural heritage - are more likely to destroy residues than to preserve them. What are the residues of this culture? What was it before European colonization? How did the Europeans destroy it? How can we rehabilitate it? To answer these questions, we will first present the state of traditional culture in Nde, and then we will study it in the pre-colonial context. We will analyze the measures taken by France and Vatican to destroy this heritage. Finally, we will propose solutions for a better rehabilitation of the material and immaterial values inherited from pre-colonial ancestors.

### The state of the Cultural Heritage in Nde

Heritage is a common object of an individual, a community or a human group that is considered as a legacy transmitted by ancestors or ascendants. Heritage can be natural as forests, lakes or mineral resources. It can also be cultural. In this case, it is an essential element of identity for a community. It is material (objects, monuments, artistic productions, archives, sites and archaeological ruins) and immaterial (cosmogonies, oral tradition, names, language, religion). In the study we conducted in Nde, we first noticed the ignorance of the population about the traditional heritage.

### The Traditional Material Heritage

Nde is an administrative area of the west region, one of the ten regions of Cameroon. It is located in the highlands of west Cameroon between 4 ° 52 'and 5 ° 17' North of latitude, 10 ° 21 'and 10 ° 49 East of longitude and extends from south to north on 25' and West to East on 28'. It is located between 1200 and 2000 m of altitude and covers an area of 1508 km$^2$.[1] Archaeological data trace the settlement of the populations in this region back to the Late Stone Age, from 5000 BC[2]. The first populations were Late Stone Age People (LSAP)[3]. They were followed by the Bantu, the Tikar and now the Bamileke. These early populations produced stone tools, first roughly shaped before noticeable improvements were made by the reduction of size and polishing. These tools will be completed with pottery. The discovery and collection of these remains revealed significant scientific and technological capabilities of these populations. This inheritance will be transmitted to the next generations, those that will complement the early knowledge with the discovery of metals.

The prehistoric archaeological heritage is practically unknown to the current Nde population. We made archaeological research in the area to collect them. The majority of the population does not know them. The most represented material culture consists of tools produced by the Bamileke, group of people that gradually settled in the area from the 17th century[4]. This heritage is visible on the markets and includes domestic furniture such as seats, beds, pestles, mortars, pottery. These artifacts are complemented by ecofacts such as calabashes or oxen's horns used as prestige goblet.

The raw materials used are clay for pottery, bamboo for seats and beds and the bark of these bamboos for baskets. It is important to mention that the use of these objects does not entail a desire to protect them as traditional legacy. It is the lower cost of the raw material that justifies the production of the objects we have observed. The interviews we conducted revealed very few individuals using tools produced by local craftsmen with the intention of preserving ancestor-transmitted technologies.

### Immaterial Traditional Heritage

It is in this aspect, as we observed during our investigations, that the rejection of heritage seemed to be total, especially among graduate students, city dwellers and Christians. In Nde therefore, the immaterial cultural heritage is not protected. There is a real destruction of the residues of the elements of culture. The peasants represented a certain

resistance in the context of preservation of the traditional immaterial cultural heritage in Nde. The informants we interviewed insisted that the residues of material and especially immaterial elements such as names, language and religion reached us because they had resisted. Because of the neo-colonialist government and churches, some people of the region tried to abandon their African names in favor of "names-of-whites"[5], African languages for western language namely french and Animism for Christianity. As long as these people lived in big cities like Yaoundé and especially Douala, the peasants or villagers allowed them to do so. But when they came back, even for short moment to the village for example to buy products of the breeding or the agriculture, the peasants demanded the application of the pre-colonial African values before satisfying them. This provoked an association of names-of-whites with the African names. As far as language and religion are concerned, alienation is total.

One of the observed behaviors which also constitute a pathology instilled in the mind of the man of Nde is the complex of white man. It is a total irrational belief of the superiority of the white man, the perpetual and constant denigration of everything that belongs to the black man. This concerns aspect of clothing, culinary and cultural. It is also the unconditional rejection of traditional religion which is ignored and biased. The basic principle of this attitude is to justify every white man's action and criticize every black man's action[6]. The Animism of Nde is therefore regarded as retrograde, superstitious and debilitating. This psychopathology which tends to be an incurable tendency was also noticed and studied by psychiatrist Frantz Fanon. He showed the physiological damage and the political, economic, social and cultural implications of this disease on the black people of Africa, America and Caribbean continents[7].

So, some cultural events such as the Medumba Festival is only a simple market because nothing, but nothing at all, in the activities organized during the period dedicated to it shows any "medumba" peculiarity. It is the same case with the "medumba seminar". The objective of the latter was to promote the national medumba language. After a real desire to propose writing to this language, the movement which initiated it which was the evangelical church deviated from its initial purpose and henceforth, this seminar consists of the promotion and popularization of Evangelical Protestant Christianity. The "macabo party" organized by the Bangoua chiefdom goes in the same direction.

