The Builders of Identity:
Education, Language, and the Elites of Cameroon,
1916-1961

by

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Introduction

The Muongo River runs through the western corner of Cameroon, dividing a country simmering with political unease. On one side lives the cultural legacy of the British colonial administration. On the other, vestiges of French power remain. The French and British colonial administrations operated in respective areas of Cameroon between the years 1916 and 1961, until the two territories gained independence and came together at reunification.¹ Fifty-one years later the effects of their policies are still contributing to unrest between the Anglophone population of West Cameroon and the Francophone population of East Cameroon.

The Anglophone population, accounting for about thirty percent of the republic, protests political, economic, and cultural domination by the Francophone majority of East Cameroon.² Since Independence the Anglophones have been excluded from holding certain key cabinet positions, such as National Security, Foreign Affairs, and Economy and Finance, as well as jobs in the state corporations that monopolize the TV and radio (CRTV), water (SNEC), and electricity (SONEL) sectors, to name only a few.³ The Anglophone politician John Ngu Foncha explained that the Anglophones’ loyalty to the state is questioned by members of the Francophone population, referring to them as « les ennemies de la maison, les traitres.

¹ The two territories had originally both been part of the German colony of Kamerun. This will be more fully explained in Chapter One.
The Anglophone population claims that while their region, rich in minerals, oil, and agricultural produce, produces seventy percent of the country’s natural resources, they receive less than ten percent of the country’s export profits. Development, especially road infrastructure, is neglected in the two Anglophone provinces.\(^4\)

Although the country is officially bilingual, the administrative workings of the government are conducted almost entirely in French. The current president of the republic, Paul Biya, has never addressed the country in English during the almost thirty-years he has spent in office.\(^5\) Many Anglophones resent the fact that they must learn French in order to attend the majority of classes at the University of Yaoundé (the country’s only university until 1993), while Francophones can neglect their English and experience no negative effects.\(^6\) A group of Anglophone school children wrote an open letter to their parents in 1985, demanding reasons for the inequalities they saw occurring between the two regions: “Tell us why bilingualism in Cameroon demands the mastery of French language by Anglophones, and not vice versa… [why] all road-signs in the Country are solely in French…[and] why the majority of Provincial chiefs in Buea and Bamenda [Anglophone cities] are Franco-phone…”\(^7\)

On July 24, 1985, the “North West and South West Elite” living in Douala sent a


\(^5\) Toh (on page 9) explains the only natural oil refinery in the country is located in West Cameroon; Samah, 254.

\(^6\) Sameh, 254.


letter to President Paul Biya stating, “the fundamental basis of our grievances…is judging us against a Franco-phone cultural background.”

On April 2 and 3, 1993, the All-Anglophone Conference was held in the western city of Buea where Anglophones, expressing discontent with the Francophone-controlled government, demanded that the federal system must be reestablished (the original federal system having been abandoned in 1972) in order to ensure them equal rights. One year later a Second All-Anglophone Conference was held in which a goal of secession was stated if the government continued to ignore their requests. The Southern Cameroons National Council, the SCNC (referring to their former title of the British Southern Cameroons), emerged from this discussion to declare themselves residents of a separate country. This radical political group now refers to their home in West Cameroon as the Southern Cameroons. To them, East Cameroon is a separate country: La République du Cameroun. The SCNC requested to join the British Commonwealth as a separate country from La République in 1995. Violence has mounted between the SCNC and the government since the 1990s and the U.S. State Department, Freedom House, and Amnesty International have denounced the government of Cameroon for punishing SCNC activists with imprisonment and torture.

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11 Konings and Nyamnjoh, 220.
12 Konings and Nyamnjoh, 221.
13 Sameh, 260.
The SCNC does not represent the views of the majority of Anglophones. There are those who proclaim their distrust of this political group, and others who believe the cause to be unrealistic. However, in 1995 the SCNC gathered 300,000 votes in support of independence from La République du Cameroun.\textsuperscript{14} Although the SCNC is regarded as a radical group throughout the Anglophone region, they are the product of a very pressing social problem.

The root of this conflict can be found in the cultural isolation that the Anglophone population experiences as a minority in a Francophone-dominated nation. The cultural identities of the two regions were molded both during the years of colonial experience, as well as in the time following Independence. The French and the British operated under two very different colonial policies, yet both East and West Cameroon today identify strongly with the culture of their colonizers. This paper will study the education and language policies of the two colonial administrations, working to understand what factors were similar enough to produce two such equally strong identities.

The SCNC claims that the evils of the “francophone corrupt culture” are overpowering their “Anglo-Saxon culture.”\textsuperscript{15} Recounting the history of how the early British Baptist missionaries had to leave when the Germans first took control of Cameroon (in 1884), SCNC literature states, “the British had to withdraw after many years of fruitful contacts. This was at the displeasure of many inhabitants who had

\textsuperscript{14} Konings and Nyamnjoh, 229.
grown to cherish the British ways of life.”

The SCNC then goes on to explain the following years of British administration from 1916 to 1961, stating, “Anglo-Saxon culture flourished as democratic political institutions took firm roots in national life.” These phrases, taken directly from the SCNC’s website, illustrate the strong identification with British culture present among the Anglophone population. Even their chosen name, the Southern Cameroons, is the name given to them by the British.

The reinterpretation of British colonial history fluctuates among the Anglophone population. The Anglophone writer Buma Kor, explained, “We had a special colonial experience which left us without terrible scars and wounds as compared to other people of Africa. That is why we had such high moral integrity and sense of purpose that struck our compatriots when we joined La République du Cameroun.” On the other hand, another Anglophone writer, Emmanuel Fru Doh, wrote, “Southern Cameroons was left to wallow in neglect” and that “together with his Francophone counterpart they bore the brunt of colonialism.” Fru Doh stated that they were “tormented and exploited by the colonists,” yet he also believed that the Anglophone was ‘once again a victim of “colonization” [by the Franchophone government], forced to cooperate with policies that “are indeed meant to alienate him from his heritage.”

It becomes necessary to understand how the colonizers, regardless of whether they are remembered as having “tormented and exploited” or

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16 Ibid
17 Ibid
20 Fru Doh, 77-78.
left behind “high moral integrity,” were able to create a cultural legacy powerful enough to give birth to the SCNC.

In 1964, three years after the reunification of Cameroon, Paul Engo, an Anglophone contributor to the cultural magazine *Abbia*, described the attraction of French ways to the residents of East Cameroon. He wrote, “The men folk attained heights by absorbing French education and imitating the outward visible symbols of French culture. The women folk, less concerned with education, bleached their skins, wore fashionable dresses and wigs…” Engo observed that the movement for independence by his francophone compatriots demonstrated a love for Africa, but stated that it was “an unrealistic dream” to believe that “they will cease to be prototype Frenchmen in a year or a decade.” In the same issue of *Abbia*, another contributor exclaimed, “Look here, you are more ’French than the Frenchmen themselves, you fellows over here…”

Today, more than “a year or a decade” since Engo’s prediction, the unity of Cameroon is threatened by the clash of Anglophone and Francophone ways. Sir Bryan Sharwood Smith, governor of Nigeria from 1954 to 1957, claimed that education in the British Cameroons was never used to change national identity. He stated in his memoirs, ‘…education was never recognized as a “solvent” or regarded in any way as a cultural influence. It was, in fact, utilitarian in the narrowest sense of

22 Engo, 186.
the word. By examining the language policies implemented, the curriculum followed, and the teaching strategies of the European missionaries and teachers at work in the two territories, it becomes possible to understand whether Sir Bryan Sharwood-Smith was speaking the truth.

Chapter One
The Colonial Mindset

On July 14, 1884, the Germans raised their flag over the coastal city of Douala, located on the innermost curve of the ear of Africa. The Germans governed the protectorate, called Kamerun, for the next 30 years until World War I swept through Central Africa. On September 26, 1914, the Germans lost Douala to the French and British forces, and the official end of German rule in Kamerun followed a year and a half later when they captured the fort of Mora in the north. On March 4, 1916 the two allied forces decided that France would control three-fourths of the former protectorate, to be named French Cameroun, and Great Britain would control one-fourth, consisting of two small disconnected areas attached to Nigeria: Northern British Cameroons and Southern British Cameroons. The 1919 Versailles peace conference declared conquered colonies to be administered under a League of Nations mandate system. It was not, however, until July 20, 1922 that the Cameroons were officially confirmed as mandates, due to resistance by France who had hoped to establish Cameroun as a colony.

The Cameroons were defined as “type B” mandates” by the League, “not yet able to stand by themselves,” and requiring France and Britain to respectively “assume the administration of the territory on conditions which, with the prohibition

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3 LeVine, The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence, 32.
of abuses, such as the slave trade and the sale of firearms and alcohol, will guarantee freedom of conscience and religion…” The mandate system was meant to eradicate the worst aspects of colonial rule. The League of Nations allowed the powers to administer the area according to their preferred style, but they were required to report to a Permanent Mandates Commission every year. The French and British administrations assumed very different political policies, economic strategies, and cultural goals in their respective mandates that would, to varying degrees, influence the creation of the Francophone and Anglophone identities.

I. French Cameroun

“Man must put the world in order”: French Colonial Policy in Cameroun

The French did not admit Cameroun into the federation of French Equatorial Africa (AEF) due to concern that its mandate status might complicate the future permanent integration of the AEF into the French Republic. However, they did set up an administration in Cameroun that closely resembled that functioning in the AEF, as well as in French West Africa (AOF). The French colonial administration operated under the policies of both assimilation and association.

Assimilation worked to incorporate the colonial state permanently into the French empire by creating French citizens out of colonial subjects. In 1895 the Sorbonne professor, Marcel Dubois, defined the goal of France:

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6 Rubin, 45.
7 Mortimer, 36.
…to create new societies [in the colonial areas] morally and politically similar to our own as much as possible, ultimately united with it by a very close friendship, which should be for our fatherland an augmentation of economic power, and in the long run an [integral] part of it.  

The French believed their moral and political standards to be superior to those originating in Africa and Asia. This policy replaced preexisting African political, legal, and social structures with French structures in the name of the “Civilizing Mission.” Assimilation sprung from the ideals of the French Revolution proclaiming all men to be equal. These ideals did not extend to claim African culture as equal to that of the French, but rather implied that the African could become the equal of the Frenchman through improved education and governance.

The policy of association, defined by the French colonial administrator Jules Harmand in his 1910 book *Domination et Colonisation*, originated from the belief that the colonies were the property of France, not a part of the nation. Africans living in the colonies would never become French citizens because their social reality was too drastically different from that in France. Harmand defined his policy as consisting of “the largest amount of administrative, economic and financial independence that is compatible with the greatest possible political dependence.”

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12 Gardinier, 10.
14 Quoted in Mortimer, 33.
Association called for a strong Governor to control the administration of the colony while preserving some aspects of African institutions.  

The Cameroonian historian Emmanuel Chiabi defined the French strategy in Cameroun to be association policy, backed with assimilation tendencies. In reality the policy of assimilation was only ever fully employed in parts of Senegal, while most parts of French colonial Africa were administered under a combination of assimilation and association. Robert Delavignette, the former director of political affairs and the minister of overseas France (following a year long position as the high commissioner of Cameroun from March 1946 to February 1947), explained that the “dosage” of the two policies [assimilation and association] were measured out in different countries according to “the practitioner’s dexterity and the temperature of the events.”

Paternalism unavoidably wrapped its long fingers around French policy, treating Africans as charges in need of instruction, rather than citizens. Delavignette explained that the colonial administrator “seeks methodically to get to know them [the Africans] as men,” yet pointed out that at the same time “the administrator measures the difference between their [the African’s] mentality and his.” A French schoolteacher’s description of his Camerounian students as « joyeux, nos petits noirs:

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15 Quoted in Mortimer, 33.
16 Chiabi, The Making of Modern Cameroon, viii.
20 Delavignette, Freedom and Authority in French West Africa, 13.
ils aiment à rire, à sauter...»,

illustrates the distance this teacher felt lay between his own mentality and those of his students.

World War I significantly impacted the colonial mentality in Cameroun. As Europe lay grey and injured after the war, the colonies provided the French with fresh land in which to start over, a place where authority would be recognized and control would produce results. 

Delavignette explained, “What they [the French administrators] loved in Africa was the possibility of applying their own civilization. They were conscious of the power given to them by the inventions of science.”

The colonial administrator often operated under a heroic mindset, believing himself to be working for his country and for the greater good of humanity; influenced by the ever-echoing chant of Buffon: “Man can and must attempt all,” “Man must put the world in order.”

A commissioner (or high commissioner) governed French Cameroun, commanding about roughly the same degree of power as a governor-general. Europeans occupied all of the top administrative spots under the commissioner. In 1937, there were 654 European government employees (206 of them commanders and administrators), supported by 2,161 Camerounian government employees (724 of them contract workers). No Camerounians were employed as commanders.


22 Delavignette, Freedom and Authority in French West Africa, 9.

23 Delavignette, Freedom and Authority in French West Africa, 21.

24 Delavignette, Freedom and Authority in French West Africa, 17.

25 Suret-Canale, 308; Chiabi, The Making of Modern Cameroon, 27, explained that in 1939 the French changed the title from commissioner to high commissioner.

colonial officers were often moved from colony to colony, and from region to region. It was not a priority of the French administration to keep officers stationary in order for them to gain specific skills correlating to the region in which they were working. Instead, the administration operated under the belief that the social conditions should be uniform throughout the colony.

The French did not often keep legitimately appointed chiefs in power, with the exception of the Fulani emirs in the north of Cameroun. Rather, they tended to place power in the hands of the Africans who appeared best educated and most likely to work efficiently and loyally. The French then possessed the power to redistribute the authority of these self-constructed chiefs whenever they pleased. A body of Camerounian advisors, called the Conseil des notables, was created in order to temper the power of the traditional chiefs in each district. The 1932 report to the League explained the inclusion of Camerounians in the political administration, stating, « La politique d’association s’est manifestée par l’institution des Conseils des notables, de commissions agricoles, qui sont consultés et éclairés sur les diverses mesures administratives intéressant la vie des collectivités indigènes. » Delavignette explained that the French could not apply the definition of indirect rule to their association style of governance since the Africans worked in foreign rather than indigenous institutional structures.

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28 Crowder, 201-203.
30 Chiabi, The Making of Modern Cameroon, 27.
31 France. Rapport 1922, 12.
32 Delavignette, Freedom and Authority in French West Africa, 50.
The justice system in French Cameroun included a native penal code, administered by a French colonial officer who possessed the power to impose the death penalty. This code qualified certain categories of actions as legal when committed by French citizens (citoyens) but as illegal when committed by native Camerounians (sujets). The Indigénat system, distinctly separate from the native penal code, allowed the colonial administrator to punish the African for minor offences. Widespread abuse of the Indigénat system occurred as the definitions of offences were both vague and numerous, such as “circulating rumors of a nature to disturb the public peace” and “allowing domestic animals to stray onto another’s property.”

World War II severely altered the course of events. French Cameroun was placed under the authority of de Gaulle in 1940 (after having been regained from the Vichy government) and the free status of Cameroun, standing as a symbol of nationalism and an all-important reserve of troops and supplies, increased the importance of this mandate in the eyes of the French. The French felt indebted to Africa for its contribution to the war effort and in January 1944 the Brazzaville Conference was held to revaluate and reestablish French colonial policy. This conference declared that all residents under French administration should enjoy the same civil liberties and undergo the same criminal processes as citizens in France. It stripped the titles of sujet and citoyen from the colonial administrative

33 Mortimer, 37.
34 Hodgkin, 35.
37 Johnson, 77.
vocabulary and banned the *Indigénat* policy. The Brazzaville Conference also focused on improving agricultural production, establishing trade unions, and educating girls. The French colonial conscience, which had never believed self-government to be a discussable issue before 1944, was finally forced to recognize it as a possibility.

The League of Nations officially disintegrated on April 18, 1946. Eight months later, on December 13, 1946, the French and British Cameroons were placed under the tutelage of the newly created United Nations. Article 76 (b) of the U.N. Charter called for the inhabitants of the trust territories to undergo “progressive development towards self government.” However, even before French Cameroun was officially declared a trust territory under the U.N., the effects of this change in colonial consciousness began to occur.

The *Loi Lamine Guèye* was enacted on May 7, 1946, declaring, “tout les ressortissants des territoires d’outre-mer ont la qualité de citoyen au même titre que les nationaux français de la métropole ou des territoires d’outre-mer.” Individuals who were not French nationals (identified as *administrés français* and constituting the vast majority of African Camerounians) were granted citizenship of the French Union, although not of France. The consequences of the *Loi Lamine Guèye* allowed

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38 Rubin, 52-53.
44 Hodgkin, 36.
Africans to run as representatives for the French National Assembly and the
Assembly of the French Union. In 1950, the second Loi Lamine Guèye called for equalization of the salaries and working conditions for all Africans and Europeans employed by the colonial governments. In 1956, the loi cadre was instituted in French Cameroun, prompting universal suffrage; followed closely a year later by a new constitution.

On May 9, 1947, French Cameroun became a state under trusteeship, headed by the Camerounian conservative leader André-Marie Mbida. Mbida went on to become prime minister, claiming in 1957 that Cameroun was yet unequipped to receive independence and should continue under French tutelage for ten more years. The French, ironically, expressed discomfort with Mbida’s refusal to accept plans for independence. A timetable had been set for independence, complete with a plan to gradually replace French officials with scholarship students returning from France.

In 1958 Mbida resigned due to a disagreement with the French High Commissioner,

46 Rubin, 52-53.
47 Hodgkin, 36.
48 Hodgkin, 37.
50 Joseph, 337.
and Ahmadou Ahidjo was appointed Prime Minister. Cameroun officially gained its independence on January 1, 1960.

“Man-power”: The French Economic Strategy in Cameroun

Albert Sarraut, French minister for the colonies from 1920 to 1924 and 1932 to 1933, and author of *La Mise en valeur de colonies françaises*, called for the development of a mutually beneficial relationship between France and her colonies. The colonies, he explained, must produce raw materials, which France would then process with her advanced technology. Labor was required to produce these raw materials and Delavignette explained how the colonial government turned to the Camerounians to supply this force. He wrote, “Thus, while on the moral and political level he [the colonizer] thought of the blacks as men, on the economic plane he treated them as man-power.”

Camerounian labor was required on the plantations, in the forests, building bridges, and constructing railroads. The French forced the Germans to leave their plantations in the years following World War I and, unlike the British, did not allow them to return. The colonial government took control of the plantations and sold more than two hundred of them to private buyers, mostly French or Camerounian. The plantations of French Cameroun mainly produced cocoa, bananas, palm oil, rubber, and coffee. Logging played a large role in the economic development of French Cameroun as well. By the year 1936, 200,000 hectares of forests were designated for

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53 Rubin, 89. A more detailed explanation of independence will follow in Chapter Four.
56 Rubin, 56.
commercial use. In order to export the country’s wealth of raw materials, the French undertook major infrastructure projects at the beginning of their administration such as continuing the Douala-Yaoundé railway begun by the Germans and building roads throughout the territory. Between 1922 and 1935 the French spent a total of 28,210,923 francs on railroads.

The French imposed a head tax on all Cameroonian residents above the age of twelve, ranging from one franc to twenty francs depending on the locality. The head tax had not previously applied to women under the German rule and resentment was expressed over this change in policy. The chief of a village would collect the taxes from the members of his village and in exchange receive a tax rebate from the administration. The chief would sometimes force his village to pay the same collective amount of taxes even after the population had been reduced from epidemics or emigration so that he could receive a high rebate.

In addition to the head tax, a system of forced labor, called prestation, required all male Camerounians to work ten days per year. The League of Nations mandate for French Cameroun stated, “the mandatory power…shall prohibit all forms of forced labor or compulsory labor except for essential public works and services, and then only for adequate remuneration.” To sidestep the charge of using forced labor, the French declared they would pay their workers two francs per day; however,

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57 Rubin, 56.  
58 LeVine, The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence, 104.  
59 France, Rapport 1937, 32.  
61 Quoted in LeVine, The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence, 105.
these two francs rarely made their way to the laborer.\textsuperscript{62} Workers were often told they would be gone for ten days, and instead not allowed to return home for months at a time.\textsuperscript{63} In addition, before 1944 the Indigénat policy legalized forced labor as a punishment for misdemeanors among the Africans.\textsuperscript{64} In 1925, 4,700 laborers out of 6,000 within French Cameroun were conscripted.\textsuperscript{65}

The conditions of this conscripted labor were grueling, demoralizing, and unsafe. Men worked fifty-one hour weeks, received small portions of food (sometimes even being forced to pay for their own food due to food shortages), and were cared for by two doctors for every six thousand men.\textsuperscript{66} Raymound Buell, who spent time in French Cameroun during the late 1920’s researching for the Committee of International Research of Harvard University and Radcliff College, reported that the French reports to the League of Nations blatantly lied about both the number of deaths resulting from labor conditions and the amount of pay given to workers. He declared the death rate in French Cameroun for 1925 to be 61.7 men per thousand, while the report to the League stated this number as only 5.1 men per thousand.\textsuperscript{67}

Food was requisitioned from villages to give to the laborers, and if a villager failed to produce the required amount (which was for instance ten kilos of peanuts and five kilos of rice per year in the district of Ebolowa) they would be punished.\textsuperscript{68} The colonial government dismissed any unemployment as the fault of the workers.

\textsuperscript{62} LeVine, \textit{The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence}, 106.
\textsuperscript{63} Buell, vol. 2, 323.
\textsuperscript{64} Rubin, 51.
\textsuperscript{65} Buell, vol. 2, 323.
\textsuperscript{66} Buell, vol. 2, 326.
\textsuperscript{67} Buell, vol. 2, 324-325.
\textsuperscript{68} Buell, vol. 2, 327.
Following World War II, the colony saw an increase in manufacturing and foreign trade. FIDES, *the Fonds d’Investissement pour le Développement Économique et Sociale des Territoires d’Outre-Mer*, invested 250 million dollars in the development of French Cameroun. Villagers from all over the territory were drawn to the cities. In 1956, the Bamiléké ethnic group came to dominate the administration, banking, commerce, transport, secondary industry, and extractive industries in the city of Douala, yet at the same time represented almost a third of the unemployed population. The Bamiléké’s rate of unemployment exemplifies the disruption this period of economic growth caused among different ethnic groups as the cities failed to effectively absorb the influx of new emigrants. The Bassa around Edea, as well as the Ewondo around Yaoundé, underwent similar changes. The cultural goals of the French administration also contributed to the disintegration of the traditional structure of society.

