

ETHNIC SURVIVALS AND THE MODERN SHIFT:

*Literary imagology and ethno-psychology:
Cameroon as reflected by its writers*

PROBLEMS AND METHODS

Research into the psychological characteristics of a people in the context of its so-called literary production has been frequently criticized, and not without good reason. In an article published in the *Revue de Psychologie des peuples*, Mr. Brossaud of the Center for the Study of Civilizations at Nanterre—a department under the direction of Professor Guy Michaud—has emphasized the difficulties presented by the literary approach in the field of ethno-psychology.¹ If the ethno-psychologist demonstrates a cer-

Translated by Simon Pleasance.

¹ "There is no question," he writes, "but that those works which have as their objective the description of a people as a whole should occupy a privileged position in this inquiry. These are generally ethno-psychological essays and are best represented by such masters as Keyserling, Madariaga or Siegfried. The problem looks a little different when one approaches the actual field of literature: poetry, novel and play. Poetry seems as if it should be at some remove because its essential aim is not to describe but rather to make

tain suspicion towards anything that does not represent pure ethno-psychology, this is because the interest of a poem or a play is essentially of an aesthetic nature. It would certainly be a perilous task to look for the characteristics of the French mentality, for example, in the literary works of contemporary France.

The problem does however seem to be a little different when it is a matter of a young literature such as that with which we shall concern ourselves. It would seem that African literature, and thus the literature of Cameroon, remains to date essentially a literature of evidence. It is by virtue of this fact that the researcher with a collective mentality may examine it without much risk of going astray. African writers are artists, but they are above all witnesses belonging to a defined world. They appear less preoccupied by formal aesthetic research than by the task of revealing the specific nature of the black soul. Africa is a continent whose ways of life and whose *Weltanschauung* differ from those of Europe. These ways of life and this *Weltanschauung* have their origins rooted in a personal psychology, which is that of the black soul. "Literature is civilization," wrote Victor Hugo. And it is certainly in the same vein that Klineberg writes: "The genius of a nation can manifest itself as much in its literature as in its more complex productions of science and philosophy. It is certainly no chance occurrence that empiricism has developed more fully in Germany."

Mongo Beti, Ferdinand Oyono, Benjamin Matop and Jean J. Matiba, to mention but a few, are Cameroon writers who have taken part in the traditions and culture of the characters they write about. Like their various heroes, they have lived

felt and move... In some respects the theatre can be similarly designated... Where the novel is concerned, if its original definition—"a narrative portrayed or written in prose, in which the author seeks to arouse the interest by his description of passions, customs or by the strangeness of adventures"—is mainly obsolete today, the characters presented to us by the author, even if they are no more than creatures, draw their substance from the author's own experience, culture and store of knowledge. Even when a description borrows its context from a period way back in time, its truth can enable us to find characteristic features and concerns which are still of the present time, even in an allegorical story—think of Hesse's *Narcissus and Goldmund*, for example..."

"Réflexions méthodologiques sur l'imagologie littéraire," *Revue de psychologie des peuples*, No. 4, 1968.

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

through the colonial period. The Cameroon writer practically never detaches himself from his native territory. Such writers and their works thus stand at the hub of the course of ethno-psychology.

A reading of such works betrays this close link which exists between the author and his writing. Certain novels are authentic stories about people who have actually lived. They represent evidence. Cameroon is a country whose destiny is special in the sense that it has undergone several periods of domination by different foreign powers in quick succession. *Cette Afrique-là* is the story of Franz Momha, related by himself. The hero, a Basaa from Southern Cameroon, actually lived. Jean Ikelle Matiba, who transmits this story, tells us in the foreword that the figure of Franz Momha and his story are authentic: "This book is a document. It is an authentic account. The action of this story is set in the heart of Central Africa, in Cameroon, a country situated in the crook of the Gulf of Guinea, between the Atlantic Ocean and Lake Chad."

"The hero, Franz Momha, was born before the period of European colonization. He lived through the conquest of his country. He was a brilliant student. And he became a trainee civil servant. He was due to go to Berlin when the war broke out. He loses 'his chance.' When the French administration is set up, he is invited to serve in it. He declines the offer out of loyalty to his former masters. He gets married. He returns to the peasant life, thanks to his stubborn efforts, and revitalizes his property. He leads a peaceful existence, shared between working the land and religious activities, until one day he is arrested and sent to a labor camp. This is in wartime. When peace is restored, he takes part in the first elections of the National Constituent Assembly."²

If writers enjoy talking about their country, and their particular part of their country, they particularly enjoy talking about themselves. This essentially autobiographical character of the works is perhaps an even better proof of the symbiosis which exists between the writer and his work.

Ferdinand Oyono lived with missionaries. He entered the mission as a choir-boy. A priest introduced him to classical

² *Cette Afrique-là*, Foreword, p. 13.

literature, and he subsequently became the missionaries' boy. There is no doubt that it is this life in the mission which the writer relates to us through the mouth of Toundi in *Une Vie de boy*. As Oyono's avatar, Toundi is boy to R. P. Gilbert, who teaches him to read and write, and gets him interested in writing a diary. Toundi tells us: "Now that Father Gilbert has told me I can read and write fluently, I'll be able to keep a diary, just like the does."³

The autobiographical character of Mongo Beti's work is the most obvious of all. The young Alexandre Biyidi probably left school with an elementary certificate and worked in the cacao plantations. This young peasant's life which the author himself led at one time is clearly the life which we see Banda live in *Ville Cruelle*. Banda, an orphan like the author himself, attended school for eight years. He devoted himself to working in the family's cacao plantations. It is also undoubtedly the same Biyidi we find behind the characters of Medza and Kris, holidaying high-school boys in *Mission Terminée* and *Le Roi Miraculé*. Keen to pursue his studies, the author had been admitted to the lycée at Yaounde. The negative experiences which the young schoolboy had had in his native country with the administrative and religious authorities appear in *Ville Cruelle*, *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba* and *Le Roi Miraculé*, in which the writer makes it clear that he has no sympathy with the colonial administrators or the missionaries.