On the other hand, most of the so-called associations of the people from the different chiefdoms of the region bring together only alienated persons, mostly Christians who

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[1]     P.M. Mbetbo, *Le Ndé : un essai d'étude géographique,* (Yaoundé : Université de Yaoundé, 1974), p. 10

[2]     A J. Yakam Yola, "L'état des connaissances sur la recherche archéologique à l'Ouest-Cameroun" *Pan-Tikar Journal of History*, n°1, vol 1, 2013, p.127

[3]     A J. Yakam Yola, "Archaeology of Nde : the Foundations of a Culture", PhD Thesis (Dschang: The University of Dschang, 2015), p. 166

[4]     J. C. Barbier, *Essai de définition de la chefferie en pays Bamiléké*, (Paris : ONAREST, 1981), p. 336

[5]     In the Nde languages, Christian names are called "names-of-white". This appellation does not please negro-christians because it constantly reminds them their alienated situation, their irrational complex of inferiority toward a race whose supposed immaterial superiority is based on nothing.

[6]     R. Dumont, M-F. Mottin, *L'Afrique étranglée*, (Paris : Seuil, 1980), p. 49

[7]     F. Frantz, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, (Paris : Seuil, 1952)

totally ignore the principles of the traditional religion of Nde. When we tried to get closer to these groups to explain the real pillars of the traditional religion, we felt hostility that almost turned to murder. How could we give interest to "old things"? It was practically the situation of a specie introduced among degenerated and hybrid species. There are hybrids associated to obtain a better species. But with Christianity and Islam, we have the mental eradication of the Black people, a permanent cretinism. However, we have met many black Africans who wanted to take titles of traditional notability and prestige and be respected according to the codes of tradition. They selected in tradition the elements that favored them. They make confusion between superposition of two religions with pillars totally different as we will show it later, and syncretism. The result, as Réné Dumont observed, is an "irrational admiration" of the Europeans[8].

### The Causes of the Destruction of the Cultural Heritage

What we noticed during our research in Nde is the contempt, the alienation and the rejection of the patrimony. It would be interesting to understand the reasons of that attitude. This study is essential in order to propose effective measures for the rehabilitation of this heritage, because it "can act as a kind of liberating catharsis like the plunging into one's own depths entailed in psychoanalysis, which by revealing the basic forces that inhibit our personality, at the same time frees us from the complexes by which our consciousness is held fast in the hidden roots of the subconscious."[9]

### The Absence of a Traditional Heritage Protection Policy

The first reason of this attitude must be found in the culture itself. Before Europe introduced an idea of the protection of ancestral legacy, people did not preserve it in the modern sense. This does not mean that they had an attitude of rejection or contempt. The preservation of objects and immaterial values was part of the tradition. This tradition protected the material and immaterial productions of parents and grandparents through unconscious use and transmission from one generation to another. This logic of unconscious transmission had a major weakness: elements disappeared and others were invented, either by internal creation or by borrowing or imposition by another culture through various means: trade, migrations, marriages, conflicts. No family, no authority, regardless of the rank he had in a chieftaincy, was conscious of the elements of culture inherited from the ancestors as an essential task to be protected.

The absence of preservation of the cultural heritage in Nde was therefore due primarily to the absence of voluntary policy of protection, consequence of the idea that people sincerely believed that they were already protecting the heritage of their ancestors through a tradition that they taught was unalterable regardless of the contacts with other human groups. The absence also of writing supplemented the elements contributing to the disappearance of the cultural legacies.

### European Colonization

Through the process of exploitation of raw materials, the settlers needed workers. Through forced labor, men were sometimes captured for this task. In the large plantations opened in Cameroon, particularly in the Moungo region, the Nde-born men working there gradually and unconsciously abandoned the heritage of their ancestors. These "slaves, under a disguised name"[10] also began to develop the defects of their brothers carried away in America: forgetting the aspects of their cultures and gradually adopting the Western way of life copied from the white masters. However, the most detrimental element to the heritage in Nde was Christianity.

### Christianity: an Effective tool for the Alienation of the African

When Europeans decided to colonize the African continent, they were fully aware that the people who lived there will be a major obstacle in their endeavor. They therefore did not underestimate the difficulty that Africans will represent. The latter at the time had already shown their ability to cope with any form of difficulty. Let us remember that they captured and delivered to Europeans during three centuries other Africans. It is not an easy task, to observe during days a group of individuals in a given environment, to wait for the appropriate moment to isolate few of them, catch them, tie and drive them over long distances.

On the other hand, the Africans began to produce the objects that served as exchange items like rifles. They therefore had a social, political, economic, cultural and religious system which made them fearsome. If they had not yet switched to an industrial production system, it was not because they were incapable to do it. They simply had not yet thought of it. So at the contact with Europeans, they will eventually learn and become competitors to them. Three elements, however, constituted their weak points. They formed disparate groups, were disunited and had no writing. The Europeans then decided that when they will set foot on the continent, they will need a weapon that would keep Africans away from the resources of all kinds they came to exploit. This weapon must act on the part of the man that controls the whole body: the brain. It is in this context that Christianity intervenes.