Fig. 3. « Les ouvrages de la route vers l’A. E. F. » (France, *Rapport 1931* (Paris : Imprimerie Générale Lahure, 1932).)

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70 Rubin, 56-58.
71 Rubin, 58.
72 Rubin, 59.
In 1953, the historian George Hardy claimed the philosophy behind French colonization to have evolved, as long ago as the Restoration, into a system dramatically more complex than its beginnings. He wrote,

…it ceases to be an exploitation pure and simple to become a guardianship and an education, it endeavors to conciliate the interests of the métropole with those of the indigenous populations, it seeks to be an instrument of human progress."  

A steadfast belief in the moral righteousness of their work strengthened the French colonial spirit. Delavignette defined the three social goals of colonial policy in French West Africa as, “the freeing of the slaves, education, and the fight against epidemics.” The first topic covered in each report to the League during the beginning years of French administration was slavery. The 1922 report stated, « Le premier but à atteindre pour faire cesser ces pratiques condamnables [l'esclavage] était d'abord de rétablir l'ordre en instituant une administration régulière. »

By focusing on the social ills that their presence was supposedly eradicating, the French justified their position of authority in the mandate.

The French government published a pamphlet on its work in Cameroun, stating, “Thus France has left nothing undone to accomplish her civilising mission and to improve the spiritual and material wellbeing of this country committed to her

2 Delavignette, *Freedom and Authority in French West Africa*, 22.
In this attempt to “improve the wellbeing of this country” the government saw no boundaries. In 1932, the mountainous Kirdi ethnic group experienced a severe drought and grasshopper raids. The report to the League reported that in response, “…l’Administration locale s’est efforcée d’arracher ces malheureuses populations à leurs montagnes ingrates. »

This incident demonstrated the enormous degree of control that the colonial government held over the lives of individuals. The report went on to explain, « A la fin de 1932, plusieurs milliers de familles avaient abandonnée leurs repaires sauvages et constitué les première agglomérations sur des terres fertiles…mesures qui ne manqueront pas d’agir comme un stimulant puissant auprès de ceux qui sont encore demeurés réfractaires à notre actions civilisatrice. »

The colonial administration used its civilizing policies to justify the removal of an entire ethnic group from its native land with no input from the people themselves. The administration justified educational policies that distanced children from their native culture in the exact same way.

The missionaries assumed the majority of educational activity in French Cameroun. The delegation of education to the missionaries was an unusual policy for the French, differing from their standard in most of colonial French Africa at a time when secular education was celebrated. This uncharacteristic policy came about as a result of the established presence of the missions under the German administration.

The French, suddenly faced with the administration of Cameroun in the aftermath of World War I, found that they could more easily meet the educational needs of the

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4 Prince Beauvau-Craon: President of Council of Administration, “The Work of France in the Cameroons” (Paris: Centre d’Informations Documentaires, 1936), 5. This pamphlet was written in English, with the goal of sharing it in Great Britain.
5 France, Rapport 1922, 71.
6 France, Rapport 1922, 71.
country by working within the missionary framework rather than by fighting against it. The mission schools were equipped with their own source of funding and a steady supply of European teachers, a welcome prospect to the French government as it focused its attention on other areas such as health care.8

Following World War I, the French required that all German mission staff members must leave the country. The German Sacred Heart Fathers were replaced with French missionaries of the same order (working mainly in the north) while in the south of the country the German Pallotine Fathers were replaced with the French Holy Ghost Fathers.9 Other Christian missions arrived to operate schools in French Cameroun, including the American Presbyterian mission, the French Protestant mission (the Paris Evangelical Society), and the Seventh Day Adventist mission.10

The Treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye of 1919 “guaranteed freedom of conscience and the right of missionaries to pursue their calling.”11 However, in February 1922, the French issued a decree banning the right of any private school to open without the authority of the colonial government. This decree also stated that all courses must be taught in French and the missionary teachers must obtain the same teaching certificates as held by the government teachers.12 Working under assimilation-styled policies, the colonial administration worked hard to monitor every part of the education process. The administration even attempted to control the

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7 Johnson, 84.
8 LeVine, The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence, 81.
11 Hailey, 1197.
12 Hailey, 1197.
actions of the parents, stating in 1929, “La collaboration des parents, qui, en principe, devraient être les premiers éducateurs en la matière, ne saurait être escomptée; ils ont eux-mêmes le plus réel besoin d’être éduqués.”13 While the administration succeeded in controlling the educational actions of the missionaries and the parents to varying degrees, the school systems grew at a fast rate. Many Cameroonians came to regard missions as a possible route to economic success and a way to advance their status in society.14

The society of French Cameroun was strictly stratified. In 1938, 3,000 Europeans lived alongside 2¼ million Africans. Two thousand, one hundred and sixty-one of these 3,000 Europeans, working in commerce or directly for the colonial administration, were French, while 800 of them were foreigners from other countries such as Greece, Germany, and the U.S.A.15 By the end of the 1950s, the population of non-Cameroonians in the territory numbered about 10,000.16 There were those, the colons, who considered Cameroun to be their home, simply another region of France. They felt justified in creating political parties, organizing trade unions, running as representatives in national elections and sometimes even demonstrating against the French administration.17 This population lived in small pockets in colonial towns rich with European architecture.18 Delavignette explained that French customs remained equally dominating in the colony as at home in France, describing how “we brush past yellow fever to take part in the social activities of a provincial town…thrust aside

14 LeVine, The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence, 70.
15 Delavignette, Freedom and Authority in French West Africa, 18.
17 Chiabi, The Making of Modern Cameroon, 28.
18 Delavignette, Freedom and Authority in French West Africa, 26. See Fig. 4.
lepers to enter a punctilious hierarchy and a formalism of endless documents…in the tropical heat we smile and bow in obedience to bourgeois conventions.”

These social conventions and customs were thrust upon the educated Africans, shaping an elite class called the évolués. Jules Carde, Governor-General of French West Africa from 1923 to 1930, proclaimed the need to “instruire la masse et dégager l’élite.” The French did not hesitate to judge and classify the different ethnic groups within Cameroun to aid them in this task. A Paris Evangelical missionary described the ethnic groups of the Grassfields as « persévèrent » and « pratiques, » the Doualas as the most artistic and literary, and the Bassas as « fils de païens, pour la plupart buveurs de vin de palme, les fils paient pour les pères. Ils sentent leur infériorité et en souffrent… » Hand-picked by the French, the elite class was relied on by the administration to serve as links between the colonial administration and the people.

The 1938 report to the League stated, « Au point de vue social le progrès est marqué, l’indigène pour son alimentation, pour son vêtement, dans son habitat, se rapproche des habitudes européennes. » The report explained, « Il s’ouvre aux modes d’existence des européens. » According to Delavignette, “They [the évolués] have Africanized an organism that has absorbed them. They have dyed it their colour, but they have not transformed it by their spirit. They are sometimes as far removed from the native masses as a white man could be, or farther.”

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19 Delavignette, Freedom and Authority in French West Africa, 24. See Fig. 5.
20 Hailey, 1198.
As asked in 1947 what was being done to guard and encourage indigenous arts and culture, the administration responded that specific music and dances were being studied by specialists, two art training centers were operating in the north and in the west, and an art school had been opened in the town of Ebolo which was to have an exposition in Paris.  

The Institut Français d’Afrique Noire published a trimester review called Études Camerounaises which focused on different cultural aspects of Cameroun, publishing reports on different ethnic groups throughout the territory. The author of an article on the customs of the Ewondo ethnic group began by explaining, « Je crois donc répondre aux désirs de ces curieux, Blanc et Noirs, en leur soumettant un travail sur les différentes manifestations de la vie religieuse des anciens Ewondo. »

As the practice of anthropology became popular, it became apparent that the customs of Cameroun could no longer be studied independently of the effects of colonization.

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Fig. 4. « Quelques coins de Douala » (France, Rapport 1931 (Paris : Imprimerie Générale Lahure, 1932).)

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26 Delavignette, Freedom and Authority in French West Africa, 13.
II. The British Cameroons

“To stand alone”: British Colonial Policy in the Cameroons

When the British began administration of the Cameroons they placed the northern section under the administration of the Resident of the Nigerian Province of Bornu and the southern section under the Resident of the Nigerian Province of Yola. The Cameroons Administrative Ordinance of 1924 (no. 3) stated that Nigerian laws would be applied in the Cameroons, integrating the two colonial entities. Since the British Cameroons was a mandate and not a colony, this action was not officially allowed by the League of Nations’ policies. The League of Nations, however, did not

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hold enough political power at the time to effectively challenge British colonial policy and they were forced to allow this integration to occur.\textsuperscript{28}

The British operated under the policy of indirect rule, which delegated aspects of political power to a “native administration” run by traditional chiefs.\textsuperscript{29} The 1922 report by the Nigerian colonial office on the administration of the Cameroons stressed the advantages of this policy, especially when colonial officials were in high demand.

The difficulties with which the Nigerian officers have had to contend have, therefore, been considerable, and their task would have been impossible had not the fullest use been made from the first of the locally-evolved indigenous machinery of tribal administration, and had not great tact and sympathy been displayed by the officers concerned in their dealings with the many shy and sensitive communities whose well-being has been committed to their care, and whose confidence they have had to win.\textsuperscript{30}

This report noted the difference between the German colonial administration and their own, registering surprise that the Germans had failed to focus on “purely native affairs,” or to place control in the hands of the native Cameroonian.\textsuperscript{31}

Mirroring Nigeria, the native administration was at first advised by groups such as the \textit{kwifon} and the \textit{nyamkwe}, societies traditionally in charge of regulating the power of the king.\textsuperscript{32} Native Courts, and (at a later point) Native Treasury Districts were instituted.\textsuperscript{33} District heads were placed in charge of collecting taxes, administering the census, and controlling the law and order of the area. The native

\textsuperscript{29} Chiabi, “British administration and nationalism,” 182.
\textsuperscript{32} Chiabi, \textit{The Making of Modern Cameroon}, 17.
administration was allowed to keep half of the revenue gained from taxes and court fines, yet they did not enjoy complete or equal autonomy under the British by any means. Members of the native administration reported to higher-ups in the colonial administration, well aware of their rank in the highly ordered pyramid of command.\footnote{Rubin, 73.}

Orders issued by a native authority could be canceled if the British administrative officer did not agree with it. However, the orders were required to be followed once they were confirmed by the British.\footnote{Raymond Leslie Buell, \textit{The Native Problem in Africa}, vol. 1 (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1965), 689.}

Indirect rule professed to preserve the traditional structure of the African society within which it functioned, creating “a framework developed in a native not a European milieu.”\footnote{Buell, vol. 1, 717.} The 1922 report stated, “the duties of the political officer are advisory only, and the whole actual work of administration will be in the hands of the Sheikh and his subordinates.”\footnote{Great Britain Colonial Office, \textit{Report 1922}, 25.} However, Lord Lugard, Governor-General of Nigeria between 1914 and 1919, stated, “He [the African] lacks power of organization, and is conspicuously deficient in the management and control alike of men or of business. He loves the display of power, but fails to realize its responsibility…”\footnote{Lord Lugard, \textit{The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa} (London: Archon Books, 1965), 70.} The British might have proclaimed loudly that their style of governance had “its roots in the framework of indigenous society,” but the ideology of Lugard illustrates how some British administrators believed the framework of indigenous society to be deeply
flawed and in need of their help. Lugard went on to exclaim, “He is an apt pupil, and a faithful and devoted friend.”

The British colonial administrator believed himself to operate on a sense of duty and national purpose. The 1922 Nigerian report on the British Cameroons praised the colonial administrators, calling them “men who have served the Empire in these remote and little-known regions, where, in a very special manner, they had the honour of their country in their keeping.” In the ideal perspective of British rule, the administrators were posted to regions for extended periods (longer than those of the French) and the individuals who demonstrated a high level of knowledge of their region were promoted. Critics of the British rule in the Cameroons, however, have declared that the turnover of administrators was rapid because the mandate’s insignificant profile led the colonial government to send inexperienced administrators to the area for short periods of time. In the five years between 1916 and 1921, nine different administrators cycled through the post of Resident. In 1924, there were only ten colonial administrators present throughout the entire mandate. The 1932 report to the League explained that there were three European Superintendents who had just served in the Cameroons, each spending an average of about eight months.

The overwhelming force of Nigeria distracted the few administrators who did spend time in the British Cameroons. They were reported to have made little distinction between the cultural and political history of the ethnic groups living in the

39 Lugard, 70.
41 Crowder, 205.
Southern Cameroons and the surrounding regions of Nigeria. The Nigerian governor Sir Donald Cameron, reporting on the Cameroons in 1922, explained that difficulties resulted from “the great diversity of peoples and languages, as well as from the fact that under German rule no effort seemed to have been made to uphold the tribal divisions and institutions.” The British reports focused on categorizing the different ethnic groups present throughout the territory, creating a hierarchical order. The British classified the native authorities into two tiers of importance depending on what ethnic group they belonged to. The administration praised the advanced nature of the Muslim Fulani ethnic group in their 1922 report, explaining that the majority of the pagan ethnic groups under the rule of the Fulani “have lost their primitive habits. Nearly all the men speak Fulani and are clothed in a short sleeveless gown…”

The administration stated in the 1924 report to the League,

If the ultimate object, however remote, of the government of backward races is to raise them to a state of civilization in which they can stand alone, it is evident that they must be provided with a governmental machine with the control of which they themselves can be associated in an ever-increasing degree. If the machine is capable of being manipulated only by foreign hands, the withdrawal of outside assistance will speedily bring it to a standstill.

The political machine that the British declared a wish to build would allow for the native administration to control the majority of the power. In keeping with this ideal, in the late 1930s the native administration was granted more authority and placed in charge of the treasuries at Nso, Victoria, Buea, Balong, and Kembong. In 1932, the

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44 Rubin, 72.
45 Great Britain Colonial Office, Report 1922, 3.
46 Buell, vol. 1, 688.
47 Great Britain Colonial Office, Report 1922, 35.
48 Quoted in Buell, vol. 1, 722.
49 Chiabi, The Making of Modern Cameroon, 18.
native administration districts became federated in order to allow the newly educated elites, now beginning to graduate from secondary school and university in Nigeria and Great Britain, to play a more active role in the native administration. In time, they would become the principal advisors of this institution.  

Despite the colonial government’s focus to ensure the self-sufficiency of the native administration, independence remained comfortably in the future before World War II. The Oxford professor Margery Perham claimed to have heard a British colonial officer state in 1939, “Well, at any rate in Africa we can be sure that we have unlimited time in which to work.” World War II, however, wiped clean the power and the confidence that Great Britain had formerly held in relation to her colonies.

An essential shift in colonial timetable occurred as articulated by the Deputy Prime Minister of Great Britain, Sir Clement R. Attlee, who stated in 1941, “We fight war not just for ourselves but for all peoples. I look for an every-increasing measure of self-government in Africa and for an ever-rising standard of life for all the peoples of Africa.” Perham explained, “Wars in our age seem to throw up a burst of idealism like a rainbow after the storm.”

Following World War II, the people lost faith in the native administration. It would only ever come together and meet when a British officer was expected to stop by. Educated members of the Cameroonian society expressed their impatience with being limited to participation in a separate government body and a desire to instead

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52 Perham, 56.
53 Quoted in Kale, 12.
become part of the colonial administration.\textsuperscript{55} In 1946, the same year the British Cameroons became U.N. trust territories, two traditional leaders, Chief Williams and Fon Samndala Galega II, became Cameroon’s first representatives in the Eastern Regional House in Nigeria.\textsuperscript{56} In 1954, the first Cameroonian House of Assembly came together in the city of Buea.\textsuperscript{57} In 1961, the Southern British Cameroons gained its independence by joining the Cameroun Republic and the Northern British Cameroons by joining Nigeria.\textsuperscript{58}

“To be self-sufficing”: British Economic Strategy in the Cameroons

Economic difficulties plagued the British Cameroons. The mandate ran at a deficit, requiring monetary assistance from Nigeria in order to keep its administration functioning.\textsuperscript{59} Unable to economically support the large-scale building of infrastructure and the instigation of industry, the economy remained dependent on the plantations.\textsuperscript{60} Following World War I, the British administration, like its French counterpart, confiscated the plantations from their German owners. They administered these plantations, with the help of the Nigerian government, until it was concluded that this expenditure was too expensive for the colonial budget. In 1922, the government attempted to auction off these plantations to British companies. The government, however, was only able to sell a quarter of the plantations to various British, Dutch, and Swiss companies and, in 1924, it sold the majority of the

\textsuperscript{55} Chiabi, “British administration and nationalism,” 191.
\textsuperscript{56} Chiabi, The Making of Modern Cameroon, 44.
\textsuperscript{57} Chiabi, “British administration and nationalism,” 192-193.
\textsuperscript{58} LeVine, The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence, 212. A more detailed discussion of independence politics will follow in Chapter Four.
\textsuperscript{59} Rubin, 78.
\textsuperscript{60} Rubin, 81.
plantations back to the original Germans owners.\textsuperscript{61} Until the outbreak of World War II, these German-owned plantations dominated the economic activity of the territory, employing 5,735 British Cameroonians in 1925 and 17,879 in 1938. These plantations also employed significant numbers of Nigerian and French Camerounian workers.\textsuperscript{62} In 1925, the number of French Camerounian workers exceeded the number of British Camerounian workers, attesting to the intense use of forced labor on infrastructure projects across the border in French Cameroun.\textsuperscript{63}

The use of compulsory labor on private plantations was forbidden in the British Cameroons. However, compulsory labor was “permitted…for public works and services, such as road construction and transport, in the district to which the labourers belong.” The laborers were required to be paid the “the current wage” and the works had to be “sanctioned by the government.”\textsuperscript{64} The 1933 report to the League satisfactorily stated, “The labour supply has been abundant.”\textsuperscript{65} This same year, the Forced Labour Ordinance of 1933, proclaimed at the International Labour Conference at Geneva, commanded that compensation must be provided to the family of the individual who suffered death or injury during forced labour.\textsuperscript{66}

Between 1927 and 1933, the plantations in the British Cameroons produced dried bananas, fresh bananas, cocoa, kola nuts, palm kernels, palm oil, rubber, and unmanufactured wood and timber. These were shipped to Germany, Holland, French

\textsuperscript{61} Rubin, 79.
\textsuperscript{62} LeVine, \textit{The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence}, 196.
\textsuperscript{63} LeVine, \textit{The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence}, 197.
Cameroun, the United Kingdom, and France. During this period, the two ports of Victoria and Tiko in the British Cameroons sent 16,387 pounds of exports to the United Kingdom, and seven times that amount (114,966 pounds) to Germany. This drastic imbalance in exports was echoed in the import figures of the time. Germany supplied the British Cameroons with far greater quantities of salt, apparel, implements and tools, iron and steel manufactures, rice, motor spirits, kerosene, fish, cotton piece-goods, bags and sacks, and cement than the United Kingdom did. The only goods that the British Cameroons imported in greater quantities from the United Kingdom than from Germany were cigars and cigarettes. This general trend held true throughout the 1930s.

The 1927 report to the League explained that Article 22 of the Treaty of Versailles (calling for economic equality when handling imports from ex-enemy countries) was being “strictly observed.” P. M. Kale, a Cameroonian political leader during Independence, felt that the disinterested rule of the British in the Cameroons might have been due to fear that Germany would reclaim Cameroon, and that investment in this mandate would then be seen as “preposterous spending, and possibly wasting British tax-payers’ money and talent.”

In World War II the Germans were forced to leave their plantations again as they were declared public enemies and interned. In 1946, these plantations were leased to the Cameroons Development Corporation (a semi-public company with a board appointed by the government) which came to own the only railway in the

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72 Kale, 13.
territory and at one point employed more than half of the laboring population in the British Cameroons. The corporation borrowed a large amount of capital from the governments of Nigeria and the British Cameroons and, in 1970, the Cameroons Development Corporation still owed Nigeria one million pounds.  

In addition to demanding labor from the residents of the British Cameroons, the colonial administration instituted taxes. The hut tax required each adult male living in a residence to pay three shillings, plus an additional two shillings for each wife after the first, living with him. This tax measure benefited those living in monogamous marriages, illustrating one of the very small, but always present, measures used by the colonial administration to insert Christian morals into daily proceedings. The colonial secretary in the 1940s, Earl Grey, stated, “The surest test for the soundness of measures for the improvement of an uncivilized people is that they should be self-sufficing.”

It is difficult to determine whether the British took authority over the Cameroons out of economic interests, or simply as a response to an international duty. The 1922 report on the British Cameroons carried an undertone of frustration, stating:

It was, therefore, while the Government of Nigeria was already more short-handed than it had ever been, that it was called upon to include in its charge an additional area amounting to some 33,750 square miles in extent, carrying a population the same as that of the Colony or Protectorate of Sierra Leone, and is rather larger than that of Ireland.