This religion had proved its efficiency in Europe as the most effective element of mental disturbance that human beings have ever invented. Initiating obscurantism and neuroses, it plunged Europe into a phase of regression namely the Middle Ages. During long time, the erroneous conceptions of life and its origin by the priests killed many Europeans. We remember that Giordano Bruno was burned alive in Rome in 1600 while Galileo was condemned to reject his conception of the earth revolving around the sun[11]. Pope Pius VI explicitly condemned human rights, freedom of conscience and human equality which according

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[8]     R. Dumont, M-F. Mottin, *L'Afrique étranglée*, p. 33, 34
[9]     J. Ki-Zerbo, (dir), *General History of Africa, Methodology and African Prehistory*, Vol I, (Paris : Unesco ; 1980), p. 3

[10]     R. Dumont, M-F. Mottin, *L'Afrique étranglée,* p. 48
[11]     H. Pena-Ruiz, *Histoire de la laïcité, Genèse d'un idéal*, (Paris : Gallimard, 2005), p. 40

to him was "what can be suggested by the most disordered imagination."[12] It is only when Europeans were in contact with other human groups, Africans among others that they began to criticize the stupid beliefs taught by Christian religious leaders in Europe. It is true that the presence of Muslims and Jews had already aroused the idea of questioning the content of Christianity in Europe. But the two groups as Christianity took their basis of beliefs the same elements and the same geographical space, Palestine.

It is with the black people that we see a radical difference in religion. Even though it seems pretentious to say that it is the contact with Africans that began to instill the idea of rationalism in Europe, no one can deny the fact that contacts with different ways of thinking always bring an analysis or an unconscious comparison between cultures. Let us remember that before proposing his theory of evolution, Charles Darwin traveled during 5 years (1831-1836) out of Europe (England) to elaborate and confirm his theory on human evolution[13]. Even though his findings focused more on plants and animals than men, we cannot deny or ignore the fact that during his journey he met human groups that were not Christians and had a different way of life enabling them to cope with their environment. Although in practice we can notice few differences, the archaeological research we carried out in Nde allowed us to guess and propose the religion that Europeans feared so much when they were about to colonize the African continent.

### Traditional African Religion

If Europe wanted absolutely to impose its religion to Africans, it was precisely because the African conception of the relation with the immaterial and the invisible world was radically opposed to that of Europe and thus prevented Europeans to transform the Africans into servile slaves. Before presenting what this religion consisted of, a precision is necessary. Because the crimes of the Christian priests (the inquisition and the prohibition of criticism among others), Europe separated religion from other activities of life. So when colonizing Africa, the Europeans made a rigid difference between what they conceived as religion and science, the latter regarded as an act of reflection and the use of reason to solve problems[14]. This vision was totally different from the conception of Africans and most of the peoples they met in their colonial journey. The religious resemblance between all these people pushed the Europeans to propose the word Animism. The Animists did not dissociate rationalism from irrationalism, but rather considered them as the both sides of the same coin, both of which must be used at the appropriate time[15].

This new way of conceiving the world posed a serious problem to the Europeans when they wanted to propose the

principles or pillars of Animism. Even the first Africans who met Europeans found the same difficulty. After collecting archaeological remains and information in Nde from the individuals who witnessed the life around them before the arrival of the settlers and the transformations of the African society, we tried to define the pillars of this religion which was then the way of life of the populations[16]. We have grouped them into five pillars: God and blood ancestors, rationalism, self-security, public and private acts, and private territoriality. An explanation of these points will help us to better understand the conception of the Animist world and the difficulty it posed to the Westerners.

### God and Blood Ancestors

The five pillars were interconnected. The order of presentation we have chosen is only for a better understanding. The people who applied them did not do it in that order. *Ndouh* as the populations of Nde denominated this religion included the belief in God called *Sih* who was materialized by sacred woods where foods, vegetable, mineral and animal were sacrificed[17]. So there was not so-called house where people gathered to pray God. This God could be criticized[18], rejected[19], revered *freely*. This conception was totally contrary to the Christian God to whom were attributed virtues and faults to Satan that Animism did not have. Good things as well as evil ones were attributed to God.

The other sacrifices were dedicated to the *blood ancestors*. Indeed, each family considered its ancestors as being present and able to act on them and their daily activities[20]. The sacrifices mentioned above were also made in *the house of heads[21]* of the family identified by the ties of blood and kinship. We understand therefore that a religion mentioning a certain son of God to whom it was necessary to give things leave indifferent, since even within a given community there were already religious practices that were not necessarily bringing together in a given space people living in the same neighborhood. Blood ancestors were not only intermediaries with God but were also "beings" with their own rights to whom were addressed prayers and sacrifices. So it is them who were concerned and God through them. The Animist priest was also a therapist. In the place where he lived, each individual came to consult him for his problem. Within the context of an egalitarian society, taking into account the biological constitution of the both sexes, religious leaders were both men and women. A fundamental difference when we saw the European religious leaders landing only made up of men who, the .

[12]     Ibid, p. 53

[13]     C. Naudin, F. Vibert-Guigue, T. Olivaux (eds), *L'Aventure de la vie*, (Paris : Larousse-Bordas, 1997), p. 83

[14]     H. Pena-Ruiz, *Histoire de la laïcité*, p. 47

[15]     A. Hampaté Mba, « La tradition vivante », J. Ki-Zerbo (dir), *Histoire générale de l'Afrique, méthodologie et préhistoire africaine*, (Paris : Jeune Afrique, Stock, Unesco ; 1980), pp. 196, 198, 204, 206

[16]     A. Moumouni, *L'Education en Afrique*, (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1998), p. 29

[17]     Willie F. Page, *Encyclopedia of African History and Culture*, (Volume 1, 2001), p. 55.