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73 Rubin, 79-80.
74 Lugard, 257.
75 Perham, 152.
The Nigeria administration felt “called upon,” to watch over these extra 33,750 square miles of property, a burden “rather larger than that of Ireland.” These sentiments may explain why the British failed to develop infrastructure in the territory. Critics of British rule in the Cameroons describe it as “absentminded” and “disinterested,” or “relatively benign neglect.” The Cameroonian historian Emmanuel Chiabi even went so far as to state that it is precisely the degree to which colonial disinterest stunted development in the British Cameroons that has contributed to the state of chaos today.78

“To evolve from their own institutions”: British Cultural Goals in the Cameroons

The “Moral, Social, and Material Welfare” section of the 1922 report on the Cameroons by the acting governor of Nigeria, Sir Donald Cameron, stated:

This policy [indirect rule] is based on the belief that it is the one best adapted to ensure the moral and material welfare of the people of the country and their social progress by permitting development on their own racial lines, and entrusting them with the fullest possible measures of self-government compatible with the maintenance of law and order amongst the widely divergent elements making up the population.79

Indirect rule was justified in this report because it had been functioning in Northern Nigeria for the past twenty-two years and had been highly successful, contributing to the “loyalty” and “contentment” of the people.80

It is unclear how the British measured this “contentment” of the people, but they frequently expressed in their reports how healthy it was for the people to be able

78 Chiabi, The Making of Modern Cameroon, 11.
to retain their own customs and political institutions. In 1947 plans for a museum in the British Cameroons were in process. 81 Buell explained the British belief that “if the traditional group life of the native disappears without a new group life being put in place, the continent of Africa will disintegrate.” 82 However, the reports also referred constantly to the moral improvement of the people that the colonial administration must facilitate. The 1925 report to the League stated, “The plan adopted by the Mandatory Power for guiding the moral and social evolution of native life is to educate the natives to manage their own affairs, and to evolve from their own institutions a mode of government which shall conform to civilized standards.” 83 To have to “evolve from their own institutions,” implied that their institutions were not advanced enough to begin with. The British felt that it was their duty to guide the Cameroons into a higher state of “social progress.” It became difficult for a population to retain their own customs when they are told that many of these customs, along with their morals, were inferior.

In 1925, the Advisory Committee on Education explained,

Since contact with civilization—and even education itself—must necessarily tend to weaken tribal authority and the sanctions of existing beliefs, and in view of the all-prevailing belief in the supernatural which affects the whole life of the Africa it is essential that what is good in the old beliefs and sanctions should be strengthened and what is defective should be replaced. 84

82 Buell, vol. 1, 717.
83 Great Britain Colonial Office, Report 1925, 3-4.
The report continued “The greatest importance must therefore be attached to religious training and moral instructions. Both in schools and in training colleges they should be accorded an equal standing with secular subjects.” 85 The British believe that religion justified their authority to decide what “should be strengthened” and what was “defective.” The British delegated the vast majority of educational activity to the missionaries.

The Roman Catholic Mill Hill missionaries arrived in 1922, taking over from the Pallottine fathers who had worked under the German administration. 86 The Basel Evangelical Mission, of Swiss origin, expanded throughout the Southern Cameroons, after beginning under the wing of the Paris Evangelical Society in French Cameroun. 87 While the Basel and the Mill Hill missions remained the two most influential, there were additional missions working throughout the area. 88 The Baptists (of both German and American affiliation) began work in 1927. Their schools were smaller than those of the Basel and Catholic missions, but by 1933 they controlled fourteen schools throughout the British Cameroons. 89 In 1938, the Sudan United Mission had a station in the north, Adamawa, as did the Church of the Bretheran Mission. 90 In 1938, the English (Native) Baptist Church “managed by the African elders of the local church” ran one station and one school. 91

85 Advisory Committee on Native Education in the British Tropical African Dependencies, “Memorandum 1925,” 960.
89 Gwei, 61; Great Britain. Colonial Office, Report 1933, 63.
Although the missionaries played a very prominent role in translating the British message of concern for the improvement of the Cameroonian’s “social, moral, and material welfare,” they were part of a very small European population living in the British Cameroons. There were less than 500 non-Cameroonian residents by the end of the 1950s, a majority of them there only temporarily. This contrasted sharply with the population of 10,000 colons living in French Cameroun at this time.92 While in the French mandate the colons identified with the country of Cameroun, involving themselves in local politics, across the river the British residents did not become involved in the everyday workings of the society.93 The British were in the Cameroons to fulfill their duty, not to establish a new home. Regardless of this small, uninvolved population, however, a class of educated elites slowly emerged from the classrooms. The 1922 Phelps-Stokes committee on education (which visited Nigeria) noted, “Thoughtful Africans are increasingly realizing not only the importance but the necessity of the cooperation with the white group.”94

Conclusion

The colonial mindsets of the French and the British, reflections of two very different European countries, were expressed in almost complete contrast to one another. The British were accused of neglecting the development of their mandate and forgetting the small crescent of the Cameroons in favor of Nigeria. Across the border, the French poured resources into Cameroun, creating an extensive and tightly

92 Vernon-Jackson, 27.
93 Chiabi, The Making of Modern Cameroon, 28.
controlled administration that promoted the French culture at every opportunity. The British tended to keep indigenous leaders in power by allowing them a position in the native administration, while the French most generally chose to replace indigenous rulers with members of the educated elite. Despite these differences, however, the two political structures both assumed the superiority of the European administrator, and viewed the African as “an apt pupil.”

In order to aid their administrative goals, both colonial powers did not hesitate to classify the different ethnic groups throughout the country. Whether it was the British praising the ethnic groups under Muslim Fulani rule for having “lost their primitive habits” or the French defining the Douala as artistic and the Bassa as « buveurs de vin de palme, » the environment that resulted was one of stratified inferiority. Those favored by the colonial administrations left behind the less lucky to the looming institution of forced labor and backbreaking work. Although the size of the European population living in the British Cameroons was a fraction of that living in French Cameroun, the benefits of joining the elite class in both territories were equally powerful. The language policies and education systems created by these two colonial administrations would provide the tools with which these elites would ascend the social ladder to political power.

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95 Lugard, 70.
Chapter Two  
The Language of the Elite  

Cameroon, often referred to as the linguistic “center of gravity of the African continent,” is home to 225 languages from the Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan, and Afro-Asiatic language families, accounting for three of the four major language groups present in Africa. ¹ The French and the British, faced with the dilemma of how to deal with such a diversity of languages within their mandates, took two very different approaches to regulating the use of language. In the course of events, however, the two divergent policies resulted in surprisingly similar outlooks by the Cameroonians on the use of vernacular languages in education. By Independence, the French and English languages were embraced as tools of power and prestige in their respective territories.

« Absolument interdit »: The French Work to Eliminate Vernaculars in Education  

The 1921 colonial report on Cameroun stated, “La langue indigène, admis dans l’instruction religieuse que ne vise pas le règlement, ne peut, en aucun cas, être enseignée dans le vrai sens du mot.” The report continued,

Les raisons qui nécessitent l’enseignement du français dans le territoire sont d’ordre national et local. D’une part, le mandat implique pour notre tutelle des devoirs et en premier lieu celui de déterminer une évolution vers un stade de civilisation supérieur de nos nouveaux ressortissants. Or puisque la France a été jugée digne de cette tutelle,

elle doit diriger son action dans le sens de notre génie national, ce qui ne peut se réaliser sans le secours de notre langue nationale.  

The full report specified that French must be taught, not only because a common language was needed among so many different ethnic groups in Cameroun, all speaking different languages, but also in order to improve the partnership between the colonial government and the native authorities.  

Governor J. Carde, the commissioner of Cameroun during the early years of the mandate, repeated the phrase « le mandat implique pour notre tutelle des devoirs et en premier lieu celui de déterminer une évolution vers un stade de civilisation supérieur de nos nouveaux ressortissants » word for word in a letter to the Paris Evangelical Mission society earlier that same year. This explanation, justifying the predominant use of French in education, would have been in high demand during the beginning years of the mandate as various organizations and authorities questioned the strict policy.  

The French historian J. Wilbois stated confidently in 1934, « Partout l’enseignement se donne en français. » In reality, however, the story of language instruction in French Cameroun was much more complicated. The use of vernaculars was officially banned in education, but the policy was soon adjusted to allow a small

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3 Ministre des Colonies, Journal officiel de la république française (1921), 431  
In October 1921, Carde wrote to the *chefs de circonscription* explaining that missions would be allowed to use vernaculars as the language of instruction in their smallest religious schools. Carde explained his belief that “écóles religieuses perdues au fond de la brousse de faire connaitre le nom de la France et la langue des nouveaux occupants.” Carde believed that the merits of these small unofficial schools, working in the name of France to bring at least some awareness of the French language to regions yet untouched by the colonial presence, outweighed the undesirable use of vernaculars in the schoolroom.

In 1922, the American Presbyterian mission expressed its relief and gratitude for the understanding of Governor Carde.

“We are very happy in our improved relations with the Government. A year ago the new school law bid fair to practically wipe out our village schools and to render very difficult the operation of any school. Recently, however, such concessions have been granted by Governor Carde that we will not be seriously hampered in our station schools, we will be allowed to give a fair working knowledge of French to our evangelists and our village schools, though not recognized officially as schools, will be permitted to continue as classes for Catechetical instruction, in which the rudiments of French may also be taught.”

The missionaries, by the grace of Governor Carde, began to maintain “non-recognized” schools using vernaculars as the medium of education. To be registered as a “recognized school,” the teachers needed to teach classes in French for at least twenty hours a week,” while the teachers in “non-recognized schools” had the freedom to make their own curriculum and use vernaculars as the language of

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6 Stumpf, 82.
7 J. Carde, « Circulaire à MM. Les Chefs de Circonscription, le 12 Octobre, 1921 » in Stumpf, Ax 33.
instruction.\textsuperscript{9} The administration was well aware of the presence of these non-recognized schools and included a count of them each year in the colonial report.\textsuperscript{10}

The administration attempted to promote the growth of “recognized” schools by refusing to grant monetary assistance to schools that continued to use vernaculars. This policy, however, does not appear to have significantly stemmed the growth of “non-recognized” schools throughout the colonial period. In 1938, sixteen years after it expressed appreciation for the understanding of Governor Carde, the American Presbyterian Mission was educating 30,914 children in 1,061 “non-recognized” schools, and 4,429 children in 37 “recognized” schools.\textsuperscript{11} The administration reported, « Ces écoles aux effectifs considérables sont surtout des écoles où l’enseignement est fait en langue indigène. Elles échappent au contrôle du Service de l’Enseignement. »\textsuperscript{12}

The presence of “non-recognized” schools (also referred to as “écoles villageoises,” “écoles chapelles,” or “Ecoles de Catéchisme”) persisted, in part, because many missions lacked an adequate number of teachers who knew French, as well as the money required to pay for their diplomas.\textsuperscript{13} The missions also sought to evade the colonial language requirements because of the spiritual value they placed on the vernacular languages. They drew a connection between vernacular languages and religious faith, believing that the word of God could only be truly understood in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{9} Wilbois, 213-214.
\item \textsuperscript{10} This decision may have stemmed from a desire to report a high rate of education to the League of Nations each year.
\item \textsuperscript{11} France, Rapport Annuel adressé par le gouvernement français au conseil de la Société des Nations, conformément à l’article 22 du Pacte sur l’administration sous mandate du territoire du Cameroun, pour l’année 1938 (Paris: Larose Editeurs, 1939), 104.
\item \textsuperscript{12} France, Rapport 1938, 104.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Stumpf, 83.
\end{itemize}
the mother tongue of an individual. An American Presbyterian missionary wrote in the mission’s quarterly newsletter, “One must pity a people who have been instructed in a language foreign to them for so many years and it behooves us to be hasty in getting at least a translation of the Word of God to them.”¹⁴ The next year the same newsletter reported the translation of the New Testament into Bulu and quoted a Cameroonian elder saying to his missionary pastor, “The day I have the whole New Testament in my hands in my own language, I shall take it off in to the forest and give thanks to God all day.”¹⁵

Although other Protestant and some Catholic missions joined the American Presbyterians in the operation of “non-recognized” schools, there were many missions, especially the Catholics, who chose to cooperate more closely with the French government. For example, in 1937 the Sacred Heart Fathers operated 327 recognized schools (teaching 11,026 students solely in French) and not a single unrecognized school.¹⁶ The Catholic missions in Cameroun generally took a more “disciplined approach” and enjoyed the favoritism of the colonial government.¹⁷

In addition to retaining the loyal cooperation of many missions, the colonial administration also found additional methods to promote the superiority of the French language throughout the mandate. On October 1, 1936, it prohibited the production, sale, collection, or distribution of publications written in indigenous languages.

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¹⁷ Johnson, 86.
dealing with magic, sorcery, or divination.\textsuperscript{18} It also imposed a tax of 12.8 percent on books written in foreign languages, as opposed to a tax of four percent on books written in French. The indigenous Cameroonian languages of Ewondo and Douala were considered “foreign languages” in regards to this tax law. Missionaries of all denominations protested against this law.\textsuperscript{19} The Paris Evangelical Society, who published works in indigenous languages such as Douala and Bamoum, as well as in French, continued their work. At a conference of theirs in 1936, discussion focused on a revision of the New Testament in Douala. The missionaries stated that they would need collaboration « avec le plus grand nombre d’indigènes de langue Douala, » and expressed their wish that other missions (namely the Basel mission across the border in the British Cameroons) would collaborate better with them on the project.\textsuperscript{20} However, despite such continued efforts, the French effectively ensured that the majority of newspapers, magazines, and books available throughout Cameroun were written in French.\textsuperscript{21} The legacy of this literature control exists today, illustrated by the fact that the French, British, and German cultural centers in Cameroon offer a severely limited selection of Cameroonian and African authors in comparison to an abundance of European authors.\textsuperscript{22}

In the later years of their administration, the French continued to loudly and publicly decry the use of vernaculars in education. A resolution adopted during the

\textsuperscript{18} Stumpf, 99.  
\textsuperscript{19} Stumpf, 82.  
Brazzaville Conference of 1944, during which French colonial policy was reevaluated, stated, « L’enseignement doit être donné en langue française, l’emploi pédagogique des dialectes locaux parlés étant absolument interdit aussi bien dans les écoles privées que dans les écoles publiques. » The 1947 report to the U.N. declared that « aucune langue vernaculaire n’est actuellement étudiée dans les écoles publique ou privées reconnues. » In 1949, the U.N. trusteeship committee commented that the use of vernaculars as the language of instruction “does not achieve good results from the standpoint of general education, and the mission pupils who are taught in the vernacular are not so well developed culturally as those who are nurtured in French.” In 1952, the United Nations visiting mission observed “local languages must be taught in the same way as foreign languages.”

Although it is easy to interpret French policy as single-mindedly critical of the vernacular languages, the colonial government was aware of their merits. The knowledge of vernacular languages was in fact encouraged among colonial administrators. A 1933 decree offered a bonus of 1,500 francs per year to administrators who could speak one of eight selected vernacular languages, and 3,000

23 « Rapport sur la Conférence de Brazzaville, 30.1 au 8.11.1944, Recommandations adoptées, » in Stumpf, Ax 41.
francs per year to those who could speak two of them. In 1951, the French
government began to assemble a school in Paris specifically focused on the study of
vernacular languages in the African colonies. The French, while assured of the
superiority of the French language and its centrality to their mission civilisatrice, still
recognized the need to understand these vernacular languages in order to control
them.

“The illumination of utterance”: The British Promote Vernaculars in Education

Britain’s 1923 report to the League explained its educational objectives as,
“The first end in view is the formation of character; the second, the acquirement of
the English language.” The British believed that the transmission of the English
language was an important goal in education, yet, unlike the assimilation-driven
French, they did not believe that the use of vernacular languages had to be removed
from the classroom in order to accomplish this objective. In fact, the British ideology
of indirect rule embraced the use of these languages. Lord Lugard, Governor-General
of Nigeria between 1914 and 1919, explained the British colonial hope, “that the
educated few shall at least be representative of the feelings and desires of the many—
well known to them, speaking their language, and versed in their customs and
prejudices.” It was important to the British, as they set up a self-sustaining

27 Stumpf, 100; Jonathon Derrick, “Colonial elitism: The Duala in the 193s,” in Introduction to the
History of Cameroon Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, ed. Martin Njeuma (New York: St. Martin’s
Press, 1989), 123.
Mandated Sphere of the Cameroons, for the year 1923 (London: HMSO, 1924) 51.
government, that the elite ruling class would be able to communicate with all citizens in their own language.

In contrast to the French, the British colonial government was generally in agreement with the missionaries on the role of vernaculars in education. The missionaries possessed the freedom to use vernaculars in education, while “their interests are adequately represented on the Board of Education.”\(^{31}\) In 1925 the Advisory Committee on Native Education in the British Tropical African Dependencies wrote:

> The study of the educational use of vernacular is of primary importance. The Committee suggests co-operation among the scholars, with aid from Governments and Missionary Societies, in the preparation of vernacular textbooks.\(^{32}\)

This committee then went on to say that teachers should be placed among people of their own ethnic group in order to synchronize, to the closest degree, language, traditions, and customs.\(^{33}\) Eighteen years later, in 1943, the Advisory Committee on Education to the Colonial Office remained convinced of the merits of the vernaculars, writing, “It is the mother tongue which gives to the adult mind the relief and illumination of utterance. Hence in all education the primary place should be given to training in the free use of the mother tongue.”\(^{34}\) The 1947 report to the League stated,

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\(^{33}\) Advisory Committee on Native Education in the British Tropical African Dependencies, “Memorandum 1925,” 962.

\(^{34}\) “Advisory Committee on Education to the Colonial Office, 1943,” in Stumpf, Ax 48.
“the free development of their minds must not be hampered by making the assimilation of ideas unnecessarily difficult.”

Although English was always taught as a language of study from class one of primary school, vernaculars were used as the language of instruction during the early stages of education. The administration believed the first four to six years of schooling to be the time of greatest importance. In 1928, the report to the League explained, “It might for instance help a school if an experienced Vernacular Teacher were permitted to give vernacular instruction in the Infant Department of a school, where English was being taught to the standards (later grades).” An Education Code was adapted in 1928 to encourage the registration of teachers who would be teaching in the vernacular. The only qualifications required of these teachers were that they must be over the age of nineteen and possess “the recommendation of a proprietor,” and “the endorsement of the Superintendent of Education.” They did not need to speak English. Three hundred and twenty instructors who would teach solely in the vernacular were registered in 1928.

It did not matter to the British administration that different areas of the mandate completed the primary school years in different languages. For example, in the north of the Dikwa Division the students began their studies in Kanuri, while in

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the south they began in Hausa.\textsuperscript{41} The use of Arabic was also encouraged in the predominantly Muslim North. The 1926 report to the League specified that Arabic and English were taught "side by side" in the primary school in Maiduguri.\textsuperscript{42} However, the British were concerned that the African languages might alienate different ethnic groups from one another. In an attempt to create some uniformity across the mandate, the 1935 report to the League specified that the elementary stage of education should be completed in “an African language where there is one of sufficient importance to become a lingua franca,” but that “elsewhere English is taught by the elementary schools and becomes the language of instruction by the end of the course.”\textsuperscript{43}

In 1953, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) published a report explaining that education is “best carried out in the mother tongue of the pupil, adult or child.”\textsuperscript{44} Although this report echoed many of the justifications for the use of vernaculars that the British themselves had been explaining, it also included a warning. It described, “many difficult problems” associated with teaching in the vernacular, including the transmittance of an unrecorded language into writing and the political tensions that may develop between different ethnic groups.\textsuperscript{45} Not all British administrators believed that the “illumination of utterance” for the student was as important as the administrative success of the government. Lord Lugard explained, “The diversity of languages in Africa surround the problem of education with special difficulties…. though instruction in English

\textsuperscript{44} Unesco, \textit{The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education}, 15.
\textsuperscript{45} Unesco, \textit{The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education}, 12-13.
must of necessity at first be given through the medium of the vernacular, Government
encouragement should not be exerted to stimulate or preserve these native tongues.”

The British faced many complications as a result of using vernaculars as the
language of instruction in education. British colonial administrators were expected to
learn the vernacular languages relating to the regions to which they were posted. Administrators in Nigeria were required to learn Hausa and, although this worked
well for the Northern section of the British Cameroons, Hausa was not spoken in the
Southern Cameroons. Nevertheless, because the British Cameroons was
administered as part of Nigeria, colonial administrators in the Southern British
Cameroons were required to study 3 months of Hausa before their appointment. In
1926 the policy was changed, but it proved difficult to decide on one language for all
administrators to use throughout the southern section. The language of Duala was
briefly picked, but then later abandoned. As a result of this never-ending debate,
administrators often turned to pidgin-English as an effective means of sidestepping
complications.

Examining pidgin-English: An Illustration of the Two Powers

Pidgin-English originated in the region of present day Southern Nigeria and
Cameroon upon contact with British traders before the German colonial period. The
1935 British report to the League explained that pidgin-English became “so

48 According to Lord Hailey’s, *An African Survey*, the fact that Hausa was a written language (in the
Arabic script) before European colonialism, contributed to the fact that it was often used to spread
education under the British.
49 Emmanuel, Chiabi, *The Making of Modern Cameroon: A History of Substrate Nationalism and
50 Chumbow, 283.
widespread…that the Germans actually encouraged its use and compiled vocabularies of German words with their ‘pidgin’ English equivalents for the benefit of the officials and planters.” Missionaries and traders spread pidgin-English under the German administration, which showed little concern with the use of vernacular languages during the beginning years of their administration. In 1910, however, the German colonial government restricted grant-in-aids to mission schools that taught only in German. The German government even went so far as to later forbid the use of English and pidgin-English in schools.

Following the Germans, the British viewed pidgin-English as a means to aid communication and promote cohesion throughout the territory. The 1923 report to the League explained, “In this country of innumerable languages and dialects, pidgin-English has long been the lingua-franca.” The administration later stated, “The language presents comparatively little difficulty, for a knowledge of pidgin-English is widespread, even in the remotest districts.” The British became concerned, however, that pidgin-English had the potential to erode the proper function of English within the mandate. By 1936 it reported to the League that, “the policy is gradually to replace “pidgin” through the influence of schools by simple English, phonetically taught and based on the a limited vocabulary of the most common words of everyday use.”

The Mill Hill Fathers and the Baptist missionaries appreciated the easy means of communication provided by pidgin-English, concerned as they were with

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52 Chumbow, 284.
spreading the Word of God. Under the British administration, the Roman Catholic Mission used pidgin-English and Latin in mass, and the Baptist Mission used either English or pidgin-English for their services depending on the region in which they were located.\textsuperscript{55} The Baptists even decided to institute pidgin-English as the official language of their mission convention.\textsuperscript{56} The Mill Hill Fathers praised the ability of pidgin-English to facilitate communication between missionaries, as well as between different ethnic groups.\textsuperscript{57} Mgr Campling of the Mill Hill Fathers explained “before we had time to learn any of the numerous languages, we were able to hear confessions [through pidgin-English].” However, he also called it an “atrocious language.”\textsuperscript{58}

While the Catholic Mill Hill Fathers favored the use of pidgin-English, the protestant Basel mission strongly believed in the use of the vernaculars.\textsuperscript{59} The Basel mission was of Swiss origin and correspondence between the various European teachers and administrators of the Bale mission was often carried out in German.\textsuperscript{60} The Bale mission was not as likely as the Catholic mission to employ European teachers and instead hired large numbers of African teachers. Other missionaries complained that the Bale “religious schools” in the bush were not operating at an appropriate academic standard.\textsuperscript{61} The superintendent Carr believed that the Basel missions employed African teachers who were « incompétents et incapables

\textsuperscript{55} Chumbow, 285.  
\textsuperscript{56} Stumpf, 120.  
\textsuperscript{57} Stumpf, 121.  
\textsuperscript{59} Stumpf, 118.  
\textsuperscript{60} “Supervisor B.M. Schools, Buea, 23.10.1956: To Rev. A. Angst, Bali and Rev. Baer, Mbengwi,” in Stumpf, Ax 56.  
\textsuperscript{61} Stumpf, 119.
d’enseigner une langue qu’ils ne connaissaient pas. »

In 1927 the Bale mission requested an exemption from the standard education regulations because their teachers taught only in the vernacular. The government responded, with a touch of impatience, that vernacular teachers could be registered just like English-speaking ones and that there was no reason for the Bale mission to be exempted from these regulations.

Today in Cameroon pidgin-English is not considered an official language, yet it is regarded highly by some as the only language spoken within the country that is not identified with a specific European colonizer or ethnic group. Although originally created through contact with the British traders, it has taken on a nationalistic dimension as it is spoken in major cities in the francophone region of Cameroon, as well as throughout the Anglophone region. Elements of various Cameroonian vernaculars can be found in pidgin-English.

The linguist Anne Schroder praised this language as “bridging the anglophone-francophone gap and serving as a means of inter-ethnic communication.”

The language situation in East and West Cameroon exemplified the cultural goals of the two colonial powers. The presence of pidgin-English in West Cameroon, and the absence of a dominant lingua franca in East Cameroon testified to the differing degrees of value that the two colonial powers placed on the exclusive use of

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62 Stumpf, 119.
their own languages. The 1947 French report to the U.N. explained, « Il n’existe pas de lingua-franca au Cameroun. Les autochtones sont très attachés aux nombreux dialectes parlés dans les diverses régions du Territoire. » For the British, whose ultimate colonial objective was the spreading of commerce, pidgin-English was embraced as a means to facilitate trade. A lingua franca never developed in French Cameroun, where the historian Willard R. Johnson explained, “spreading their [French] ways counted for as much as spreading their [French] wares.”

The former British superintendent of education in Tanganyika Territory, W. Bryant Mumford, believed that the language policies of the British system prepared the student for an “African Africa,” where “pupils will leave these schools and return to their communities still African in outlook, but with some contribution from Europe towards the improvement of their standards of living,” while the French system prepared the student for “only one educational objective…a French Africa.”

“An additional, optional subject”: Both Sets of Elite Reject the Vernaculars

The United Nations, meeting for its Eleventh session in 1952, asked the French delegation why they were using solely French, and no vernacular languages in education. The French responded with a question of their own: what other language might be used? With over 225 languages existing in Cameroon, how should the colonial government chosen one of these to promote over the others? To put this

67 France, Rapport 1947, 123.
68 Johnson, 78.
70 Vernon-Jackson, 15.
question in the words of professor Hugh O. H. Vernon-Jackson, “Why not French, with its lack of intertribal associations, its unifying influence, and its worldwide usefulness?”

It can be argued that the French government saw the unifying power of the French language as a means to draw the mandate together and provide the building blocks of a cohesive nation. They did not, however, push their language on the Camerounians in the hopes that it would aid them in their independence process, for it is clear that the French did not envisage the possibility of independence until after World War II. It would be accurate to state that the French unknowingly granted the Camerounians an essential tool with which to fight for autonomy. The rise of French literacy contributed to the emergence of a press and improved communication between different ethnic groups, furthering the cause for independence.

The French government, however, were striving for more than improved communication throughout the mandate when they instituted their languages policies. It dismissed the value of the vernaculars as substandard modes of communication. The 1924 French government report stated, “…the colonial administration is convinced of the impossibility of propagating the achievements of a modern civilization by means of a primitive language…” The belief of the French in the superiority of their culture contributed to the ease with which they dismissed the use

71 Vernon-Jackson, 15.
72 Hailey (in An African Survey, Revised 1956 (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), 106) quoted the French historian G. Hardy stating in 1917, “the development of French as a lingua franca may help to bridge over the differences which divide Africa into so many separate communities.”
74 Quoted in Chumbow, 285.
of the vernaculars, and it was encouraged by the actions of the large population of colons in Cameroun.

The colons of French Cameroun, numbering about 10,000 by the end of the 1950s,\(^{75}\) did not speak the vernacular with their Camerounian neighbors. The European society, transplanted to the equatorial sunshine of Cameroun with all of their mannerisms intact, played an influential role in the spread of French throughout the mandate. According to some French citizens living in Cameroun, the vernaculars were unable to convey the same complexity of argument or ideas that the French language could. An article published in *Société d’Etudes Camerounaises* in 1945 articulated this conviction. « Ces dialectes sont incapables d’exprimer des idées abstraites et ne peuvent guère s’adapter aux sciences du jour. »\(^{76}\) The author then went on to ask how an individual could articulate a philosophical notion or give advanced lessons in geometry or physics possessing knowledge only of a vernacular language. The implication of the article was that the Camerounian people, while not originally on the same intellectual level of the French, needed only to be introduced to the civilizing influence of the French language in order to hold philosophical conversations and understand the intricacies of geometry and physics.

Many colonial educators and administers believed that they were bestowing “an invaluable gift on the pupil” by teaching them the French language.\(^{77}\) The former British superintendent of education Mumford noted that that the French believed that

\(^{75}\) Vernon-Jackson, 27.
\(^{77}\) Mumford, 76.
their language “will form the key to unlock all the doors of French culture.”78 There were others, however, for whom the supposed satisfaction of spreading the French language crumbled at the sight of the Camerounian’s rise in social status.

The same article that extolled the ability of the French language to enlarge the intellect of the Camerounian in Société d’Etudes Camerounaises argued, « Nous qui vivons depuis de longues années en Afrique, nous sommes souvent frappés du français défectueux et emphatique qu’emploient de si nombreux indigènes. »79 Some colons felt annoyance that « L’indigène croit qu’il est devenu quelqu’un, quand il sait aligner quelques mots français et les emploi à tort et à traveres. »80 The European society within Cameroun held conflicting views on the effects of language education. While some colons felt paternalistic pleasure in instilling their language among the people of Africa, others felt annoyance that the actual acquisition of the French language could lead an African to view himself as the equal of a European.

The influence of the colons in Cameroun, coupled with the presence of Camerounians who had studied in France, gave rise to a local Camerounian elite, the évolutés, who spoke French in their homes.81 Mastery of the French language was required for a Camerounian to rise through the ranks of the colonial society.82 The évolutés who spoke French in order to delineate their social status and separate themselves from the uneducated masses, would eventually find themselves to be the ones in control of language policy. The rest of society came to realize throughout the

78 Mumford, 76.
81 Vernon-Jackson, 15.
82 Gardinier, 33.
period of French administration that if they wished to gain the same elite lifestyle as this select group of évolués, they must also learn the French language.

In March 1935, a small newspaper written in both French and the African languages of Duala, Bass, Ewondo, and Bulu was started with permission by the government. The articles written in these African languages, however, declined rapidly and the paper publication fell apart in June of the same year. The editor of the paper, Eugène Schneider, grumbled in the last issue that the Cameroonian were not interested in the paper as a means to express themselves in their own languages. A satisfaction with the French language was revealed through an examination of petitions submitted by the people of French Cameroun to the U.N. The 1952 U.N. visiting mission reported that they “received no complaints on the subject (that French is the language of instruction) from indigenous inhabitants.” In December of 1959, with Independence right around the corner, the new Cameroonian government would sign the Franco-Cameroun treaty that established French as the official language.

Across the border, in the British mandate, a surprisingly similar situation emerged. The promotion of vernaculars in education by the British throughout the colonial period did not result in the ultimate acceptance of this policy by the people.

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83 Jonathon Derrick, “Colonial elitism: The Duala in the 1930s,” in Introduction to the History of Cameroon Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, ed. Martin Njeuma (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), 133. Derrick states that the French did not allow the development of African newspapers, highlighting the fact that Schneider’s government-approved multi-lingual newspaper was a rare event.

84 Derrick, 123.

85 Miller, 64.


As Independence arrived and the school system was placed in the hands of the Camerooni ans, the use of vernaculars as the language of instruction in the classroom was rejected and the exclusive use of English was called for. As with the case in the French mandate, it was the educated elite, the individuals who had climbed the social pyramid of colonial society aided by the possession of the English language, who became to ones in charge of determining this new language policy in education. This reaction did not seem any less powerful on the British side, despite the fact that there was only a small, detached British population present throughout the territory. Regardless of the lack of influence from a large colon population, the presence of colonial language policies promoting the use of the vernaculars, or even the prevalence of pidgin-English throughout the territory, the social prestige attached to speaking the English language grew throughout the colonial period.

In 1935, eighty-nine percent (4,480 children) of children in British Cameroon were receiving education in the vernacular, while in 1959 (when Cameroonians held the majority of control over the education system), this number had been reduced to a mere one percent (191 children). English was given a high social standing in the classroom and in the workplace. Despite the efforts of the colonial government, and the Basel mission, to ensure that the teachers used the vernacular as the language of instruction, there were many instances when teachers did not speak the vernacular of the particular region in which they were teaching or who themselves associated the English language with future success.88 The 1947 report to the League explained,

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“The diversity and limited appeal of the local vernaculars has prohibited the printing of any literature in them other than some elementary text-books in Kanuri.”

This decline was greeted with resistance by the Basel missionaries, long-time advocates of the use of vernacular language in education. The Education Committee of the Basel Mission stated in 1956, “The Chairman stressed that the struggle to keep native language now rested with the Africans and in particular to church members. The Committee agreed that within the Mission itself many seemed to care little for their own languages.”

The Basel Mission has no choice but to bow to the popular sentiment hostile to the use of vernaculars. In 1958 the Supervisor of the Basel Mission Schools wrote,

The picture of wet dog (poodle) could have applied to me here. After the B. M. has fought with the German and English Governments for the recognition of the vernacular and was not defeated, [it] has now to look on as the first Cameroon Government will…root up and deal with it for good.

Eight months later, the Director of Education at Buea sent out a notice stating,

“Although the mother tongue of children may be used to assist in instruction, English is to be the medium of instruction in primary schools and all text books used to be English.”

At a meeting later that year, the Basel Mission discussed the possibility of applying to the Director of Education for the permission to teach the vernaculars as

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“an additional optional subject,” a far cry from the days when a large number of their teachers knew no English.  

Conclusion

The French viewed the spread of their language as essential to spreading Francophone culture, providing communication, and building a successfully functioning colony. Although the colonial administration was not able to control the actions of all of the missionaries throughout the area, it worked hard to establish French as the language of instruction throughout the school system and to discourage the production of literature in the vernacular. The British, on the other hand, encouraged the use of vernaculars in the classrooms, believing that the mind of the African child would learn better in a “native tongue.” In the end, at Independence, both sets of elites demanded the European languages.

The historian Rudolph Stumpf defined English and French as “un argent linguistique” in the lives of Cameroonians. The language of the government granted both social prestige and economic possibility. This linguistic money of Stumpf’s description implies that the acceptance of these European languages was a conscious, and somewhat shrewd, decision made by the Cameroonian people. On the other hand, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, a novelist, professor, and theorist of post-colonial African literature, explained the rejection of vernaculars throughout Africa to be an unconscious result of the actions of the colonizers.

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93 “Education Committee of the B. M., Minutes of the 4th Meeting held at Buea-8, 10, 11, 1and 12th Nov. 1958: Reactions to Government’s decision on vernacular in schools, paragraph 83,” in Stumpf, Ax 61.
94 Stumpf, 139.
But the biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against the collective defiance is the cultural bomb. The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves.  

Thiong’o argued that the colonial powers’ insistence on the inferiority of the indigenous culture took root among the people of a society. “It makes them want to identity with that which is furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other peoples’ languages rather than their own.” The very power of the colonial government is built upon the framework of humiliation, Thiongo’o argued. “Economic and political control can never be complete or effective without mental control. To control a people’s culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relationship to others.” The colonial government needed the people of a society to believe that the culture of their own county was inferior to the culture of the colonizer in order to ensure that their subjects did not attempt to gain any type of political or economic equality.

According to Thiongo’o’s thesis, the rejection of vernaculars by the Cameroonians of both the French and the British mandate would have been influenced less by the specific language policies of each particular government, and instead originated from the very imposition of the colonial governments on the people. For the residents of French Cameroun, the supposed superiority of French ways would have been easy to identify at all times, from the colons exclaiming « Ces

96 Thiong’o, 3.
97 Thiong’o, 16.
dialectes sont incapables d’exprimer des idées abstraites, » to the commissioner proclaiming the need to « déterminer une évolution vers un stade de civilisation supérieur. »98 Across the border, the British may have proclaimed eloquently and often the need to retain African language and culture, yet the imposition of these moralistic policies often created an equally demeaning environment. When the British advocated for the use of vernaculars by proclaiming, “the free development of their minds must not be hampered by making the assimilation of ideas unnecessarily difficult,” they implied an inferiority of the African intellect. 99 Being told “their minds” were not developed enough to handle anything “unnecessarily difficult,” it does not seem unlikely that they would have wanted “to identify with that which is furthest from themselves.”

Chapter Three
The French and British Colonial Education Systems

Article 76 (b) of the United Nations Charter for the Cameroons explained the trusteeship system must “promote the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants…”¹ At the end of the German period, before the French and British arrived, there were four government schools and 631 mission schools.² Both the French and the British continued to allow the missionaries to undertake the majority of the educational activity, yet the French school system was more rigidly controlled and better funded than the British. Together the curriculum, teachers, and administrators of the two education systems crafted two sets of educated elites and two national identities that would fail to successfully integrate upon Independence.

I. The French

« La fréquentation est excellente »: The Expansion of Schools in French Cameroun

The French were displeased with the small number of schools present at the beginning of their administration in Cameroun. The 1922 report to the League explained that it was rare to find a student who had completed more than four years of school. It stated, « Ce n’est pas suffisant pour des élèves indigènes, et il ne faut pas s’étonner des résultats médiocres obtenus par les écoles ne tenant pas compte de ces

facteurs de succès. »³ The administration busied itself with establishing an education system, with the help of the missionary societies, that would in 1958 contain a larger number of primary school students than any other French African territory with the exception of Madagascar. ⁴ The number of primary school students in French Cameroun almost tripled between the years 1947 and 1959.⁵

Government-run primary school lasted for seven years, followed by another seven years of secondary school, after which the student would take the baccalaureate.⁶ Despite the large growth in attendance, the majority of education offered in Cameroun, especially before World War II, consisted solely of primary school.⁷ Only 3.2 percent of the 40,626 students who enrolled in the first class of primary school in 1946 went on to graduate from primary school, and only 0.1 percent of this same class obtained their baccalaureate.⁸ While in 1958, 69.2 percent of children in Cameroon attended primary school (in contrast to Senegal’s 31.5 percent), only 1.5 percent attended secondary school (in contrast to Senegal’s 2.5 percent).⁹ In addition to the low rate of secondary school attendance, the rate of girls attending school was also inadequate. In 1960 only twenty-seven percent of girls in

⁴ Johnson (82) explained that while Cameroon had a larger number of primary school children, Gabon had a higher percentage.
⁷ Marcel Nguini, La Valeur Politique & Sociale de la Tutelle Française au Cameroun (Thèse pour le Doctorat, Université d’Aix-Marseille, 1956), 201. (Nguini only applies this statement to mission schools). Solomon Nfor Gwei, Education in Cameroon: Western Pre-Colonial and Colonial Antecedents and the Development of Higher Education (Ph.D Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1975), 266. (Gwei applies this statement to both mission and government schools).
⁹ Johnson, 83.
the south were attending school, in comparison to almost one hundred percent of boys. The rate was even lower for girls living in the Muslim-dominated north, with only two percent of girls attending school.\textsuperscript{10}

Education progressed at a slower rate in the Muslim-dominated northern area of the country, in large part because of the high prevalence of missionaries.\textsuperscript{11} In 1952, the U.N. visiting mission “noted that great efforts were being made by the Administration and by religious missions to promote educational advancement in the Territory.”\textsuperscript{12} It also noted that all the Cameroonian political leaders of the time had been educated in missions.\textsuperscript{13} Sixty percent of students in French Cameroun attended missionary schools in 1919. This number rose to ninety percent in 1938,\textsuperscript{14} and, although it dropped slightly after World War II\textsuperscript{15}, seventy-one percent of primary school students attended private school in 1952.\textsuperscript{16} Although the French deviated from their usual style of education by allowing missions to control such a large portion of the educational activities, they managed to retain tight control over the system.\textsuperscript{17}

To maintain this control the government issued grants-in-aid, \textit{subventions}, to the schools that cooperated with their language policies (as was discussed in Chapter 2) as well as with their highly organized curriculum. The 1921 report to the Minister

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{11} LeVine, \textit{The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence}, 75.
\bibitem{14} Johnson, 84.
\bibitem{15} Gwei, 253.
\bibitem{17} See Chapter One, pages 16-17, for an explanation of why the French allowed the missionaries to carry out such a high degree of educational activity.
\end{thebibliography}
of the Colonies on the conquest of Cameroun, stated, « Pour encourager leur effort, l’administration locale a prévu l’allocation d’une subvention aux écoles libres se soumettant à un programme officiel. »\(^{18}\) The colonial government distributed 9,440.80 francs to the French Catholic missions, 4,738.80 francs to the French Protestant missions, and 820.40 francs to the American Presbyterian missions in the year 1918.\(^{19}\) Between 1923 and 1935, the French government consistently gave the most money in subventions to the American Presbyterian mission, next greatest amount to the French Protestant mission, and the least to the Catholic mission.\(^{20}\) As the missions’ desires to cooperate, as well as their financial needs, changed the recipient of the greatest amount of subventions fluctuated. In 1952, the Catholic mission had pulled ahead of the other two missions to receive the largest sum.\(^{21}\)

The 1938 report to the League expressed worry that not enough students in the north and the far east of the country were attending school. It stated, « Nous nous efforçons d’assurer l’entretien des enfants par octroi de bourses, création de villages scolaires avec cantine, ce qui donne de très bons résultats. »\(^{22}\) These strategies, however, would not alleviate the alienation northerners felt by the presence of the missionaries, and as a result their exposure to the same degree of French education and culture was diminished. The French placed great importance on the expansion of their school system, believing it to create order throughout the territory. It was with

\(^{18}\) Ministre des Colonies, « Rapport au Ministre des Colonies sur l’administration des territoires occupés du Cameroun, de la conquête au 1\(^{er}\) Juillet 1921, » *Journal officiel de la république française* (1921) : 430.

\(^{19}\) Ministre des Colonies, *Journal officiel de la république française* (1921) : 431.

\(^{20}\) Nguini, 200.

\(^{21}\) Nguini, 202.

pride that they noted in this same report « la fréquentation » to be « excellente » in the south of the country.²³

Fig. 6. « Groupe scolaire à Yaoundé » 1931 » (France, *Rapport 1931* (Paris : Imprimerie Générale Lahure, 1932).)

Fig. 7. « Classe à l’école régionale de Douala » (France, *Rapport 1931* (Paris : Imprimerie Générale Lahure, 1932).)

*A Duplication: The Content of Curriculum in French Cameroun*

The 1921 report to the Minister of the Colonies explained that the education system was not designed to push a child to the limits of his knowledge or to give him encyclopedic knowledge. The report followed,

²³ France, *Rapport 1938*, 101
“d’entreprendre méthodiquement l’éducation physique, morale et intellectuelle de l’enfant indigène, de faire de lui un homme pour le préparer à vouloir et à pourvoir être utile. Pour parvenir à ce résultat, les méthodes seront assouplies à une triple loi d’adaptation.”

The report explained that the government was working to increase a child’s intellect and to teach skills such as hygiene and agriculture in order to help fulfill the economic and social needs of the country as well as allow for an easy adaptation to the administration.\(^\text{25}\)

On July 25, 1921, the Commissioner mandated that schools must stay open nine months per year and 25 hours per week. The curriculum was required to consist of five hours of language, five of reading, two and a half of writing, five of arithmetic, two and a half of drawing, singing or recreation, and five of school gardening and vocational education (manual work or agriculture).\(^\text{26}\) The 1928 report to the League explained that students performed six to eight hours of fieldwork per week, and stressed the need to teach students « hygiène du corps, hygiène alimentaire, hygiène du bâtiment, hygiène morale. »\(^\text{27}\) One French missionary, explaining the importance she placed on hygiene, wrote, « Partout il y a à apprendre dans le domaine pratique de l’hygiène dont on ne peut séparer l’amélioration matérielle et même morale de la race….\(^\text{28}\)

The curriculum, as laid out in 1951, mandated that each week students in the first elementary class received moral instructions and civics for one hour, hygiene “with practical exercises” for two hours, language for five, French language for two,

reading for five, recitation and singing for one, writing for one hour and fifteen minutes, arithmetic for 3 hours and forty five minutes, nature study for one, manual work (sewing, drawing) for two and a half, physical education for two, and recreation for two and a half.  