[18]     H. Sikounmo, *Ousmane Sembène, écrivain populaire*, (Paris : L'Harmattan, 2010), p. 193

[19]     J-G. Bidima, *la philosophie négro-africaine*, (Paris : PUF, 1995), p. 53

[20]     Danielle et Olivier Föllmi, *Origines : 365 Pensées de sages africains*, (Paris : Martinière, 2005)

[21]     In the Nde languages, even though it is the skull that represents the revered and solicited ancestor, the populations talk of head when they are paying him tribute.

main reason that pushed the populations of Nde to be reticent to Catholicism, were not even married. The fear of seeing them dating wives or daughters of people greatly contributed to the resistance against them in Nde[22].

### Rationalism

Rationalism, which means the ability to use reason to manage environment, called *Zenouh* in Nde, was also a sacred pillar of the Animist religion. For Europeans, reason cannot be combined with religion. For the African, the reason is emanating from the brain, an organ of the human body, the latter being considered as a creation of God and blood ancestors. So, to use it is a means to pay tribute to God and blood ancestors. It is also sacred[23]. The use of reason was a religious obligation and therefore a legacy to be protected. This inheritance, proof of a rational and scientific study of the environment, was verifiable in the objects produced: pottery, spears, arrows, etc. These were made from raw materials as diverse as rocks, clay and especially metals. Rationalism was also verified in the education and social organization[24]. If this was not the case, Europe would have found Africans still living in the caves[25].

We are thus in the presence of a technological mastery improving by personal research and contacts with other peoples. We mentioned earlier the muskets that once acquired from the Arabs and the first Europeans, the Africans started producing them. Castes of producers of these technologies were created to perpetuate them within the families. The production of materials being sacred in Africa, we understand the danger they represented to the Europeans who came to seek for the raw materials for their industries and to look for a market to sell these products. The use of reason was therefore sacred to Animism, contrary to the Christianity which condemned it[26]. It was an element of competition that threatened Europeans. In fact, according to Michel Onfray, the three monotheistic religions namely Christianity, Islam and Judaism are animated by the same death instinct. They share common hatred of reason and intelligence, hatred of freedom and books, hatred of life and sexuality, hatred of women and pleasure[27].

### Self-Security

The principle of self-security which also takes the same word *Zenouh* in Nde consisted of training individuals to become their own bodyguard. In an environment made

essentially of human, animal, plant, landscape, etc. hazards, the most effective way to protect someone was to train him to self-protection. He must anticipate any danger by imagining risk scenarios from the experiences of the ascendants and personal hypotheses. The tales that reached us are the best ways to present supposed and real dangers, simulations of dangers and the means to face them. In these short stories, the hero overcame dangers or solved problems by using his reason without simply praying or waiting for any messiah as taught by Christianity[28]. Every moment, every object, every aspect of the environment was transformed into dangerous situation or object with automatic means to face it. Each act, every speech, the disposal of the objects in a given space, the slightest fact and gesture was a permanent precaution taken to face a danger or the solution to an immediate, short, medium or long term problem. Rationalism was used to understand man and the environment, and self-security helped to deal with dangers and problems posed by these elements. This pillar explains the secret or discretion surrounded each act of life. When visiting an Animist priest, it was always with distrust and his diagnosis consisted more of defining which blood ancestor demanded something than to invent new diagnosis[29]. When we know that self-security was also sacred, which means, presented as a heritage to be applied in order to respect God and the blood ancestors, we easily understand the need to destroy Animism by Europeans through Christianity that advocated protection by a messiah identified to them. This conception had to make Africans vulnerable, manipulated and easily controllable by them.

### Public and Private Acts

Equally dangerous for Europeans was the fourth pillar, which advocated public and private acts. In every areas of the world where Christianity reached, Europeans noticed this pillar among the populations. Elements that can be grouped in the two types of acts ranged from sexual intercourse to assassination, lying and all actions that may be considered "shocking" to man: stealing, avarice, Gluttony, inhospitality, betrayal, and so on. This helps to understand the attitude of Africans towards slave trade which had never been judged by the population as something horrible. Each having God and blood ancestors, having been trained or educated rationally to know man in his good and bad side, self-security, to be caught and sold was an evidence of the non application of that education or the destiny of the victim carried away. "Negative" acts such as lie were regarded more as casual defense systems than forbidden acts. They had to remain private. The tales are still the most illustrative element of our argument. In most cases, the hero must use trickery, which means to tell lie in order to manipulate the object or the man who opposed himself to get out of danger. Jacques Chevrier summarizes this vision perfectly when he writes:

However, the exaltation of trick - often accompanied by a certain exaggeration - that the Hare and Spider tales show

[22]      Interview with Pa Yadieu Simeon, 80 years old, Kassang, 20/08/99

[23]      A. Hampaté Mba, « La tradition vivante », p. 205

[24]      A. Moumouni, *L'Education en Afrique*, p. 29

[25]      Bouba Hama, J. Ki-Zerbo, « place de l'histoire dans la société africaine » in J. Ki-Zerbo (dir), *Histoire générale de l'Afrique, méthodologie et préhistoire africaine*, (Paris : Jeune Afrique, Stock, Unesco ; 1980), p. 72

[26]      M. Onfray, *Traité d'athéologie, Physique de la métaphysique,* (Paris : Grasset, 2006), p. 103-104

[27]      Ibid.

[28]      D. Birago, *Les nouveaux contes d'Amadou Koumba*, (Paris : Présence africaine, 1961)

[29]      W. Rodney, *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*, (Nigeria : Panaf press, 2009), p. 291

may seem paradoxical to non-African readers, and in particular to European readers educated over centuries by Christian tradition to regard lying as a capital sin. It is not the same in Africa where the tricks of the Hare and Spider do not call for moral judgment. The mixture of suppleness, duplicity and sometimes bad faith and cruelty, which defines the cunning of these characters, is called in Rwanda *ubwenge*, a term whose best translation, if it was not pejorative, would have been "deceit". Same thing for the *Banem* of South Cameroon to whom, says Denise Paulme, "the trick is a form and a mark of **great intelligence**[30]".[31]

Let us remind once again that these elements regarded as reaction of the human body considered as a creation of God and blood ancestors, to apply this pillar was also a way of praying and paying tribute to them. It was therefore an obvious barrier to Europeans who cannot totally control the men and women they will meet. The need, therefore, of a form of thinking which would oblige individuals to subject themselves totally was indispensable for a complete control. Christianity, and especially Catholicism demanding confessions, was the best tool to do it.

### Private Territoriality

Territoriality or private property completed the pillars of Animism. Each individual lived in a house whose materials, depending on the other pillars, could vary from one region to another. In this strictly private territory, no one, whatever his status, cannot enter there without an authorization of the owner[32]. To be an adult meant to have a private property. If we take into account the first four pillars, we understand the difficulty that the Europeans faced when setting foot inside the African continent. With these different elements, the mental manipulation, basis of colonization without risk remained problematic. European industrialists analyzed these points during a long time and quickly realized that when they will engage in a deep exploitation of the continent, they will need to transform men they will find there into mental slaves.

### The political, Economic, social and Cultural Implications of African Animism

### The Political plan

The different pillars of animism as presented above strongly influenced all aspects of the life of the Africans of Nde. Politically, the chiefdoms of the region applied democracy with the participation of women. Base on the physiological and psychological knowledge that men and women knew (rationalism), the risks of abuse of power and thus generating insecurity (self-security), in addition to the security services established by the chiefdom such as "Fefe", anti-witchcraft service, "djong", secret service and "madjong", army[33], they had already established a system to

control the power of the king. We had a democratic regime that opposed the debilitating and uncritical obedience to the state that Christianity advocated through the Bible[34]. It is sad to notice that it is the ancient Greece that is taught in the African countries today when giving the origin of the democracy reintroduced in the 90s! By constructing a private dwelling and managing it with its inhabitants, animals and plants (private territoriality), a citizen showed that by administering a micro-space, kind of micro-state, he could also administer a larger territory. It became logical and compulsory for him to be associated to the decision of any matter relating to the political management of the chiefdom[35]. While controlling this power, the blood ancestors and God were solicited for more efficiency.

### The Economic Aspect

In economic plan, the sale of agricultural, animal husbandry, hunting and technology products was still based on the biological and physiological knowledge of individuals, animals, plants and the environment (rationalism). Discreet flatteries can be observed through solidarity and hospitality in order to suppress the bellicose instinct (self-security) of others. All these actions allowed privileged relationships during the sale of products. This technique was so efficient that the Bamileke merchants were called "genius artisans"[36]. It was complemented by invitations in the private territoriality and some offerings to blood ancestors and God to avoid unforeseen events after a scientific analysis of environment and human behaviors.

### The Social Dimension

It was at the social level that the pillars of animism were mostly observable. The contexts surrounding the birth of a child, attribution of names and education were conditioned by the application of Animism. Solidarity, respect for others, permanent solicitude or friendliness flattered the ego of others who, feeling well physically and psychologically (rationalism), suppressed potential enemy (self-security). People were invited in the private property to make business easily with them. However, this was done subtly so that the individual did not realize it directly but felt that it was evident (rationalism, public and private act). In order to prevent this action to fail, some offerings were done to the blood ancestors and to God to protect the success of what was scientifically conceived.

### The Cultural Perspective

On the cultural level, intellectual education was based on the pillars of Animism by integrating them into daily life through its various aspects. In addition to advices and reminders in case of non-respect or mistakes in their application, people used stories and proverbs to instill them more effectively into the conscience of the children. When we read the books of some African writers, the content addresses all dimensions of Animism with particular emphasis on rationalism, self-security and private

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[30]     My emphasis.
[31]     J. Chevrier, *L'Arbre à palabres, Essai sur les contes et récits traditionnels d'Afrique noire*, (Paris : hatier International, 2005), p. 151
[32]     A. Moumouni, *L'Education en Afrique*, p. 29
[33]     L. Perrois, J. P. Notue, *Rois et sculpteurs de l'Ouest Cameroun, la panthère et la mygale*, (Paris : Karthala-Orstom, 1997), p. 202