The curriculum, schedules, textbooks, exams, and diplomas were supposed to be a duplicate of these same aspects in Metropolitan France.  

The 1947 report to the United Nations explained, « Dans les collèges africains, les programmes sont donc ceux des collèges modernes de France. » This report also noted that the same exams at the end of primary school were held in both France and Cameroun. Secondary school was focused on preparing the students for the standardized baccalaureate test. This meant that in order for a Cameroonian student to pass these exams, they must know the same level of French history and geography that a student living in Paris. African history was pushed to the side. In 1952 the U.N. visiting mission heard complaints at a Territorial Assembly that the “educational programmes had not been adapted to the Territory’s requirements.”

This curriculum, however, was taught in a very different manner to the students in Cameroun than it was to those in France. P. Baatard, a Paris Evangelical missionary writing in 1929, described the trouble he experienced teaching morals to his students, finding them unable to understand certain words. He explained, « liberté,

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30 Gwei, 232; Todd (162) asserts that the textbooks used in Cameroon were the same as those used in France.  
33 Gardnier (31) stated, “They treated African history, traditions and culture as things of secondary importance.”
amour, charité, droit…n’ont, pour les noirs, aucun sens précis. »

He explained how « l’intelligence des élèves stimulée par leur imagination, avance avec joie sur les sentiers de la découverte, » when he taught his students geography, science and arithmetic, writing. He described the accomplishments of his students with pride, describing how they initially experienced difficulty with arithmetic, because, he explained, « Les spéculations abstraites rebutent naturellement nos indigènes… »

European teachers, both frustrated by the cultural gap between the students and the curriculum, and paternalistically surprised when they learned correctly, transmitted the message to their students that they were not the same as students in France.

“Conduct Reflected”: The Hierarchy of Teachers in French Cameroun

In 1958 the visiting mission from the U.N. expressed

…a warm tribute to those many hundreds of men and women from countries far from the Cameroons, and especially from France, other French-speaking countries, and from the United States of America, who at present or in past years have given their devotion, effort, and skill to helping the Cameroonian people develop the political institutions and the economic, social and educational facilities which constitute the foundation of their coming independence.

The Westerners who gave “their devotion, effort, and skill” to building the educational facilities of the country came to Cameroon for many different reasons.

Some may have been escaping aspects of their life at home, others drawn by the

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35 Société des Missions Évangéliques, « Lettre de M. le missionnaire P. Baatard, 1929, » 159.
36 Société des Missions Évangéliques, « Lettre de M. le missionnaire P. Baatard, 1929, » 159.
romantic adventure of Africa, and still others, especially among the missionaries, believed strongly that it was their duty.

One missionary teacher in 1930, Mme Michel, explained that when she taught her Camerounian pupils she would « d’essayer de les initier à une vie plus haute, plus vraiment humaine que celle vécu par leurs ancêtres. » While all of the Western teachers were not necessarily so articulately paternalistic in their views, especially as time progressed, they all arrived in Cameroun with the intention of promoting Western knowledge among their students, seeking to be “an instrument of human progress.” In addition to this presupposed superior purpose, these teachers commanded more authority than the Camerounian teachers with whom they worked, providing a vivid example of inequality to their students each day.

The government and mission schools employed a large number of Camerounians, most commonly as moniteurs (probationary teachers). To be certified as a teacher, a Camerounian needed to complete the baccalaureate, have two years of teaching experience, and a certificate of competence in teaching. To be a moniteur, a Camerounian only needed a primary school education certificate. In 1927, the government schools employed one inspector, fourteen male teachers, twelve female teachers, eighty-two moniteurs with a primary school diploma, and sixteen assistant moniteurs. In 1938, government schools employed 192 individuals (of whom 172

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38 Société des Missions Évangéliques, « Cameroun et Togo: Dernières Nouvelles, » 33.
39 See page 15 of Chapter One for a discussion of French cultural goals.
40 Miller, 56.
were Camerounian *moniteurs*) and mission schools employed about 1,250 individuals (1,100 of whom were *moniteurs*).\(^{42}\)

The administration, concentrating on expanding their education system and worried that there were not enough teachers to meet the growth of students, worked to hire more Camerounians. Following World War II, the 1947 French report to the U.N. explained the need « former le plus rapidly et le plus complètement possible le personnel enseignant autochtone nécessaire à l’extension de cette éducation de base. » \(^{43}\) The numbers increased. In 1947, there were 320 indigenous teachers in the school system. Two hundred and seventy of these possessed a certificate “d’études primaires supérieures” and another thirty had a “diplôme de moniteur indigène.” In addition to these indigenous teachers, there were 1,183 indigenous *moniteurs* who did not possess an official diploma but worked with a European teacher or a diploma-holding Camerounian.\(^{44}\)

The Camerounian *moniteurs* and teachers were trained to follow the curriculum as laid out by the colonial government, the same curriculum that was being used in Paris. A contributor to the American Presbyterian mission newsletter described the exam for the *Diplôme Moniteur Indigène* as consisting of a dictation of a “long text, often taken from a colonial author,” grammar, writing, reading comprehension, French composition, arithmetic, and drawing.\(^{45}\) French Cameroun lacked the facilities in which to train secondary school teachers, causing them to

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\(^{42}\) LeVine, *The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence*, 81.


heavily rely on foreign teachers for this level of education.\textsuperscript{46} The 1947 report to the League noted potential plans to build a teachers college in Cameroun at some point in the future and discussed the effectiveness of sending scholarship students to France to return later as teachers.\textsuperscript{47} By 1957, three Normal Schools (teacher training schools) for men and one for women had been established and each year the government chose eight teachers to travel to France and study for four months.\textsuperscript{48}

The training that the Camerounian teachers and \textit{moniteurs} received, especially for those select few who were sent to France, significantly impacted their views. A Camerounian teacher who attended Normal School explained, “What the Normal School has contributed to my moral life is invaluable. The language and the actions of the people whom I know who are said to come from the higher schools stupefy me.”\textsuperscript{49} This teacher then explained the power he, in turn, held over his students, “They all look at me, they have confidence in me. They want to learn from me. I have to teach them and the pupils are quick to copy. During a lesson if I happen to use a word or expression frequently, everyone tries to use the same word or expression. In this way I am able to see my work and my conduct reflected in the pupils.”\textsuperscript{50} It is impossible to know if this testimony, published in an American missionary newsletter, accurately reflected the mindset of this one Camerounian teacher, but it does reveal the missionaries’ desire to transpose their image.

Despite the fact that a large number of Cameronian teachers received training at the hands of the colonial administration, the European teachers did not generally

\textsuperscript{46} Gwei, 266.
\textsuperscript{48} LeVine, \textit{The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence}, 81.
\textsuperscript{49} Jean Edje’e Obam, “Since Graduation,” \textit{The Drum Call} 17, no. 1 (January 1938): 28.
\textsuperscript{50} Jean Edje’e Obam, “Since Graduation,” 27.
pay them much respect. A Paris Evangelical Society missionary, Mlle Idelette Allier, described her distrust of the Camerounian *moniteurs* working in her school. She described how important it was to « suivre les moniteurs de très près, d’heure en heure. Ils sont à former à tous les points de vue, il faut les pousser constamment, leur réexpliquer tout continuellement, répéter sans cesse, surtout quand ils ont du travailler quelques mois seuls… »51 Another missionary with the Paris Evangelical Society in 1930, M. Robert, stated his approval of the training of Cameroonian teachers at the Ecole normale de Ndoungué, yet at the same time anxiously called for a greater presence of European teachers, claiming, « Nous aurions besoin d’autres instituteurs européens pour assurer la bonne marche de toute notre œuvre scolaire l’année prochaine et l’année suivant. »52 The *moniteurs* and indigenous teachers were not considered the equals of the European teachers, strengthening the conception of inferiority transmitted to the students each day in the classroom. The hierarchical relationship between the European and African teachers simply reflected the societal structure outside the classroom where Camerounians were indisputably needed to provide manpower, but never treated as equals.

“Having Learned to Live”: Mission Culture in French Cameroun

The missionaries saw education, for the most part, as a tool with which to gain converts. An American Presbyterian missionary explained in 1938, ‘However, the educational aim of our Normal School program is but secondary. Our primary purpose is to train young men in Christian living and how to carry the “good news” as
the natives call Christ’s Message, to others.\textsuperscript{53} Fifteen years earlier the same mission had stated, “But with the increasing attractions of government work, we need to strengthen our hold on the boys, deepen their spiritual purpose, and save for the Mission the material which we are so carefully training.”\textsuperscript{54} The American mission was more interested in keeping their students close and gaining more converts, than it was in supplying the French government with educated workers. A Paris Evangelical Society missionary explained in 1930 that he focused first on the Bible « notre principal livre de lecture, » and then on « la vie sociale de nos jeunes hommes. »\textsuperscript{55} The French, traditionally in favor of a secular system of education, tolerated this promotion of spirituality because it allowed them to easily expand their system.\textsuperscript{56} Despite the fact that the missionaries placed more value on spirituality than the government, these two parties shared many of the same justifications and goals for their educational work.

The missionaries, arriving in Cameroun with a moral purpose, did not often find themselves on the same level as their students. An anonymous Catholic missionary explained the difficulty he had recounting Bible stories to the students who did not have the same cultural or religious background and who failed to understand when original sin occurred or who was “un riche laboureur.”\textsuperscript{57} He stated, « Non, les Noirs ne sont pas des Blanc crêpus (sic) et pigmentés. L’esprit humain

\textsuperscript{55} Société des Missions Évangéliques « Lettre de M. le missionnaire P. Baatard, Ndougé, 1929, » 158.
\textsuperscript{56} See page 15 of Chapter 1 for a more detailed explanation of the unusual aspect of missionaries in Cameroonian education.
\textsuperscript{57} (A…, Missionaire des Pères du Saint-Esprit à Yaoundé (Cameroun)), 16.
n’est pas identique partout. » 58 The missionaries who believed they were bridging a fundamental physical and mental gap between themselves and their students were able to justify their efforts as heroic. The French historian J. Wilbois, writing in 1934, described this self-glorifying belief, writing, “Beaucoup d’efforts chez les Blancs, assez d’indifférence chez les Noirs.” 59

The missions believed they were raising the moral standard of the people with whom they were working. The American Presbyterian mission newsletter described, “The moral life of the average town boy is very low; swearing, lying, stealing, adultery, smoking, and drinking are practiced from the earliest years… With a high standard in our school and church work these evils are being greatly reduced.” 60

A Catholic missionary, writing in 1936, explained that white people, while having sinned during slavery were now contributing something positive to Africa. He wrote, « La rançon du crime d’esclavage que des Blancs ont commis, ce sont ces autres Blancs qui portent la lumière aux peuples de couleur. » 61 In 1955, a Cameroonian priest described his childhood (“before my people knew the Words of God or the things of school”), explaining that parents taught their children to “plunder and to steal,” that the people “breathed hatred and strife,” and he had “witnessed murder, theft, and bestial brutality.” 62 It seems possible that these words may have been twisted, printed as they were in a missionary newsletter. However they could also

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58 (A…, Missionaire des Pères du Saint-Esprit à Yaoundé (Cameroun)), 16.  
60 E. Cozzens et. al., “Excerpts from Station Reports,” The Drum Call 2, no.2 (February 1923): 17.  
61 (A…, Missionaire des Pères du Saint-Esprit à Yaoundé (Cameroun)), 43.  
serve as an example of the self-debasement that might spring from years of hearing similar stories coming from the mouths of his teachers.

The American Presbyterian mission explained that the girls who attended their schools before marriage “will make better homes because of having learned to live during their stay with us.” The French Catholic missions set up schools for girls that were referred to as the SIXA. Young unmarried girls would attend these schools, for any length of time between six months and two years, while they were taught catechism, nursing, house-work, and farming. The 1960 novel *Houseboy*, by the Cameroonian author Ferdinand-Léopold Oyono, gives the following description of the SIXA as seen through the eyes of a small Cameroonian boy:

> Today Father Vandermayer came back from the bush. He has brought five women with him. It seems they are Christians that he has taken away from their polygamous husband. Five more boarders for the SIXA. If they knew the work there is waiting for them here, they would have stayed behind with their husband.

The SIXA was later outlawed due to the following reasons, as listed in the Catholic *Album of a Century*: “preparing only women for marriage, leaving men aside, obliging the trainees to work for the mission, ignoring the cultural background of the trainee, violation of Human Rights, etc.”

The missionaries often sought to retain a degree of separation from the Cameroonian populations among whom they taught. In 1922, the American Presbyterians explained that being able to build a school for their own children would, “mean a great deal to the Mission” and would allow many to stay “who would

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otherwise have to retire from the work because of their children.”  

Members of the same mission also exclaimed after a meeting how it was « good to be for a while exclusively with those of your own kind, color and tongue.»  

The missionaries were often not as interested in learning about Cameroonian culture as they were in spreading their own.

The American Presbyterian mission exposed their Cameroonian students to a mixture of American and French culture. Their 1923 newsletter both described Thanksgiving dinner, relishing in the details of “canned sweet-potato, canned cranberry sauce, nuts and raisins from California,” and explained that on some Friday nights in the girl’s school “American game” was introduced and “adopted with enthusiasm.”  

The same year, the mission explained that, “twenty-three [students] received the prize of a little French St. John for having passed four examinations with 100 per cent…” Regardless of whether the Presbyterians were promoting American or French culture, the very fact that these foreign cultures were being introduced to the students from a position of authority and assumed superiority had a significant impact on how the students felt about their own indigenous culture.

The European influence in the missions, however, would fade throughout the colonial years as Camerounians began to play a more prominent role in the church and in the missionary classrooms. Early on, in 1923, the American Presbyterians explained their desire that all Camerounian teachers “should be a Church member and not merely a catechumen,” so that they might assume the “heavier responsibility” for

“the evangelistic work in the centers.” In a letter to his director, a missionary from the Paris Evangelical Society mused on how much authority the missionary should command within the church. He wrote, « Je ne crois pas (malgré l’ascendant qu’ils ont sur les indigènes) de contrôler toutes les initiatives des chrétiens et des églises. »

Once Camerounians came to gain leadership positions within the missions, an important space to foster political activity was created. It was here, in the missions, that the independence leaders studied and gained their ideas.

“The great work of Civilisation”: The Educated Elite of French Cameroun

The Cameroonian individuals who became teachers did not become the equals of the European teachers, but they did enter a class above the majority of Cameroonians. In 1921 the French government dictated, “As for the higher stage of education it shall be reserved for an elite.”\(^1\) The French government was committed to creating an elite class made up of évolutés in order to ease their administrative duties, and they were confident that they could achieve this through the means of education.\(^2\) In December 1933 the Commissioner Bonnecarrère explained the importance of educating the chiefs and their sons, as there were limited spots open for educational opportunities.\(^3\) Sons of chiefs had to pass exam-schools focused on French language

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\(^1\) France, *Journal Officiel de la République Francaise* (7 septembre, 1921), 432. Quoted in Gwei, 154.

\(^2\) See page 18 of Chapter One for a more detailed explanation of the link the elite class played between the administration and the people.

skills, moral instruction and governing approaches. The French, however, also favored educating and placing in power those individuals who were not descended from chiefs so that their loyalty would belong more completely to the French and their ways.

The Duala ethnic group, located on the coast, enjoyed a privileged position with the French administration, especially in the years preceding World War II. They ran the plantations and occupied many of the clerical positions in the administration. Protestantism was central to their elite status. The prominent Duala family, the Bells, headed a social organization called the Musango ma Bonadoo whose purpose was to aid the French in “the accomplishing of the great work of civilisation.” Although this organization chastised its fellow Cameroonians for failing to be appropriately appreciative of the French efforts to impart culture, it also devoted time to the preserving Duala traditions. The Douala saw Western culture as a means to protect them against the threat of the colonial administration.

In 1928 three students were sent to France to be prepared for professional schooling. Due to the complete absence of higher education possibilities in Cameroun, scholarships were dispersed to attend medical school in Dakar, and students (both female and male) were sent to France in 1947. In 1952, eighty-five

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4 Gwei, 178.  
5 Gwei, 176.  
6 Derrick, 107.  
7 Derrick, 113.  
8 L’Eveil des Camerouniens, Douala (10 September 1934). Quoted in Derrick, 115.  
9 Derrick, 115-116.  
students were given scholarships to attend university in France or Dakar.\textsuperscript{13}

Throughout the 1950s, the administration significantly increased the number of scholarships offered to study in France. In 1950, they offered 206 scholarships (for both secondary and university), and in 1954, they offered 406.\textsuperscript{14} These numbers then increased dramatically in the last four years before independence. In 1956, 473 Camerounian students were granted scholarships to France (about half of these for university).\textsuperscript{15} By 1958 there were 1,050 students studying abroad at the university level.\textsuperscript{16} The same 1959 Franco-Cameroun treaty that established use of the French language, also guaranteed the rights of all public and private French schools within Cameroun, and mandated that Cameroonian students would have equal rights to French students in French universities.\textsuperscript{17} Two years after Independence, in 1962, Cameroonian students were the third most numerous African student group in French universities (after Ivorians and Malians).\textsuperscript{18}

As this growing number of students began to return to Cameroon with their diploma in hand, they brought back a divided experience. A 1956 Unesco publication on African students in France stated, “A new African society is thus coming into being in France, modelled (sic) on French society; but we cannot assert \textit{a priori} that it will be transplanted as such to Africa.”\textsuperscript{19} This publication described the “tragic misunderstanding of what the elite was to be,” explaining that the French had in mind

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{13} United Nations. Trusteeship Committee, \textit{Visiting Mission 1952}, 32.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Nguini, 197.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Gardinier, 33.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Johnson, 83.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} LeVine and M’Ballah, \textit{The Educated African}, 522.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Johnson, 83.
\end{itemize}
‘a system of “intellectual relay systems” between the whites at the top and the bulk of
the native population,’ while the Africans believed in a “new elite to replace the old
one.”\textsuperscript{20} African students often came to realize this truth in addition to experiencing
continued racism in France.\textsuperscript{21} They also failed to find a connection with their white
classmates through Christianity, finding Western Christianity individualistic in
comparison to their own belief system.\textsuperscript{22} Despite the alienation that many African
students felt abroad, they still returned home in possession of many of the airs and
practices of France. The 1956 Unesco publication stated, “Acculturation does take
place, but it represents a change of form rather than a change of matter; it consists
less in an acceptance of values, institutions and customs than a change in mental
outlook and possibly also in forms of response.”\textsuperscript{23}

It was not, however, just abroad that the Camerounian elite class was shaped.
The 1947 report to the U.N. explained one of their primary goals to be teaching the
growing number of \textit{évolués} ‘sans « déracinement » des modes de vie coutumiers aux
modes de vie modernes et d’entrainer la masse de la population dans cette
évolution.’\textsuperscript{24} Two « écoles urbaines » were reported in the 1928 report to the League,
in order to « assurer l’instruction élémentaire des enfants de race blanche
fonctionnement. »\textsuperscript{25} The 1952 visiting mission from the U.N. noted the presence of
European pupils in the high school in Yaoundé.\textsuperscript{26} There was also a college in
Yaoundé, defined as “modern mixte,” where both Africans and Europeans prepared

\textsuperscript{20} Bastide, 489-490.
\textsuperscript{21} Bastide, 489.
\textsuperscript{22} Bastide, 491.
\textsuperscript{23} Bastide, 491.
\textsuperscript{24} France, \textit{Rapport 1947}, 121.
\textsuperscript{25} France, Rapport 1928, 13.
for the baccalaureate.”27 Although students attending these mixed schools were not physically in France, they were surrounded by both the culture of their European classmates and the unequal power dynamic existing between the two groups of students. The elite Cameroonians emerging from these schools would find that speaking French and imitating the styles of their European classmate provided them at least some distanced between themselves and this pervasive inequality.

II. The British

“A Biblical Needle’s Eye”: The British Lack Funds for Education

The Advisory Committee on Native Education in the British Tropical African Dependencies wrote, in 1925,

Education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupation and traditions of the various peoples, conserving as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life; adapting them where necessary to changed circumstances and progressive ideas, as an agent of natural growth and evolution.28

The committee went on to say that the very goal of education should be to aid the development of the society by improving both the work ethic and national sentiment of the individual. The future leaders of the country must be “capable, trustworthy, public-spirited” and “belonging to their own race.”29

The British reports expressed high expectations for their schools, yet in reality the administration did not contribute enough money to ensure that very many schools were put in place. Margaret Read, the head of the Department of Education in

27 France, Rapport 1947, 123.
Tropical Areas of the Institute of Education in 1953, explained that the British colonies must support their own education systems. Education, she declared, is “unproductive in the direct and material sense of the word.” She described how colonies must determine whether primary school education increased the productivity of workers and how economically worthwhile it was to expand the system. The British viewed education as a privilege rather than a right.

The British administration relied almost entirely on the missionaries to carry out the educational duties in the Cameroons, yet they often left these missionaries stranded without adequate financial support. Lord Lugard believed the British colonial administration had “been too ready to leave the burden of education to be borne by the Missions.” He continued, explaining, “In most of the African dependencies the proportion of revenue devoted to this all-important object might well be doubled or even trebled.” In 1925 the Advisory Committee on Native Education in Africa decided that grants-in-aid to mission schools should not be given based on exam results. Grants-in-aid were instead awarded to the mission schools that the administration felt were acting in accordance to their wishes. This open-ended condition very-likely allowed the administration to give away smaller sums of money. For example, in 1928 the administration only gave away two grants-in-aid, one for 231 pounds and the other for 49 pounds. The limited availability of these grants-in-aid made it difficult for missions to expand their capacity.

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31 Read, 20-21.
II broke out it became increasingly hard for the missions to secure grants from the
colonial government.\textsuperscript{35}

The first secondary school in the British Cameroons was not opened until
1938 when the Catholic Mill Hill Fathers built St. Joseph’s College, at Sasse.\textsuperscript{36} It was
then not until 1949 that another secondary school, run by the Basel mission, was
opened at Bati.\textsuperscript{37} There were only three secondary schools and one technical school
run by missionaries on the brink of Independence.\textsuperscript{38} For ten years Sasse remained the
only secondary school in the entire British Cameroons mandate (and protectorate),
prompting the Anglophone writer Godfrey B. Tangwa to describe, many years later,
the process of entering secondary school in the Cameroons as “equivalent to passing
through the biblical needle’s eye.”\textsuperscript{39} It was next to impossible to be admitted to
secondary school, much less to go on to university in Nigeria or the U.K.

When representatives from the 1952 U.N. visiting mission passed through the
Southern Cameroons they heard people “complaining of the paucity of schools in the
Territory” and asking for more primary schools.\textsuperscript{40} A note written by a Mill Hill
missionary at Sasse to Bishop Heery of Onitsha in 1941 listed the suggestions for the
Bigger grants for unassisted schools, 4. Increase in existing grants, 5. All round

\textsuperscript{35} Bernard F Booth, \textit{The Mill Hill Fathers in West Cameroon: Education, Health and Development,}
\textsuperscript{36} Booth, 111; Robert J. O’Neil. \textit{Mission to the British Cameroons} (London: Mission Book Service,
1991),79.
\textsuperscript{37} Emmanuel, Chiabi, \textit{The Making of Modern Cameroon: A History of Substrate Nationalism and
\textsuperscript{38} Gwei, 141.
\textsuperscript{39} Godfrey B. Tangwa, “The Other Side of Anglophone Writing,” in \textit{Anglophone Cameroon Writing},
bigger grants for any kind of school, 6. More money…’

This slightly humorous note effectively illustrates the ever-pressing need for money felt by these mission schools. The British education system was simply not as extensive as the French, in part due to financial constraints. Only twenty-three percent of children were enrolled in the British school system in 1955 (while forty-eight percent of children were enrolled in that of the French).

“*A Civilising Influence*: The Core of Christianity in the British Cameroons

In 1912, four years before the British entered the Cameroons, Lord Lugard proclaimed the need for the British colonial education system to be grounded in the spiritual so as to inspire “a man to a sense of duty, to unswerving integrity and loyalty, whether in the public or the private relations of life,” and in order “to train and educate a nation.” A Memorandum on Educational Policy in British Tropical Africa, written in 1925, emphasized the mission’s role in shaping the moral instruction of the pupil. It stated, “History shows that devotion to some spiritual ideal is the deepest source of inspiration in the discharge of public duty.”

In 1922, the American Presbyterians (visiting from French Cameroun) referred to the British Cameroons as ‘a present-day “No Missionary’s Land!” all of it a Land of Promise for greater things yet to be done in the name of the Lord who has

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41 Soppo Archive, in O’Neil, 67.
42 Johnson, 85.
44 Lugard, “Speech at the opening of the Hong-Kong University, 11th March 1912,” cited in Lugard, 460.
kept that work through all these years." The Basel mission (having begun with the help of the American Presbyterians) and the Catholic Mill Hill Fathers were, according to the 1927 report to the League, the two most important missions in the area. Greater than 90 percent of all education was administered by missionaries and the Native Administration." In 1937, 8,644 students attended 227 mission schools, 1,507 students attended nineteen native administration schools, and 1,028 students attended six government schools. The mission presence only increased throughout the period and by 1954 there were 289 mission schools and thirty government and Native Administration schools combined. At reunification in 1961, West Cameroon could boast of only three schools (out of 650) that were not controlled by missions.

As was the case in French Cameroun, every prominent political leader fighting for independence within the British Cameroons was educated in a mission school.

In 1925, the Advisory Committee on Native Education in the British Tropical Dependencies stated, “Provided that the required standard of educational efficiency is reached, aided schools should be regarded as filling a place in the scheme of education as important as the schools conducted by the Government itself.” The Nigerian Education Code of 1926 granted the government power to ensure that all

49 Gwei, 141.
50 Gwei, 63. (Table compiled from Great Britain’s Annual Reports to the League of Nations.)
52 Johnson, 84.
missionary schools had clean, well constructed building, sports fields, and 175 days of class per year. It mandated that no student would be refused an education because of their religious beliefs and that the school would follow an official curriculum with qualified teachers, while refraining from making a profit.\textsuperscript{55} Competition for government approval existed between the two major missions. The educational endeavors of the Mill Hill fathers were praised in the 1926 report to the League for “the readiness of its members to co-operate with Government.”\textsuperscript{56} During this year, the Basel mission only received one grant-in-aid for educating 3,122 students, while the Mill Hill Fathers received four grant-in-aids for educating 425 students.\textsuperscript{57}

The 1925 report to the League applauded the Basel mission for changing the “savage customs” of the Ngi ethnic group and weaning them away from “any surviving tendencies towards cannibalism and witchcraft.”\textsuperscript{58} The British viewed Christianity as an essential remedy to bring about the cultural advancement of the Cameroonian people. In 1926, the administration noted that the educational work of the Basel mission “cannot be considered as efficient at present,” but that it did “exercise a civilising influence among the people.”\textsuperscript{59} They also described how some northern chiefs were “filled with alarm” to note “the growing desire of the young to become Christians and to abandon their traditional customs and observances.”\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{55} Rudolph, Stumpf, \textit{La Politique Linguistique au Cameroun de 1884 à 1960: Comparaisons entre les administrations coloniales allemande, française et britannique et du rôle joué par les sociétés missionnaires} (Bern: Peter Lang, 1979), 115.
\textsuperscript{60} Great Britain Colonial Office, \textit{Report 1925}, 57.
The British worked to include both the missionary and the Cameroonian in the education decisions made in the mandate. In 1928, the School Committee was made up of the Resident, the District Office of Victoria, the Medical Officer of Victoria, the Superintendent of Education at Buea, a member of the Basel Mission, a member of the Roman Catholic Mission, and the two African District Heads of Victoria and Buea. The British report stated, “The inclusion of the two African members… will assure the representation of the interests and views of the native community.” The inclusion of two members of the missions reflected the cooperative relationship existing between the missionaries and the government. The administration noted in 1929, “A small school forms a nucleus of religious work in every village where a catechist can be sent, and, if this school has to be closed a Mission sees its hold over the village slipping away.” Missions throughout the British Cameroons were less abundant than in French Cameroun, yet they possessed a greater degree of autonomy in determining the curriculum and educational policies than the missions located in French Cameroun.

“Within their experience”: The Content of Curriculum in the British Cameroons

The colonial reports suggest that the British were concerned with adapting the curriculum to the context of the British Cameroons. The 1923 Advisory Committee on Native Education in the British Tropical African Dependencies advocated for the adaption of the curriculum, especially in history and geography, to Africa, explaining that the textbooks should “be replaced where necessary by others better adapted, the

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64 Johnson, 84.
foundations and illustrations being taken from African life and surroundings."\(^{65}\) The 1928 report to the League listed some “new and suitable” books for schools in the Cameroons, including *Atlantic Readers*, which “deal in simple language with African life,” *Nightingale’s West African Health Reader*, with “simple talks on practical hygiene,” and *Lives of Eminent Africans*, “stories of Africans who have made good.”\(^{66}\)

Margaret Read of the British Institute of Education explained in 1953 the importance of teaching African history, stating, “If African children are introduced in schools and colleges to all the wealth of the literary tradition of Western Europe, they cannot help as they grow up, having a sense of inferiority vis à vis the Europeans who are so rich in this tradition.”\(^{67}\) Those who felt that textbooks and curriculum should be adapted to the “African life” did not always successfully promote the idea that this “African life” was rich in its own tradition.” Instead these adapted textbooks, with their “simple” approaches, often assumed African children to be not just on a different cultural level from the British school children, but also a different intelligence level.

In 1952 an advisory committee studying African education, appointed by the British Colonial Office and the Nuffield Foundation, found some textbooks at use in West Africa to be “quite suitable,” while others were found to either “assume a knowledge which the English child has and the Africa child had not,” or “said to be

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\(^{67}\) Read, 13.
written for West African schools but are in fact written down to them.”  

This committee elaborated,

There can be no doubt that primary education on the West Coast has paid far too much regard to the content and treatment traditionally associated with the English elementary school and far too little to the African environment and to the material which has reality and meaning for the children because it is within their experience.  

Colin G. Wise, Principal Education Officer of the Cameroons Development Corporation, viewed the situation in a very straightforward manner, reporting in 1956, “In all territories the final result seems certain—a replica of the English system.”  

The education system in the British Cameroons was structurally composed of eight years of primary school, six years of secondary school, and an additional two to three years of courses for those training to be teachers.  

In 1926 the curriculum of a government school in the Dikwa division included reading, writing, and arithmetic (in the vernacular Kanuri for the two lower classes and in English for the upper class), Arabic, hygiene, religion, and sewing. The students worked on the school’s farm learning about agriculture, as well as playing football and “native games.” About a third of the boys lived at the school.

The institution of boarding schools greatly contributed to the impact of cultural influence upon the students as they were removed from their families and

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69 Ward, 19.
villages for long months at a time. The 1947 report to the League explained that there is “little feeling of interdependence between the tribes,” with the exception of the Cameroons Province where there is a “feeling of solidarity…only among the educated elements where the school syllabus is devised to stress inter-relationships wherever possible in geography, history, handicrafts and simple economics.” When students were taken out of their home distinctive to their ethnic group, their classmates and their teachers became their families. The first group of Sasse Secondary school graduates who attended Ibadan College in Nigeria formed a Sasse College association, frequently sending letters back to their old boarding school. These students, who had received additional tutoring before they took the entrance exam for Ibadan, felt an especial connection to their former teachers.  

At Sasse Secondary school the mission board created the curriculum in cooperation with the government. The “Constitution of Catholic Institutions” mandated that the goal of Sasse was “To educate them [the students] to become upright and useful citizens in the best Christian traditions,” to focus on “mental, moral, spiritual, cultural and physical development,” and to prepare them to live “as Nigerian citizens with dignity and without poverty.” Bookkeeping and shorthand were taught in order to prepare students for jobs as government clerks and in business. In 1949 English, Latin math, religious doctrine, history, geography, physics, chemistry, biology, general knowledge, singing, agriculture, and typing

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74 “Report to the Board of Guardians, 1948” in Booth, 133.
75 Booth, 117.
76 Sasse College Archives, Booth 116-117.
77 Booth, 127.
made up the curriculum.\textsuperscript{78} In the years between 1945 and 1951 eighty-eight students took the Cambridge school certificate, and only six failed.\textsuperscript{79} The school did not allow students to take the exam whom they did not expect to pass, in this way building “an academic elite.”\textsuperscript{80}

At the same time boys were attending Sasse Secondary, girls and adult women were given the opportunity to attend “domestic subjects” centers.\textsuperscript{81} The 1952 advisory committee appointed by the British Colonial Office and the Nuffield Foundation explained the ways in which formal education for girls would “make fresh and often uncomfortable demands upon the men and to ask of them difficult and often disturbing responsibilities, in relation to home, children, and domestic affairs generally.”\textsuperscript{82} As a result of not wanting to “upset the established order in society,” the committee declared the need to train girls for “work on the land and in the home.” They explained that through this training a girl “understands for the first time such things as the simple but fundamental rules of health education, the care of children, and food values.”\textsuperscript{83} This committee expressed contentment that African men were realizing their wives’ potential, such as when “a group of influential Africans asked the Women Assistant Director of Education if she would run tea-parties so that their wives could learn European ways of social behaviour and develop the art of conversation.”\textsuperscript{84}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
  \bibitem{78} Booth, 130.
  \bibitem{79} Booth, 129.
  \bibitem{80} Booth, 130.
  \bibitem{82} Ward, 108.
  \bibitem{83} Ward, 108.
  \bibitem{84} Ward, 108.
\end{thebibliography}
“Incapable of grappling”: The Teacher Hierarchy in the British Cameroons

Professor Boniface I. Obichere wrote, “Those of us who attended Catholic boarding schools in Eastern Nigeria in the 1950’s will never forget the tyranny of the older students…the destabilizing fear of the Irish priests who taught us.” Obichere explained how there were priests “guilty of disdain and racial prejudice against the Africans,” giving a “bad name to all European missionaries.” He however also acknowledged that the legacy of these priests was both positive and negative and their contributions to education were important.85 The beating of Cameroonians by Mill Hill priests, however, became a serious bone of contention between the Catholic mission and the government. A notice by Bishop Rogan was distributed to the priests banning the use of flogging and explaining that if they were found in violation they would be sent home.86 In order to discourage his priests from this use of violence, Bishop Rogan wrote in 1931, ‘I personally have always looked upon the average primitive African as a “little one,” as a child.’87

The colonial administration advocated for the incorporation of Cameroonians into the teaching staff. The 1925 Advisory Committee on Education stated, “Teachers for village schools should, when possible, be selected from pupils belonging to the tribe and district who are familiar with its language, traditions, and customs.”88 However, despite this expressed hope there were a high percentage of African teachers from other countries working in the British Cameroons. In 1932 only ten out

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85 Boniface I. Obichere, “Forward” in Booth, xii. Obichere holds a doctorate of Philosophy, Professor of History University of California at Los Angeles, 1994.
86 Booth, 44.
87 “Circulaire from Bishop Rogan, NHM, October 1931, Soppo,” in Booth, 44.
of the thirty-six certified African teachers employed by the colonial government were Cameroonian. Ten out of the eleven uncertified African teachers were Cameroonians, illustrating the lack of teacher training available in the country.\(^\text{89}\)

Teachers at Sasse Secondary school needed to be Catholic, hold a university degree, and have attended additional educational training.\(^\text{90}\) Until 1949 the staff was made up of mostly Europeans. In 1949, however, the numbers increased and there were nine Cameroonians on the staff that year. Former students would often teach for a year or two and then move on.\(^\text{91}\) The famous Cameroonian intellectual, Bernard Fonlon, taught at Sasse in 1946 and 1947.\(^\text{92}\)

The Cameroonian individuals who did become teachers assumed an elite status within society. The report to the League noted that the new school in Dikwa, opened in 1924, was led by a Cameroonian who was “a member of one of the leading legal families in Bornu,”\(^\text{93}\) illustrating the insular characteristic of the emerging educated class. The educated became more educated, while the opportunities for the non-elites to find their way into secondary school remained slim. However, despite enjoying a privileged position in contrast to their fellow Cameroonians, native teachers were often disrespected by European administrators. In 1920 Sir Hugh Clifford addressed the Nigerian Council lamenting the fact that a ‘mushroom-growth of “hedge-schools”’ was being led by teachers he defined as “young men who are

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\(^\text{90}\) Booth, 117.  
\(^\text{91}\) Booth, 141-142.  
incapable of grappling successfully with the mysteries of the Fourth Standard.”⁹⁴ At Sasse Secondary school, the European and Cameroonian staff were given separate living quarters.⁹⁵ Some of the Cameroonian staff left in protest of the poor conditions of their quarters.⁹⁶

The Cameroonian individuals taking the Normal Class in training for the 3⁰ Class Certificate Examination (the first teachers’ examination) in 1926 studied English History but no Cameroonian History (in addition to School Method and the Principles of Teaching, Geography, and Hygiene).⁹⁷ The adaption of curriculum to “African life” did not extend to this particular teacher training, and these Cameroonian teachers were not given the tools with which to teach their students about the history of their own country.

“Promotion of the Moral”: The Educated Elite of the British Cameroons

In contrast to the French habit of sending students to Europe for education, the British more often sent students to Nigeria. The 1947 report to the U.N. mentioned students who were “eligible for entrance to University College” and the existence of scholarships to the U.K.⁹⁸ However, of the twelve students who went on to university from Sasse Secondary school between 1947 and 1951, the majority attended Ibadan University College in Nigeria, and only a few went on to schools in the U.K.⁹⁹ Before

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⁹⁵ “Hedge schools refer to small missionary schools in the bush.

⁹⁶ Sasse Archives material (in Booth, 120) show separate European staff quarters in the 1939 building designs.


⁹⁹ Booth, 143.
Sasse opened in 1939, the few students who had been able to attend secondary school were forced to travel across the border to Nigeria. 100 An important relationship existed between the Mill Hill Fathers and the older and more established Holy Ghost Fathers of Eastern Nigeria. Catholic conferences on education and diocesan politics were held in Eastern Nigeria. 101 The education system in the British Cameroons was intricately linked to that of Nigeria, 102 yet the colonial government debated the effects of educating Cameroonians in Nigeria.

Sasse was opened in order “to give Cameroon boys a chance to obtain further education in their own country.” 103 The government was concerned with sending future teachers to training in Umuahia, in Southern Nigeria, feeling that it was harmful to remove “native children from their own to what is to them a foreign territory.” 104 It is possible that the British government was also concerned that the students who traveled to Nigeria for secondary school, and those graduates of Sasse who went on to attend university in Nigeria, would observe the push for political change occurring there and become inspired to follow in those footsteps. 105 The Anglophone politician P. M. Kale explained that the Cameroonian students in Nigeria “fell directly under the influence of Nigerian political leaders.” 106

The British had good reason to be concerned with the activities of the Cameroonian students studying in Nigeria due to the fact that their number so small and their impact on society would be so great. The British administration, very

100 Chiabi, *The Making of Modern Cameroon*, 142-143. Booth, 111.
101 Booth, 116.
102 LeVine, *The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence*, 69
103 Sasse College Archives, Booth 116-117.
concerned with creating a functioning class of elite leaders, operated a two-pronged education system; one for the masses and one for the elites. The 1953 Nuffield report stated, “economic conditions which have up to now rewarded literacy so generously that it has come to be regarded as inevitably entitling the literate to a standard of life far higher than the illiterate can hope for, however hard they may work and however great their skill.” In 1928 the administration remarked that the increased school attendance “may seem a small thing, but, when the apparent impossibility of making the real village up-country native understand the necessity for such niceties as punctuality is realised…[it] is very encouraging.” To the British, these “niceties” separated the masses from the elites.

The British administrator Lord Lugard described his view of the “Europeanised African” as “separated from the rest of the people by a gulf which no racial affinity can bridge. He must be treated—and seems to desire to be treated—as though he were of a different race.” In 1912, Lord Lugard wrote to his wife from Lagos, ‘I am somewhat baffled as to how to get into touch with the educated native ... To start with, I am not in sympathy with him. His loud and arrogant conceit are distasteful to me, the lack of natural dignity and courtesy antagonise me.’ Lugard wrote this four years before the Cameroons came under British rule, yet this provides an accurate illustration of the attitude of some British administrators towards the educated elite studying in Nigeria.

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110 Quoted in Kale, 25.
111 Lord Lugard served as Governor-General of Nigeria from 1914-1919.
The British did not shy away from favoring some ethnic groups over others abroad in Africa. The colonial administration explained that the “promotion of the moral, social, and material welfare of the inhabitants” of Cameroon needed to be flexible because the population consisted of “some of the most enlightened as well as some of the most primitive of West African peoples.”¹¹³ The British, unafraid to categorize and define the mental abilities of their subjects (for example referring to the Arab population in the eastern districts of the Emirate as “intelligent, but quick-tempered”), ensured that there was a distinct division between the educated elite and the rest of the population.¹¹⁴ Whether they were accepted, disrespected, or classified by the British, it was this literate section of society that advocated for and assumed political control at Independence. In 1961, the prominent Cameroonian politician Premier Endeley, wrote, “The cry for more and more education is heard from all parts of the Federation [Nigeria], but its need is even greater here in the Cameroons.”¹¹⁵

Conclusion

The French worked to increase primary school enrollment during the forty-five years they administered Cameroun, while the British failed to offer adequate economic support to their respective education system during this same period. To aid in their expansion the French allowed missionaries to operate more than half of the schools throughout the area, yet they worked to retain a tight control over the curriculum by mandating that all children in Cameroun must learn the same material being taught to children in Paris. In contrast, the British administration placed

virtually all responsibility of education in the hands of the missionaries, believing religion and morality to be intricately intertwined in the curriculum. The British frequently proclaimed their desire to adapt the content of the curriculum and textbooks to the specifics of Cameroonian life.

A close examination of these two education systems shows very few similarities in the specifics procedures and overarching philosophy. It becomes important, however, to take a step back and recognize the characteristics inherent to both education systems. In classrooms on both sides of the border there was an implied context of inferiority, reflected in the relationship between the African teacher and the European teacher. It was this similar stratified environment, consisting of “simplified” curriculum and teacher hopes to « initier une vie plus haute, » that overpowered the differences and produced two sets of elites both embracing the European identities.

The philosopher Lamin Sanneh argued, “Education was conceived as a means of social control, to install in the African a proper attitude of subservience towards the white man, usually in connection with tilling the land and producing the raw materials needed to feed western industries.”116 Although the goals of colonial education systems were perhaps more complex than this definition implies, there is an element of truth in these words that can be identified with both the French and the British colonial systems. No amount of good will and genuine hope contributed to the construction of these education systems by some colonial administrators could have outweighed the overarching economic goals of the two colonial powers. Eleven years

before the British even began administration of the Cameroons, in 1905 the Nigerian politician and nationalist Herbert Macaulay articulated this principal, stating, “The dimensions of the true interests of the natives at heart are algebraically equal to the length, breadth, and depth of the white man’s pocket.”

Lant Pritchett, a professor at Harvard Kennedy School and a former missionary, questioned the role of government-mandated education at its most basic level in an address to the Brooks Center for Global Poverty in 2008. Pritchett asked his audience to remember that universal government schooling is always replacing education of another kind, and he quoted the Indonesian educator Ki Hajar Dewantara who stated, “Thus we have sacrificed what was ours but have not gained in its place anything that might be considered its equivalent; we have lost our world, but we have not entered another.” Halfway across the world from Indonesia, Dewantara’s statement can be tilted to reflect the history of Cameroon. Educated Cameroonians under colonial rule were never fully allowed to enter the world of the French and the British, yet they were at the same time excluded from their old world. After Independence, searching to enter an all-together new world of African cultural identity, the nation was instead slowly pulled back into the shadow left by the French and the British.