[34]     Roman, 13 : 1-7
[35]     A. Moumouni, *L'Education en Afrique*, p. 29
[36]     M. Beti, *Main basse sur le Cameroun, Autopsie d'une décolonisation*, (5e ed. Paris : La Découverte, 2010), p. 92

territoriality. It is generally the story of an orphan ill-treated by her father-in-law or her mother-in-law (natural egoism-rationalism) who is driven out to look for an object that was damaged or mislaid. Throughout his efforts to find that object, the hero encounters obstacles that he must overcome by reflecting, obeying and remaining cautious. In the end of the stories, he succeeds to all the tests because of his scientific knowledge of the men and his environment. The story ends with the success of the hero who gains a palace (private territory) because of his sense of deduction drawn from his knowledge (rationalism) and the precautions taken during his quest (self-security). The tyranny of kings or those who have power is always avoided or defeated by ruse on the basis of the objective knowledge that the hero has of the psychological impact of power on an individual. It is very rare that the hero facing a difficulty makes offerings to the ancestors or God. He does not consult Animist priests-physicians for his problem to find a miraculous solution as taught by Christianity. Everything is linked to the brain, to the study and the knowledge that the organ can provide[37].

The alleged mysterious side of the initiation which adolescents underwent in the chiefdoms finds here part of its answer. They were isolated for better rationalization. In fact, in the activities of life, there was only one-fifth of irrational versus four-fifth of rational. But for the interest of a better protection of the chiefdom, it was the opposite that was presented to every child and especially any stranger[38]. The study of human psychology proves that he prefers to believe and especially to be afraid of all what is mysterious than what can be explained. Thus, to say that a person who had seen his naked mother was cursed was more efficient than to explain that voyeurism could lead to a violent reaction of the spied person. Once one could have children, live at his home or initiated to the responsibility to defend his private territory, the individual to whom was revealed the rational basis of the tradition perpetuated the irrationalized part and enjoyed the advantages linked to it.

We see therefore that at the moment Europeans entered Africa with the avowed intention of exploiting its resources, they know that they will face very formidable opponents for the simple reason that they have nothing, absolutely nothing to teach them intellectually. If they succeed to defeat them at the moment of conquest, they will equally face formidable competitors. It was therefore indispensable to destroy them psychologically or mentally and control them. Animism had already produced a political, economic, social and cultural system enabling the full development of the individual. It had above all, and this is the most dangerous aspect, generated an efficient technological production system. So it must be defeated. Christianity had proved its worth in Europe. If initially it was associated to the white race and its expansion throughout the world, it was also an effective idiot factor with the stupid belief to dogmas linked to the person of some unscrupulous individuals, pastors and priests. To insert this religion of idiocy into the Negro's head will take him away from the riches of his soil and

exploitation will be done without any risk. All European nations therefore supported the efforts of Christian religious leaders in the process of evangelization, which means the cretinism of Africans. One of the best elements proving what we are saying is the ban of secularism in the French colonies, whereas in France one of the great battles of the 19th century will lead to the establishment of secularism[39].

### *The Case of Women*

The habit of presenting the events of the past without specifying the sexual perspective is very detrimental to the female. In our present work it is indispensable to write a paragraph to this case because the imposition of the European and Arab religions was particularly harmful for women. The position of women is therefore an element of cultural heritage and it is important to analyze how her situation was perceived before colonization. Since the percentage of people convert to Islam is very low in Nde, we will focus more on Christianity. The pillars of Animism were particularly favorable to women who were politically, economically, socially and culturally independent. No decision whatsoever was taken without consulting them[40]. This is one of the most important immaterial cultural heritage that should be *absolutely* rehabilitated. Most European researchers like Odile Reveyrand-Coulon[41] or Catherine Cocquery-Vidrovitch[42] who visited Africa after colonization acknowledged and mentioned it abundantly. While the European woman at the same time was subjected to the diktat of the males, the woman of Nde, as well as her sisters of other African Animist societies, enjoyed a freedom that many European women envied[43].

It is sad to see African woman struggling today for her emancipation cancelled by Christianity and Islam seeking leaders in Europe, while pre-Christian and pre-Islamic Africa is only made of the woman mastering her life! As Camara Laye points out, "in our country custom advocates a fundamental independence and innate pride; we bully only those who let themselves to be bullied, and the women do not allow anyone to bully them."[44] Ambroise Kom supplements this assertion by pointing out that in Africa "the so-called male power is often only an impression, since man is, in most cases, only the spokesman of an agreement whose woman is the brain". Cosme Dikoume, quoted by Kom concludes that" woman is the salt of the soup. We do

[37]      J. Chevrier, *L'Arbre à palabres,*  p. 151
[38]      A. Hampaté  Mba, « La tradition vivante », p. 204

[39]      J. Baubérot, *Histoire de la laïcité en France*, (Paris, PUF, 3è ed., 2005), pp. 58, 89
[40]      Bouba Hama, J. Ki-Zerbo, « place de l'histoire», p. 71
[41]      O. Reveyrand-Coulon, « Les énoncés féminins de l'islam » in Jean-François Bayart (ed.), *Religion et modernité politique, Dieu pour tous et chacun pour soi*, (Paris : Karthala, 1993), p. 77
[42]      C. Cocquery-Vidrovitch, *Les Africaines, Histoires des femmes d'Afrique Noire, du XIXe au XXe siècle*, (Paris : Desjonquères, 1994), pp. 228, 229, 255
[43]      C. Njiké Bergeret, *Ma passion africaine*, (Paris : Jean-Claude Lattes, 1997), pp. 136, 195
[44]      C. Laye, *L'enfant noir*, (Paris : Pocket, 1953), p. 73

not see it, but it gives its entire flavor "[45]. What a difference with Christianity that demands a stupid submission from woman! An analysis of the Bible which is regarded as a book guiding the life of Christians reveals a sexist, macho and misogynist document. It begins with the book of Genesis ascribing responsibility of the difficulties of life to woman because she had deceived man in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1: 6-16). Some extracts edify us in this regard:

But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ; And the head of the woman is man ... For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; But woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man (1 Corinthians 11: 3-9)

In the other pages we read: "Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to enquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. (1 Corinthians 14: 34-35). This attitude is totally different from the Animism which in its pillars does not specify the roles attributed to the both sexes! We know that there were priests and priestesses in Animism. If the stupidities written in the Bible can flatter the ego of weak men, those who are responsible and enough mature cannot adhere to such nonsense[46]. What about African women adhering to such cretinism? Generally, they present the same psychological profile as the men who adhere to it. They are therefore stupid, weak, lazy and are especially found among urban dwellers and graduate students[47].

One of the icons of the fierce defense of the Animist religion of Nde was, and remains paradoxically a European, Queen Claude Njiké-Bergeret. Daughter of an evangelical pastor, holder of a Master degree in geography, she divorced her French husband to marry a traditional polygamous chief of the Bangangté chiefdom and converted herself to the Animism of this area. Perfectly lucid and assuming her choice, she explained the advantages of this religion compared to the flaws of Christianity. Her autobiography is a real research work on the Animism of Nde whose she says: "More than an organized religion with its dogmas and occasional ceremonies, Animism is a way of conceiving oneself in creation, *a way of life*[48]."[49] She concludes that "the Animist

religion [is] more tolerant than the Christian religion"[50]. Conscious of the fact that her autobiography was limited to show and study the pillars of this new religion in which she felt good, she wrote a second book devoted essentially to the detailed explanation of the constitutive elements of the Animism of Nde[51]. She was criticized many times by local Christian people because of her position in favor of Animism. What is funny is that people who hated her were paradoxically converted to Christianity by her father. Today, she is considered as one of the few people able to give accurate information about the cultural heritage of Nde.

### The Church and the Western School

The Europeans will therefore do everything possible to alienate the Africans of Nde with Christianity. The method they mostly used consisted of isolating the children from their parents who were the repositories of Animism, the religion of intelligence. Most of the Africans usually give all virtues to Western school forgetting, as we have seen above, that at the time of colonization a political, economic, social and cultural organization was taught to children. What then, apart from language, did Western school introduce in Africa? We know that Western education consisted of training individuals who will never think, but rather will remain illiterate people, simple auxiliaries to carry documents. The Europeans will later give them power to rule and dominate their brothers on their behalf[52]. When the children returned from school and told the story of an individual, a certain Jesus who claimed to have been the son of God, African parents listened to them distractedly because they did not see how such information could help them to develop Agriculture, livestock or trade. The administration will force them to go to church and listen to the imbecilities taught by individuals who did not have any link with the inhabitants. The interviews we conducted in Nde have all confirmed the methods used by the settlers to alienate by Christianity the populations and were confirmed by writers like Mongo Beti[53] or Asare Opoku who affirmed that generally in Africa "School was church"[54].

### Decolonization and Neo-Colonialism

Convinced that they had settled in Nde everlastingly as they clearly stated it at the Brazzaville conference in 1944 in these terms "the eventual constitution, even far of self-governments in the colonies is rejected"[55], the French government initiated the Christianization-alienation of the

[45]        A. Kom, *Notre librairie*, N° 125, janvier-mars, 1996, p. 71

[46]        We too were criticized several times by friends and colleagues to have reveal Animism as a religion that gives power to women while if we were converted to Christianity we should have subjected them without any effort. To have studied woman's contribution to the development of prehistoric and pre-colonial Africa, it is absolutely impossible for us to adopt such ingratitude and total unfair attitude.

[47]        R. Dumont, M-F. Mottin, *L'Afrique étranglée*, pp. 149-150

[48]        My emphasis

[49]        C. Njiké Bergeret, *Ma passion*, p. 222

[50]        Ibid. p. 307

[51]        C. Njiké Bergeret, *La sagesse de mon village*, (Paris : Jean-Claude Lattes, 2000)

[52]        H. d'Almeida-Topor, *L'Afrique au 20é siècle*, (Paris : Armand Colin), p. 32

[53]        B. Mouralis, *Comprendre l'œuvre de Mongo Beti*, (Paris : Les Classiques Africains/Saint-Paul, 1981)

[54]        A. Asare Opoku, « Religion in Africa during the colonial era », in A. Abu Boahen (Dir.), *General History of Africa, VII, Africa under Colonial Domination, 18880-1935*, (California, Paris: Heinemann, Unesco, 1985, 2000), p. 525

[55]        H. d'Almeida-Topor, *L'Afrique au 20é siècle*, p. 153

populations slowly in a gradual process. The situation changed after the Second World War. The decolonization movement demanded by the United States, Russia and the United Nations in their majority convinced the French that they were going to lose Cameroon.