Chapter Four
Voices of Independence

“One ironic aspect of Cameroon independence—indeed, of the achievement of political independence by almost every African state—is that it tended to destroy rather than create the clear sense of collective purpose we usually associate with nationalism.” –Willard R. Johnson

In the years following World War II, a myriad of political parties emerged on both the Anglophone and the Francophone sides calling for independence. Some of these groups were violently anti-colonialist, while others were moderate, and they all debated the future role of French and British culture in their new nation. Regardless of their political beliefs, and often despite an articulated desire to create a new African identity, the leaders who organized these various groups all explained the need to retain the cultures and languages of the colonizers in their future. These leaders demonstrated a widespread inability to separate the national mindset from the pervasive legacy of the colonizers. The words of these leaders, gathered from speeches and memoirs, serve as a barometer with which to understand the people’s views of education, language, culture and identity as the colonial era shakily came to a close.

I. Francophone Leaders

_A Call for Independence in French Cameroun_

Political activity first began in French Cameroun in 1938 with the creation of the youth organization _Jeunesse Camerounaise Francaise_ (Jeucafra).\(^2\) Agitation for rights, however, did not gain momentum until World War II. This can be partially

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attributed to the new sense of political importance gained by the elites when General de Gaulle chose Cameroun as the first part of the French empire to visit after France fell to the Germans in 1940.³ The simultaneous shift in colonial mentality and policy brought about by the Brazzaville Conference, coupled with external pressure from the U.N. due to Cameroun’s unique status as a trust territory, enabled this political development to occur.⁴ Two days after Paris was liberated from the Germans, on August 27, 1944, French Cameroun legalized trade union activity.⁵

In July 1945, ex-servicemen from World War II established an organization called the Front Intercolonial (FI) in Cameroun, with the goal “to unite French colonials of the métropole and overseas and work towards improving their social, intellectual, political, and economic situations.” Many Camerounians had been forced to march with French troops during World War II. The Camerounian novelist Mbella Sonne Dipoko explained that Camerounians were reluctant to be enlisted in the French army, “not because they didn’t want to fight against Nazi Germany and on the side of France, but simply because they couldn’t be bothered one way or the other.”⁶ Regardless of how detached from the Free French cause these soldiers felt, their participation in the war effort brought together Camerounians from all over the mandate and throughout the French colonies, allowing discussion of unity and

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⁵ LeVine, *The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence*, 143
independence to occur.\textsuperscript{7} In 1947 this organization expressed their disappointment with the actions of the elites and intellectuals of the territory who were not involved in the national cause.\textsuperscript{8}

In direct contrast to this view, the colonial administration expressed worry over the political aggression they sensed radiating from the elites. Following a spate of violent riots in 1945, the colonial administrator Robert Delavignette was sent to French Cameroun, staying two years as Governor and then Governor-General.\textsuperscript{9} In 1946 he reported, in “A Letter from French Cameroun” published in \textit{African Affairs}, that he was bringing together Africans and Europeans at receptions, in schools, and in the government as part of an attempt to « afin de constituer un esprit d ’équipe franco-camerounais. » \textsuperscript{10} However, tension continued to gather between the 20,000 Camerounian elites and the 2,000 Europeans. Delavignette stated that the elites were fifty years ahead in their political beliefs and that the Europeans were twenty years behind.\textsuperscript{11}

\textit{The “gangrene”: The UPC Rebel Against the French Colonial Government}

The largest source of political tension within French Cameroun was generated by the \textit{Union des Populations du Cameroun} (the UPC), which sprang up in 1948 as a section of the West African political party \textit{Rassemblement Démocratique Africain}

\textsuperscript{8} Joseph (323-325) notes that the exact date when the FI branch was established in Cameroun is recorded as both December 18, 1945 and July 8, 1946.
\textsuperscript{9} Joseph, 328.
\textsuperscript{11} Delavignette, “A Letter from French Cameroun,” 153.
In 1949, the UPC had evolved into a well-organized political party based on Cameroun nationalism, advocating for independence and reunification with the British Cameroons, and supported by other groups, such as the cultural organization of *Les Amis du Progrès*. The UPC, however, was not able to win enough votes to be elected to the Representative Assembly in 1949, the French National Assembly in 1951 or the Territorial Assembly in 1952. Leaders of the group traveled to New York and appeared before the UN Trusteeship Committee in 1952 to explain their cause of independence, capturing international attention and increasing their prestige among Cameroonian leaders. Soon after, in 1955, the French outlawed and banished the UPC from Cameroun. Riots occurred, some of the UPC leaders retreated into hiding in the British Cameroons, and the organization took up guerrilla warfare.

Violence escalated throughout the 1950s. The UPC derailed trains, overturned cars, cut telegraph lines, and burned polling places, as well as kidnapping and killing village chiefs and planters. Members of the UPC who were unlucky enough to be caught, or turned in by their neighbors, were shot by the government. Between 1946 and 1957 around two thousand people were killed in the Sanaga-Maritime area from UPC-related violence.18

12 LeVine, *The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence*, 146. For a discussion of UPC’s connection to RDA also see Joseph, 323.
14 Johnson (144-145) stated that a colonial official said the UPC was unable to gain election because the French had rigged the elections; Richard Bjornson, *The African Quest for Freedom and Identity: Cameroonian Writing and the National Experience* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991), 49, described their inability to win these elections as stemming from “fraudulent election procedures.”
15 LeVine, *The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence*, 152. A discussion of Ruben Um Nyobës appearance before the U.N. Trusteeship Committee can also be found in Bjornson, 48.
16 LeVine, *The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence*, 153; Bjornson, 49; Rubin, 68.
The UPC was born out of the frustration of the elites, especially of the Duala ethnic group, that their contribution in the Second World War had done little to raise their social status. The leaders of the UPC, for the most part products of Presbyterian mission schools, were described as either coldhearted Marxist terrorists or national heroes depending on the source. The most famous leader of the group was Ruben Um Nyobé, a union organizer and a former civil servant.

The UPC was a decidedly anti-colonialist group. They built their very foundation of support upon the desperate need to push the French administration out of the country. Um Nyobé wrote, « l’Impérialisme doit comprendre que les forces de démocratie sont trop importantes pour céder aux emprisonnements et aux brimades de toutes sortes. » Um Nyobé did not view the French administration kindly, stating that it worked « pour la protection des monopoles et pour assurer l’exploitation des richesses. » According to him, French colonial power was installed for economic purposes, aided by the military and the creation of an elite class.

According to Um Nyobé, one of the evils of the French colonial administration had been to transform Cameroonian culture. Um Nyobé believed that culture would have to be dealt with very carefully upon reunification with the British Cameroons. He stated,

On a seulement essayé de la falsifier en instaurant la pseudo-culture française d’une part et anglaise d’autre part. Mais cette entreprise se

19 Joseph, 327.
21 Bjornson, 48.
trouve elle-même mis en échec par le fait colonial qui s’oppose au développement culturel des peuples colonisé. La vraie culture étant basée sur les mœurs, il n’y aurait aucun défenseur des intérêts colonialistes pour renier aux Camerounais le droit d’avoir une communauté des mœurs. »

He argued that the people must turn back to their original customs and reclaim them, hoping that the false cultures of the French and British would not stand as obstacles of reunification.

In 1951, Um Nyobé explained that the UPC stood for the continued development of secondary schools and the creation of superior education. The organization condemned the hiring of monitors who had no professional training, and promoted the « incorporation des principales langues locales dans le programme d’enseignement officiel… » A year later, however, Um Nyobé acknowledged the usefulness of the European languages, stating, « L’emploi du français et de l’anglais concilie même nos relations internationales. » Despite his criticism of the colonial administration, Um Nyobé asserted that the UPC was not an anti-French organization. He explained that they were fighting against “une politique” characterized by its violation of the United Nations and the French Constitution. He explained, « Le peuple de France a toujours été et reste toujours le symbole du progrès et de la démocratie. »

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Um Nyobé was arrested and executed in 1958. Dr. Felix Moumié, a slightly more radical leader in the group, became the president of the exiled UPC after Um Nyobé’s death. Moumié publicly proclaimed his identification with Marxist ideals, (despite the fact that Um Nyobé denied any ties with the Communist party). On Easter day in 1955, Catholic churches throughout Cameroun told their congregations to beware of Marxism, “the gravest danger that menaces our civilization,” and the organization in its grip, the UPC with its “hostile and malevolent attitude.” Moumié responded to this announcement by stating, “God is with those who fight against colonialism and seek their country’s independence.”

As the war raged against the UPC, the French government methodically continued to prepare the country for independence, on their own terms. They appointed the moderate Muslim leader from the North, Ahmadou Ahidjo, as Prime Minister in 1958. In 1959, a year before official independence, Moumié reported from exile in Conakry on the injustice perpetrated by the Ahidjo government. He explained the torture and abuse occurring as a result of the creation of Special Criminal Courts used to punish UPC members. On July 5, 1959, five political prisoners were publically executed in the town of Bafoussam. Moumié claimed French Cameroon to be ‘the only country in the world, Algeria excepted, where the law provides that “capital punishment will be carried out in public, on the scene of the

28 Bjornson, 50.
30 Cited in LeVine, 155.
31 Quoted in LeVine, 155.
32 LeVine, The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence, 166.
He also described the atrocious wounds inflicted by police on thirty-four Cameroonian citizens in August 1959. He explained that seven of the nine policemen who tortured these citizens were not condemned despite the fact that they confessed. Moumié insisted that the Ahidjo government was “totally rejected by the people,” and called it a “fascist regime that the French Government is forcing upon their country.”

In the eyes of Moumié, Cameroun was intricately connected to the events occurring in Algeria; he believed both countries to be victims of colonialism, caught up in the desperate quest of the French to retain their power. He called the use of torture and capital punishment in the Cameroon a “gangrene” that was spreading throughout Africa and France. He wrote, “When the Community becomes a torture chamber for the people, the Africans must refuse to act as assistant executioners. Repression in the Cameroons must not take place with the help of African troops, as happened in Algeria.”

Despite his violent accusations of the French government, Moumié, like Um Nyobé, did not find fault with the French people. Echoing his former leader’s statement, Moumié declared, “We are not anti-French, we do not intend to expel them from the Cameroons, all we demand is that the French people hold back the arm of the murders in our country.” The UPC was an organization led by a group of highly educated elites, many of whom had studied in Europe. For example, one member of

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34 Moumié, 13.
35 Moumié, 15.
36 Moumié, 2.
37 Moumié, 18.
38 Moumié, 16.
39 Moomie, 17.
40 Moumié, 17.
the group, Ngouo Woungly-Massaga, traveled to France at the age of fourteen as the recipient of a scholarship, and later received his doctorate in math at the Sorbonne in 1960. The leaders of the organization straightforwardly despised the colonial government, but could not seem to bring themselves to insult the citizens of France, among side of whom many of them had studied.

The UPC was doomed to failure. Although UPC activity continued after Independence, fueled by anger over the close ties that the new president of the Republic, Ahmadou Ahidjo, held with France, they would never gain political power. The residents of British Cameroons witnessed much of the terrorist activity carried out by the UPC in their territory, increasing animosity towards the Francophone population. A *West Africa* article written in 1961 reported, “the arrival of the terrorists is awaited with a superstitious dread which makes it difficult to assess where the core of truth lies.”

Ruben Um Nyobé believed the UPC to be the “soul of Cameroonian people.” If the UPC had succeeded in their revolutionary efforts, the state of culture and national integration in present-day Cameroon might have been very different. However, the inability of the UPC to insult the French might suggest that they too would have been unable to bring about a complete rejection of the European cultures. The mythical figure of Um Nyobé and the failed state of the UPC have remained in

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43 Bjornson, 48.
the national consciousness since Independence, reminding the public how necessary it was to possess the colonizer’s favor in order to gain success. 44

To “Out-do colonialism”: President Ahmadou Ahidjo

Ahmadou Ahidjo, the first president of the republic, was handpicked by the French administration. He was the only candidate in the presidential election that took place in 1960. 45 In the eyes of the UPC and its followers, the election of Ahidjo simply exhibited the continued presence of the French colonial administration. In his Proclamation of Independence in 1960, Ahidjo chastised the UPC as “those who were separated from us and who attempted to achieve, alone, these aims which are the right of an entire nation,” and stated that they “have only hindered the progress of their fellow men.” 46 President Ahmadou Ahidjo referred to members of the UPC as “professional criminals and outcasts who, after participating in struggles of the maquis, no longer can or no longer wish to readapt themselves to life in a normal society.” 47

Ahidjo then proclaimed his respect for the U.N. and France. In this same speech, Ahidjo referred to the United Nations and “France, whose friendship comforts us every day” as “the natural guides for our first steps.” Ahidjo continued,

We know that we will need their help, we are sure that it will be disinterested and that its only aim will be the consolidation of our independence and our liberties. We wish as this solemn moment to give them the assurance of our gratitude and do them the friendly

44 Bjornson, 51.
45 Rubin, 102.
homage of a people which is aware of what it owes them. Yesterday we were their charges, today we are their partners. The bonds of friendship which unite us now will be even stronger in the future than they were in the past.  

Ahidjo’s reference to Cameroonian as a people “aware of what it owes them [France]” reveals a power dynamic that was not dismantled with the proclamation of Independence. The Ahidjo government would remain intricately linked with France throughout the coming years, allowing French culture and language to be “institutionalized” throughout the nation.  

Ahidjo declared that the new nation must be created from “the best of the two cultures [French and British] with a view to reviving the African original cultures and way of life.” Ahidjo claimed to reject European influence on the education system, proclaiming, “…we must shun all servile importing and transplanting of foreign systems.” He spoke of “decolonizing” and increasing the effectiveness of the education system by introducing “compulsory manual work.” In 1962, Ahidjo told the Congress at Ebolowa: “the organisation, methods and curricula of the education system are still, perforce, to a large extent redolent of the concepts characteristic of our former trustees.” He explained that they “correspond neither to African reality, nor to our political independence.”

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49 Bjornson, 127.
52 Ahidjo, “5th Congress of Union Camerounaise Bafoussam, 1st-4th December 1965”, in As Told by Ahmadou Ahidjo, 73.
53 Ahidjo, “Address to the Congress of Ebolowa, 4-8th July 1962”, in As Told by Ahmadou Ahidjo, 72.
Ahidjo called for the study of the “cultural and social features common to African countries” and an “adaption of education to African realities.” He hoped “to promote an “assertion of the African personality” and a “rediscovery of the African cultural patrimony,” all in order to “reinforce African unity and to facilitate mutual knowledge.” However, despite this multitude of proclamations, Ahidjo explained the need to equalize the two European styles of education. He stated that “to harmonise the two systems in this uniform manner, it would be necessary for us to move towards the English system,” explaining the need to embrace education that “not only equips the child with the basic tools (reading, writing and arithmetic) but also integrates him in his social environment.”

Ahidjo viewed education as a tool with which to promote unity and to fight against tribalism. Ahidjo’s belief that the child needed the British system of education to help him integrate “into his social environment” demonstrated his ultimate acceptance that the “social environment” within the country consisted of the two European cultures.

Ahidjo’s decisions contained deference to the wisdom that he felt lay in the French and British styles of education. When addressing the nation in 1964 he stated,

> Our goal however is clear: it consists firstly, both in and out of school, of gradually creating a civilisation which, whilst being based on our African heritage, will also draw its inspiration from what is best and most valuable in the cultures imposed on us.

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54 Ahidjo, “Address to the Congress of Ebolowa, 4-8th July 1962”, in *As Told by Ahmadou Ahidjo*, 72.
56 Ahidjo, “Ebolowa Congress 4-8th July 1962”, in *As Told by Ahmadou Ahidjo*, 73.
He explained that the languages and cultures of the English and French must not be looked at “as the property of such and such a race but as an acquirement of the universal civilization to which we belong.” In true politician manner, Ahidjo dared not alienate either the anti-colonists or the French and British-sympathizers. He described this process as “ensuring a just balance between knowledge of the cultural values of the national patrimony and knowledge of the universal values, and between knowledge of the past and knowledge of the contemporary world.”

Losing some of his political caution when speaking to the Ebolowo Congress in 1962 (which is where he also explained most of his hopes for African-focused education), Ahidjo spoke candidly about the role of the elite. He felt that they had gone a step too far in the direction of European culture, explaining,

It is not an exaggeration to affirm that, in the eyes of the ordinary people, this elite has taken over not only the white man’s functions and his material prerogatives such as houses and cars; they have taken over, above all, the white man’s habits and manners which were cried down but only yesterday but which, in the new enslavement of fellow citizens, out-do colonialism.

Ahidjo expressed distaste for the duplicate nature of the elite taking on the ways that they had proclaimed to reject. During this speech, however, he seemed to be conveniently unable to recognize the similarity between the actions of the elite and

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61 Ahidjo, “Policy Speech to the 4th Congress of the Union Camerounaise Ebolowa, 4th-8th July 1962”, in As Told by Ahmadou Ahidjo, 88.
his own double call for both the “assertion of an African personality” and “gratitude” towards France.\textsuperscript{62}

II. Anglophone Leaders

\textit{Agitation for Independence in the British Cameroons}

Political activity on the British side began in 1939 when a group of students at the Higher College in Yaba, Nigeria (outside of Lagos) started the Cameroon Youth League. The organization advocated for national unity within the Cameroons and educational advancement.\textsuperscript{63} It was modeled on aspects of the Nigerian Youth movement, gaining momentum as more Cameroonian became influence by the political activity occurring in Nigeria.\textsuperscript{64} When the British Cameroons became a trust territory under the newly created United Nations the British remained hopeful that it would still eventually become permanently integrated with Nigeria. The young elites of the British Cameroons, however, became less interested in this future as they became more concerned with retaining their individual identity.\textsuperscript{65}

In 1949, a conference was held in the town of Kumba to discuss the possibility of reunification with French Cameroun. Seventeen political groups from the British Cameroons attended, along with one group from French Cameroun. The conference discussed the possibility of reunification and the teaching of both the French and the English languages in schools on either side of the border. An


\textsuperscript{63} Kale, 50; Rubin, 83.


organization called the Cameroons National Federation was formed and the “shocking neglect” of the territory was proclaimed.\textsuperscript{66}

An article published in \textit{West Africa} in 1961 summarized the political issues at stake in the Southern Cameroons as: “(1) antipathy towards certain Nigerian peoples, especially to the Ibo, (2) An attachment to ‘British’ ways, (3) A feeling of community with certain Cameroun peoples, (4) Antipathy towards ‘French’ ways, (5) A fear of terrorists from the Republic.”\textsuperscript{67} Independence politics in the southern region of the British Cameroons were formed upon two waves of “the Southern Cameroons intelligentsia.” The old wave wished to join Nigeria and the young wave stood in favor of reunification with French Cameroun.\textsuperscript{68} Two men stepped forward to lead these opposing political movements.

\textit{“A promising son”: Dr. Endeley Advocates to Join Nigeria}

Dr. E. M. L. Endeley, head of the Kamerun National Congress (KNC), advocated for the British Cameroons to join Nigeria upon independence. He had originally wavered over the issue of reunification with French Cameroun, but in the end had determined that Nigeria stood as the better choice.\textsuperscript{69} Endeley, who had attended school in Nigeria where he joined the Cameroons Youth League, was characterized as promoting an attachment to the British ways and antipathy towards the French ways.\textsuperscript{70} He hoped that this attachment to the British ways would neutralize an antipathy towards the Nigerian people, and that an attachment to the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{66} LeVine, \textit{The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence}, 203.
\item \textsuperscript{67} Ardener, 878. The terrorists in question are the UPC.
\item \textsuperscript{68} Ardener, 878.
\item \textsuperscript{69} LeVine, \textit{The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence}, 207.
\item \textsuperscript{70} Rubin, 83.
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British ways along with a fear of terrorists from the Republic would neutralize a feeling of community with certain Cameroun peoples. 71 In 1958, Dr. E. M. L. Endeley was elected as the first premier of the British Cameroons.72

The first words spoken by Endeley at a state banquet in 1958 were used to thank Sir Ralph, the Acting High Commissioner of British Cameroons, for his “fatherly message of congratulations” and to assure him of his “determination to do everything to live up to his expectations.”73 Endeley stated “our gratitude” for the commercial and agricultural projects underway in cooperation with the government, explaining, “history will not fail to record their endeavors in a territory without good roads or adequate communications.”74 It may have pained Premier Endeley to compliment the British in such a way, but, the question of whether these were words of empty political flattery or backed by true respect matters little when imagining the effect of this speech on the Cameroonian public. These words, published and distributed throughout the country, were an endorsement of the moral fiber of the British officers from the mouth of the premier.

Endeley explained his wish to “preserve the cultural traditions of our people…now on the verge of extinction,” as well as to “pursue a vigorous policy of Cameroonisation” in the civil service by increasing educational scholarships.75 This nationalistic message was qualified, however, by his description of independence as possessing the “attitude a father should adopt when a promising son feels sufficiently grown up to look after his own affairs.” Endeley promoted the identity of Great

71 Ardener, 878.
74 Endeley, 5.
75 Endeley, 6-7.
Britain as a caring mentor and explained the British would continue to play a role in future education.  

Scholarships given under Endeley’s premiership would be for secondary schools and universities “both here and abroad,” meaning that the future Cameroonian civil students would attend university in Europe before taking up their post. In addition, Endeley praised the work of the missions for their provision of education and health care. He expressed his hope that “with the coming of self-government and independence, the Missions will continue to give us of their valuable service.” The Anglophone Cameroonian’s perception of Great Britain would be deeply influenced by the continued presence of British missionaries at work in schools and hospitals after Independence.

Endeley was not given a chance to implement his views on the future of Cameroonian culture. Hostility towards Nigeria increased. The Anglophone writer Buma Kor explained, “we were dominated by Nigerians as Yorubas and Igbos held senior posts in the colonial administration, while the Igbos monopolized the business sector.” Endeley failed to win reelection in 1959, ceding power to the opposing political party advocating for reunification with French Cameroun.