The creation of U.P.C. (Union des Populations du Cameroun) - even though the rehabilitation of the Animism whose leaders mostly trained in the Christian missions did not know the pillars, was not part of their program - helped the grandparents to come back to their previous religion. France then decided to use force: mass execution of populations, destruction of palaces, deportations of people to concentration camps[56]. Everything was used to destroy the memory of this African past of Nde, whose Animism, carrying the germs of religious independence with political, economic, social and cultural implications, would ensure true independence. The risk to see the Bamileke developing an industry in Cameroon prohibited by the colonial pact[57] was inconceivable for France. This people had shown "very early the proof of a universally recognized sense of trade and initiative"[58]. René Dumont will say about their peasants that they are one of the best in Africa[59].

Before the inevitable end of colonization or independence demanded by the UN, France decided to place a puppet at the head of Cameroon, Ahmadou Ahidjo, a "Catholicized Muslim"[60]. The latter, together with the French, established a neocolonial regime in which he was only a pet, a vulgar spokesman for the French and Vatican. The destruction of chiefdoms, the deportations and executions of old men, women and children will reach horrible proportions. One of the participants to the massacre, the French pilot Max Bardet talked of it as a "true genocide"[61]. If the main leaders of the UPC party were executed one after the other till 1971 in Bafoussam, Ahidjo's regime of terror against Animism or the authentic immaterial cultural heritage of the West continued with the educational system which allowed a free afternoon in the week, Thursday, reserved for religious teaching. The religions taught were Catholicism, Protestantism and Islam. The resignation of Ahidjo in 1982 did not really change the situation because his successor Paul Biya, even though he eased the dictatorship, did nothing concrete to resuscitate Animism. It was only after the establishment of the constitution of January 1996 which provided a law on the freedom of associations and the official recognition of Animism as one of the Cameroonian religions that efforts started to rehabilitate it.

*Rehabilitation of the Cultural Heritage*

The need to protect heritage is an idea shared by many people of Nde. However, the alienation introduced by Europe with Christianity is so deep that the good will of the few Cameroonians who sincerely wish to protect the heritage faces several difficulties, the most important being the indifference of the authorities of Nde. Before the constitution of 1996, this indifference was instilled in the mind of administrators through their training. Indeed under dictatorship "in the evaluation form of the traditional leaders established by the government, it was stated that they were either Protestant or Catholic"[62]. Since the new constitution was adopted, things are gradually changing. The Cameroonian government, through the school curriculum began to educate children about their African inheritances. Courses and even Cameroonian national languages competitions are organized in primary schools. Projects for regional museums are undertaken. The opening of the departments of African literature, archaeology, anthropology in the State universities of the country, the presence among our bibliography of books denouncing colonialism and neo-colonialism such as those of René Dumont or Mongo Beti whose authors and works were banned in Cameroon, all these efforts prove a real desire to rehabilitate the cultural heritage of Cameroon. This rehabilitation is urgent because Christianity and Islam generate neuroses with stupidities such as hell, devil or sin. The need to remove those mental diseases from the head of Cameroonian citizens is therefore a priority to make them become efficient tools for development.

## CONCLUSION

The cultural heritage is still a notion almost unknown to most of the populations of Nde. During our research we noticed a lack of interest from the various authorities. The few initiatives taken by some individuals were more a matter of claim than a real desire to protect and even rehabilitate it. If it is difficult to guess the sincerity of some organizers of the so-called traditional or cultural ceremonies, we noticed that there was nothing cultural in such activities. It was only a presentation of cultural alienation. This alienation is the result of European colonization and in particular the introduction of the psychological weapon aimed at removing from the African's mind the Animism whose pillars guaranteed resistance to the economic exploitation of the continent, the main reason for the presence of the Europeans in Africa. The re-establishment of democracy has given the occasion for new efforts for the protection and even the rehabilitation of Animism, one of the bases of the real knowledge about the way of life of the pre-Christian and pre-Islamic populations of Nde. According to Sylvain Djache "the religions called "Animists" are very interesting because they did not instill an idea of hegemony and genocide. They can be cited as an example of religious belief which is a school of tolerance"[63]. We hope that it will help to define

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[56] M. Beti, *Main basse sur le Cameroun,* p. 95

[57] R. Dumont, *L'Afrique noire est mal partie*, (3e Ed. Paris : Seuil, 1973), p. 41

[58] M. Beti, *Main basse sur le Cameroun,* p. 92

[59] R. Dumont, *L'Afrique noire,* p. 206

[60] E. Meyomesse, « Le pouvoir politique descend de l'autel », in *Les cahiers de Mutations*, (Vol. 056, Mars 2009), p. 6

[61] A. Eyinga, *L'UPC : une révolution manquée* ?, (Paris : Chaka, 1991), p. 124

[62] S. Djache Nzefa, *Les chefferies bamiléké dans l'enfer du modernisme*, (Strasbourg : DILA, 1994), p. 65

[63] S. Djache Nzefa, *Les chefferies bamiléké,* p. 64

and develop appropriate measures for an efficient protection and rehabilitation of the material and immaterial cultural heritage.

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