“To gloss over the mistakes”: Reunification with French Cameroun

John Ngu Foncha led the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) which called for reunification with French Cameroun. Foncha, who like Endeley had joined

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76 Endeley, 6.
77 Endeley, 6.
78 Endeley, 8.
the Cameroons Youth League while he was a student in Nigeria, was characterized as promoting an antipathy towards the Nigerian people, an attachment to British ways, and a feeling of community with certain Cameroun peoples in order to promote his political agenda.  

He hoped that the threat of the terrorists from the Republic would fade.  

When the KNDP party won the elections in the House of Assembly in 1959, Foncha became the next premier of the British Cameroons.  

Some residents of the British Cameroons did not support joining either Nigeria under Endeley or unifying with Cameroun under Foncha. This is a position that is especially popular to reference in the current Anglophone struggle. In 1959, Fon Achiribi II of Bafut, stated (in reference to a conference in Bamenda where he served as the chairman),“We rejected Dr. Endeley because he wanted to take us to Nigeria. If Mr. Foncha tries to take us to the French Cameroons, we shall run away from him. To me the French Cameroons is “fire” and Nigeria is “water.” Sir, I support secession with (Re)unification.”  

This view, however, went unheard by the U.N. In 1961 the U.N. administered a plebiscite vote at which the British Cameroons was given two options for independence from Britain: to join Nigeria or the Cameroun Republic. The U.N. refused to allow the British Cameroons to attain its independence as a separate

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80 Rubin, 83.  
81 Ardener, 878.  
82 LeVine, The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence, 207; Rubin, 103.  
83 Fon Achiribi II of Bafut, “during a plebiscite conference which took place in Mamfe on the 10th to 11th August, 1959,” in Promises and Prophesies: The Illusive Dream of the Anglophones in Cameroon, (1993-1995?), 3. This pamphlet (without a known publisher or exact date) refers to this quote as “The Prophetic Voice of One of Our Fathers.”  
84 Both of these countries had gained their independence one year earlier in 1960.
country.\textsuperscript{85} Worried that it would contribute to the “balkanization” of Africa, they stated that it did not have a strong enough economy to support itself.\textsuperscript{86} The Southern British Cameroons voted to join the Cameroun Republic and the Northern British Cameroons voted to join Nigeria.\textsuperscript{87} Foncha and Ahidjo set about integrating the Southern Cameroons’ political, economic, and cultural aspects into the Cameroun Republic, creating the Federal Republic of Cameroon.

In July 1961, Foncha explained his hope that an “indigenous” culture would replace the two European cultures presently existing within Cameroon.\textsuperscript{88} Two years later, Foncha discreetly criticized the French and the British as he addressed the KNDP party, stating, “I should warn that Cameroonians should not behave like their old colonial masters, but to consider themselves sons and daughters of the soil and treat fellow Cameroonians with due respect. I should urge them to be civil and obliging to both great and small, and to mete justice to everybody without fear or favour.”\textsuperscript{89} However, despite this backhanded implication of the injustice of the colonial powers, he seemed to maintain a positive attitude in regard to the colonial powers for the most part. He stated, “Ours has been the best use of the situation in which we were placed by circumstances not of our own creation.”\textsuperscript{90}

\textsuperscript{85} LeVine, \textit{The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence}, 212.
\textsuperscript{86} Piet Konings and Francis B. Nyamnjoh, \textit{Negotiating an Anglocphone Identity} (Leiden, the Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2003), 10.
\textsuperscript{87} LeVine, \textit{The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence}, 212.
\textsuperscript{90} Foncha, \textit{Presidential Address to the K.N.D.P. Ninth Annual Convention}, 6.
In this 1963 speech, Foncha thanked “these Governments for their kind assistance in the development of Cameroon.”91 He spoke of the “friendly and cultural ties” between West Cameroon and the British Government, including the presence of 105 West Cameroonians in United Kingdom Universities. He also referred to the Commonwealth Preferential Tariff which was granted to produce from West Cameroon for over two years, giving “breathing space to look for new markets in other countries, and concluding that, “recent negotiations are encouraging for the future economic relations between the Federation of Cameroon and Great Britain.”92

Foncha, interestingly enough, extended the same complimentary hand to the French. He explained, “the French Government was quick to lend us [West Cameroon] a helping hand” by contributing “heavy road equipment,” establishing “cultural links” and a Bilingual Secondary School, “a number of French teachers,” and by allowing West Cameroonians to study at French Universities.93 Foncha, who had risen to power through his plan for reunification, was working to ensure that both the French and the British were appropriately praised and included in the newly independent Cameroonian national consciousness.

In 1964, Foncha urged his political supporters to “thank and congratulate once more all foreigners” who were present in the country. He explained that these individuals, possessed with “a sense of responsibility,” were “anxious to leave behind examples of their work to be emulated,” and that they should be welcomed.94 One year later, as Foncha prepared to depart West Cameroon to serve as Vice-President of

the federal republic in Yaoundé, he told his supporters to think of the colonial era as different from the slave era, explaining, “although the colonial period had its own faults it cannot be considered as the time of evil.”95 He went on to state that they must “gloss over the mistakes of our Colonial masters and our past misfortunes and be content with what good came out from them.”96

The future role of Great Britain in the affairs of the state was debated throughout West Cameroon. A newspaper article from August 1961 explained that the Southern Cameroons were in “the ironical position of being the first ‘liberated’ British territory in which there is likely to be no continuity of expatriate staff, despite the insistent desire of the local government to keep them.”97 On the other hand, Mr. Hugh Fraser, Minister in the House of Commons stated in the same newspaper issue, “They are facing their future with a commendable spirit of optimism and we should wish them well and offer what assistance and help we can, while preserving our rights to safeguard the interests of our own nationals.”98 The historian Victor T. LeVine referred to Britain as a “political midwife” who had promised “to continue reasonable economic and financial assistance to the Southern Cameroons after unification, and has had Mr. Foncha to London for doses of reassurance.”99

The seeds of cultural alienation existing between the two sides of Cameroon can be readily detected in the events surrounding Independence. Ahidjo did not feel the same degree of friendship with Great Britain as he did with France. He expressed

96 Foncha, *Message to the Prime Minister and the People of West Cameroon*, 2.
97 Ardener, 879.
remorse that the Northern Cameroon decided to join Nigeria. He seemed to find fault for the loss of the Northern Cameroons in the voting conditions under the plebiscite, as well as discontent with the British treatment of the Cameroons under trusteeship. The Anglophone Cameroonian writer Godfrey B. Tanga described the violence, perpetrated by Francophone gendarmes entering West Cameroon directly following Independence. He wrote, “The people of my village had never imagined such completely unprovoked, wanton wickedness to be possible…these early experiences gave me a distaste for everything French and Francophone.”

“The culture of the few”: The Prediction of Dr. Bernard Fonlon

At the time of Independence Dr. Bernard Fonlon was the most highly educated West Cameroonian. He attended seminary in Eastern Nigeria before going on to receive a Ph.D. from the University of Ireland, attend the Sorbonne for two years, and receive a Masters in Education at Oxford. He studied the culture, language, and education systems of East and West Cameroon in the hopes of understanding how to successfully integrate the two national identities into one country. Fonlon believed that “culture, considered as the cultivation of man, is synonymous with education.” He created the cultural magazine Abbía, which discussed the process of rebuilding the new nation and its cultural identity. Fonlon

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100 Ahidjo, “Address to the Nation July 1961”, in As Told by Ahmadou Ahidjo, 36
101 Ahidjo, “Address to the Nation the 4th December 1963,” in As Told by Ahmadou Ahidjo, 36.
103 Johnson, 291.
described the purpose of the publication as, “Not merely to recount what has been, but to share in moulding what should be.”

Fonlon described the three competing cultures in Cameroon at the time of Independence as “the African mainstream—the culture of the land, the culture of the masses; and the French and British tributaries—the cultures of the Westernized few.” He spoke of the global importance for Cameroon to follow in Ghana’s footsteps and show the West her capability to live in freedom and reach a state of unity. He explained,

When President Ahidjo says that this country is a pilot state, he is not bragging, nor is he using a phrase void of meaning. It is precisely the historic opportunity to effect an integration of these three cultures that has invested Cameroon with the singular, enviable mission to pilot the rest of Africa into continental unity. It would be a curious lack of sense of history to be indifferent to an enterprise of these dimensions.

If Cameroon could succeed in bringing together both the French and British legacy, not to mention that of the German, into one functional African state, then there should have been no reason why the rest of Africa could not join hands and work together towards a strong and independent future. Fonlon declared, “we have no choice but to succeed; to fail would be to let down a whole continent, to let down a whole race.”

“As this is an African nation, its principal builders should be African,” Fonlon proclaimed at a political conference in 1964. He referred to “the era of colonial

107 Fonlon, “Will We Make or Mar?” 14.
108 Fonlon, “Will We Make or Mar?” 15.
exploitation” as “a second rape of Africa.” He believed that colonialism had “provoked the Negro’s negrophobia, the blackman’s hatred of himself,” and contributed to “the enslavement of the mind.” He explained, “victory for the whiteman’s way of life seems all the more assured as the African himself, through a sense of shame born of a purposely inculcated inferiority complex, has taken an active part in spurning and demolishing the legacy of his fathers.” Fonlon, fearful that future leaders would “spurn them [African values] under-foot as only fit for the scrap-heap,” wrote,

> the élite, especially, has become so imbued with these outside cultures that this emotional detachment is not to be taken for granted. …In other words, if we become pseudo-Englishmen or pseudo-Frenchmen, we will surely get enmeshed in pointless, cultural wrangling; and goodbye to all hopes for a healthy harmonization of cultures in Cameroon.

Fonlon believed that the Europeans, afraid of the power of African Unity, sought to “inculcate the idea that Africans cast, respectively, in the French and in the English moulds were so radically different that all their efforts to come together were, a priori, doomed to failure.”

Fonlon, however, did not believe that the legacies of the French and British cultures should be simply swept aside in an anticolonial fever. Fonlon was one of the strongest voices advocating for a bilingual state, arguing that the French and English

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111 Fonlon, “Will We Make or Mar?” 32.
112 Fonlon, “Will We Make or Mar?” 32.
113 Fonlon, “Will We Make or Mar?” 32.
114 Fonlon, “Will We Make or Mar?” 32.
115 Fonlon, “Will We Make or Mar?” 31.
116 Fonlon, “Will We Make or Mar?” 15.
languages must remain central to the education system.\textsuperscript{117} Fonlon referred to language as “the very warp and woof of our mental life.”\textsuperscript{118} Although Fonlon believed that indigenous languages should also remain a part of the society, his insistence on the continued use of French and English in the classrooms illustrated his acceptance that these European cultures would continue to play a significant part in the future.\textsuperscript{119}

Fonlon recognized the destructive nature of European culture, yet he also believed that these cultures, in addition to the languages, were also a part of the very “warp and woof” of Cameroonian life. He wrote, “though the culture of the few, European culture is the culture of government, the culture of science and technology, the culture of commerce and industry, the culture of schools and the churches, in a word the culture of those persons and institutions in whose grasp Cultural Initiative is solidly entrenched.” He believed European culture to be “a force charged with dynamism and resilience, an imperative for our political, economic, social and cultural advancement.”\textsuperscript{120}

He warned his fellow citizens that becoming “pseudo-Frenchmen or pseudo-Englishmen” would tear apart the young country in the same breath that he described the French and English languages as the “warp and woof” of the Cameroonian’s mind.” Unlike the other Independence leaders, Fonlon was not a politician trying to appease two sides of a political spectrum. He was a scholar describing the game of tug and war playing out between the rejection and the acceptance of the colonial legacy; asserting that Cameroon must find a balance between the two forces.

\textsuperscript{117} Fonlon’s view on bilingualism is documented in “Pour un bilinguisme de bonne heure,” Abbia: Revue Culturelle Camerounaise no. 7 (1964).
\textsuperscript{118} Quoted in Johnson, 295.
\textsuperscript{119} Johnson, 295.
\textsuperscript{120} Fonlon, “Will We Make or Mar?” 10.
Conclusion

President Ahidjo, Premier Foncha, and Dr. Endeley all met at “the historic Sultanate of Foumban,” in the Cameroun Republic in 1961 to discuss and agree on the “exclusion of the right of secession from the Federation,” as well as the “Creation of a common nationality for persons originating in either of the two Federated States.”\(^{121}\) This common nationality that they spoke of carried within its identity aspects of the French and the British culture. These three political figures had all proclaimed their relief for the continued friendship and guidance of the former colonial powers in one speech or another during the time surrounding Independence. They expressed their hope for future political advice, the continued presence of the European-styled education systems, and the benefits of the French and British languages. Despite their various hopes for the emergence of an African unity and identity, they were all incapable of reimagining the nation to exclude the presence of the colonizers. Even, the UPC, the one political party that truly rejected the continued influence of the colonial governments, had felt the need to explain that they were not critical of the French people.

Conclusion

“Humanity expects from us something other than this sort of imitation which turns us to ridicule. If all we intend to do is to transform Africa into a new Europe, why, then let us hand over the destinies of our countries to Europeans... But if we want to make humanity advance, even so much by a notch, if we intend to raise it to a height other than that to which Europe is pointing, then we should invent it [a new identity], then we should find it.” - Frantz Fanon

Cameroon became a bilingual country, speaking both French and English, at reunification. The goal of bilingualism was to bring about peaceful cooperation between all ethnic groups of both colonial legacies, as well as allowing for easy and productive interaction with the Western world. The majority of schools remained under missionary control in the West after reunification, while the government began playing a greater role in the education system in the East. West Cameroonians clung to their British-styled education system when both parts of the country were required to transition to a bilingual curriculum in 1963. The Anglophone school system only required French to be taught up until the GCE Ordinary Level (excluding the last two years of secondary school), while in the Francophone system English was a compulsory subject up through the end of secondary education.

The cultural imbalance began at the very beginning. French cultural centers were opened in Yaoundé and Douala, with the one in Yaoundé housing the largest

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library in the new country. In 1962 the University of Yaoundé was opened, and two years later it too began to operate under the bilingual system. The university was located in the French-speaking capital in East Cameroon, however, and Anglophone students expressed discontent at the lack of classes taught in English and the discriminatory treatment they received. In response to the uproar that ensued over the domination of French language at the university, Dr. Fonlon explained, “We should keep a sharp eye against this type of thing [favoring French over English] in every Federal institution in the Republic, lest, instead of bringing off successfully this lofty experiment for cultural integration in Cameroon, we end up turning the country into a cultural battleground.”

The identification that the Anglophones and the Francophones each felt for their colonial language negatively impacted the government’s ability to effectively institute a bilingual state. Fonlon explained the strength of this linguistic identity, asking the nation in 1964, “Car âpres tout, que représente une personne, si ce n’est une entité douée de la faculté de penser, de sentir, de vouloir et d’agir ? » As the minorities in the state, the Anglophones believe the English language defines who they are, uniting all ethnic groups in their fight to resist domination by the Francophones.

The linguist Hans-Georg Wolf explained, ‘The sense of unity is so

6 Bjornson, 127-128.
7 Johnson, 304-305.
8 Quoted in Johnson, 304.
strong that “being Anglophone” denotes a new ethnicity, transcending new ethnicities.’

The question of a trilingual policy, involving the individual’s maternal language, was debated in Cameroon following Independence. In the north of Cameroon, Fulfulde took the place of French as the everyday language, bridging ethnic gaps and allowing the community to join together. A contributor to the cultural magazine of *Abbia*, Francis Mbassi Manga, referred to the vernacular language as “a missing link between a child’s home and himself,” and wrote with horror of the fact that some parents “consider it beneath their dignity for their children to speak their native dialect!” Cameroon’s 225 indigenous languages, however, have remained excluded from education, the government, and the media. The majority of discussion regarding the use of vernacular languages in post-Independence French Africa has been debated through the medium of the French language and the Cameroonian authors Ferdinand-Léopold Oyono and Mongo Beti used French literary techniques to write their anticolonialist novels.

The anti-colonialist fervor that swept Africa in the 1960s did not skip over Cameroon. In 1964 *Abbia* published a poem about resurrecting Cameroonian culture in a high school in the northern town of Garoua. The poem explained how the students had experienced «une révélation indispensable d’un patrimoine culturel

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13 Chumbow, 302.
16 Johnson, 81; Bjornson, 62.
rejeté et méprisé par le système colonial. »¹⁷ However, as both the Anglophone and Francophone independence leaders demonstrated, the country could not seem to effectively extricate itself from the cultural ways of France and Great Britain.

A 1962 survey of African education systems explained that there was an attempt to place an ‘African and “national” orientation’ on the history, geography, and civics courses taught in primary school, yet it also noted, that the Ministry of Education “has recognized the need for retaining expatriate teachers in order to retain the standard of instruction.”¹⁸ In a similar pattern, a textbook on the colonial and postcolonial period currently used today in Cameroon fails to discuss any negative aspects of the European missionaries in Cameroon. Although this textbook mentioned abuses that occurred under the colonialist system, it states, “The missionaries invariably took the side of the local inhabitants and defended their interests fully.”¹⁹

Students have continued to have a practical need of French and British geography, culture, and history as their education systems have remained centered around French and British controlled exams.²⁰ The attachment to these French and British styled education systems mirrors that to the French and English languages. In 1983, President Biya adapted the General Certificate of Education (GCE) exam in order to make it more like the baccalaureate. Protests broke out at the University of

Yaoundé and in Anglophone cities.\(^{21}\) Anglophone residents worked for the next ten years to reclaim the original test and, in 1993, the residents of West Cameroon succeeded in creating a GCE board in the government.\(^{22}\) Today, the education systems of East and West Cameroon continue in the French and British models.

The Anglophone population’s identification with its British heritage has intensified as a reaction against its decreasing political and economic rights. It could be argued that today’s political unrest is due more to the minority status of the Anglophones within the state, than to the continued influence of the colonial years. The minority status of the Anglophones would not exist, though, if the colonial powers had not originally created the defining borders between East and West Cameroon. The “Anglophone Problem” and the SCNC’s movements must not be oversimplified. Years of complicated history and economic transactions lie behind the unrest. The presence of oil on the Anglophone side cannot be ignored, nor can the intricate relationships that exist between the many different ethnic groups on both sides of the Muongo River. However, these other factors do not diminish the degree of cultural and linguistic marginalization felt by the Anglophone population.

The French and the British undertook drastically different colonial strategies. The French followed the policies of assimilation and association, while the British operated under indirect rule. The French administration tried its hardest to erase the use of vernacular languages from classrooms and mandated that schools must follow the same curriculum as students in Paris, while the British advocated for teachers to


\(^{22}\) Konings and Nyamnjoh, 217.
use the vernacular during the beginning years of instruction and attempted to adapt the curriculum to focus on “African realities.” These contrasting policies were accentuated by two very different societal structures in the two territories. The large presence of an active colon population on the French side contrasted sharply with the scattering of European residents living on the British side who remained, for the most part, aloof from society.

The historian Willard R. Johnson observed, “Cameroon has been remarkably successful in consolidating the state.” Writing in 1970, twenty years before the SCNC emerged, Johnson saw the colonial years in a different light. He believed that because the French had been more concerned with the spread of culture and the incorporation of the colonies into the empire, while the British, had focused on trade, “They [the British] inspired envy for the privileges of Englishmen, but did not engender a large-scale commitment to English culture per se.” Today the political discourse of the SCNC actively disproves Johnson’s theory. The contrasting colonial policies have not resulted in understandable results, and it becomes essential to look beyond these two specific sets of education and language policies, and focus more closely on how these policies were administered.

It is the greater framework of colonial philosophy that has influenced the formation of these two cultural identities and led to the SCNC’s call for secession. It

23 Johnson, 374.
24 Johnson, 78.
25 History will always reflect the present times more than it will the past. I have worked hard to record the details of this history as accurately as I possibly can, but it is important to acknowledge my inability to remove my thought process from the social environment of the present. I began researching the colonial education and language policies of Cameroon with the goal of understanding how they affected the clashing national identities of today. I am unable to stop my ideas from reflecting the current context in which I am working, in similarity to the education systems which I am studying.
does not matter whether the colonial administration advocated for or banned the use of vernaculars if every student knew that the British colonial officers, the individuals who held the power, spoke English. No amount of adapted curriculum to the realities of Cameroon could hide the fact that the British were the ones running the government, and the ones who believed that the Cameroonians were not capable of doing it themselves.

School children on both sides of the territory listened to the colonial powers declaring the need to rid the country of the evils of slavery and cannibalism, and to expand the education and health systems. The U.N. charter stated the need to bring about the “advancement of the inhabitants…” Education and culture did not arrive with the colonizers. As the French and British education systems expanded, Cameroonian students watched as the oral tradition, religion, and philosophy belonging to their own ethnic groups faded. They observed the social dynamics of their teachers and came to realize it did not matter whether there were a large number of Cameroonian teachers in the school system if they were always given less respect than a European teacher. They saw their parents transformed into economic tools and forced to produce exports and build roads. It is the inferior status that the larger institution of colonialism placed upon the Cameroonians, this notion of the cultural bomb that Thiong’o spoke of, which caused such an identification process to occur. One step beyond this world of inferiority lay the educated elite. If a student learned French or English, and adopted the mannerisms with which to fit into European

society, they could attain a white-collar job and therefore avoid the looming years of backbreaking work and forced labor. The ability to escape the constant reminder of inferiority would prove a powerful incentive to leave behind old habits.

It was the actions of the educated Cameroonian elites, not the colonial administrations, that kept the European-styled education systems and languages in place at Independence. While this thesis has examined the role of the European colonial policies on the national identities of Cameroon, it is essential to keep in mind the importance of Cameroonian agency. In 1963, the academic Godfrey Brown, reporting on education in West Africa, stated, “The verdict of history may well be that the more significant principles of British educational policy in tropical Africa owed more to the volition of the African than to the persuasion of the policy maker.” The principles of education policy in Cameroon, however, were owed to the volition of only a very few Africans, who had been educated as part of two very specific colonial strategies.

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