If Cameroon literature is inclined, somewhat exceptionally for its particular character which we have just indicated, to cite authentic information on the conduct and customs of the Cameroon people, the inquirer, plunging into a study of this kind, soon comes up against an imposing difficulty. In fact the process of acculturation, seen in its linguistic aspect, can call in question any study of literary texts.

African writers write in an adopted language, French, and it is well-known that in itself a language is already a conveyor of attitude. It is no chance that the word "argueil" (pride) is derived etymologically from "orguol" (remarkable) or "urgoli" (proudness), in Old High German and western Germanic, respectively; and the word "vanité" is taken from

³ *Une Vie de Boy*.

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

the Latin "vanitas," which in turn derives from "vanus." One may thus ask oneself to what extent can a literature, which expresses itself in a language which is totally alien to the processes of thought and ways of life of a people, preserve any sort of character which belongs to that people. Africanists and Africans give different answers to this question. Some say that there is a possibility of transposition, such as one finds perfectly achieved in the work of L. S. Senghor. Others proclaim a return to the sources and the adoption or the elaboration of one or several languages—African languages—in which an authentically African literature would be able to find expression. The question has been debated incessantly. It is true that the task of the ethno-psychologist would be made considerably easier if, in his search for the psychological features of an ethnic subject, and by using the literary method, he found himself confronted by a literature written in the language of the ethnic subject under consideration. The literary method and the linguistic method could be used in unison, and this simultaneous use of both approaches would contribute more precise and more credible information. In this respect J. Vendryès wrote: "One could imagine a psychology of peoples which would be based on the examination of the various semantic changes witnessed in the languages spoken by these peoples. It would be a delicate study, but it would be well worthwhile embarking on it."⁴ One can, incidentally, discern the slightly hesitant attitude of the great philologist and linguist in respect of a study of a linguistic and ethno-psychological nature. F. de Saussure is even more hesitant, or should one say suspicious, with regard to this question, when he writes: "It is a fairly general opinion that a language reflects the psychological character of a nation: but there is a very serious opposition to this view—a linguistic procedure is not necessarily determined by psychic causes." In the light of this standpoint we can thus admit a large possibility of transposing a collective mentality in the literature of Cameroon as it is expressed in French.

We shall now attempt to observe the psychological characteristics of the Cameroon native in as far as such characteristics can

⁴ Reported by A. Heuse in *Psychologie ethnique*, p. 39, F. de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, pp. 310-311.

be detected by reading the works of Cameroon writers. Our method will initiate with information given to us by various writers about the society and culture of the peoples which concern us; we shall then attempt to review the psychic processes which might give rise to the society and culture which are described for us. The social structures and cultural elements of a human group can, in fact, present us with both beliefs, in the broad sense of the term—that is, manifestations of intelligence—and customs—that is, manifestations of activity: in a word, ideas grounded in a dominant theoretical or practical field in the social environment under consideration. Finally, in order to account for the more or less decisive influence of western culture on the peoples which concern us here, we shall consider three distinct groupings: the traditional group, the more or less westernized group, and the sharply westernized group.

I. LIFE ORGANIZED ACCORDING TO TRADITION.

The family constitutes the primary unit in this society. Reckoned in its strictest European definition, it is made up of the father, mother and children. Each of the members of this unit has a clearly defined place within the bosom of the small group. The father is its principal figure, the head. He guarantees the subsistence of his wife (or wives) and his children by the fact that he works. His role as instructor and educator is generally limited to the blows he hands out with his stick to his children, and sometimes even to his wife. When his children are of a marriageable age, it is their father who finds them their partner.

Thus in René Philombé's *Sola ma chérie* we see Abuma, Sola's father, make the decision about the marriage of his daughter with Nkonda, in the latter's absence: "Joining with all the drunkards in the land, Nkonda and Abuma introduced themselves to each other, apologized to each other, forgave one another, applauded one another, flattered one another and insulted one another, and praised each other mutually. They got to the point of sealing the betrothal ..."⁵ In Mongo Beti's *Mission*

⁵ Philombé R., *Sola, ma chérie*, Clé, 1966, p. 73.

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

Terminée, Medza describes to us the strictness with which his father brought him up:

“My father generally thrashed his children with a fly-swat, and beat his wife with a very thin, very wicked rattan-cane, about the same size as a snake”.⁶

Next to the father we find the mother, who has a special place at the bosom of the family. Giver of life, she receives a certain amount of respect from her spouse. But one can easily see from reading Cameroon novelists and other writers that Cameroon society has turned woman into an inferior being. Even at a young age, the Cameroon man assumes airs of superiority over women: “Oh, a girl!” is how Gustave, in *Le Roi Miraculé*, announces to father Le Guen that his father has just given birth to a daughter. This disdain which is clearly revealed in the young boy’s words demonstrates that he would rather have had a baby brother than a baby sister. If children adopt this attitude towards the female sex, it is because adults show their disdain for women quite openly. To his sister Odilia, who advises him to be prudent, Koumé replies: “Dear little Odilia... What are you worrying about? Leave it to me. This is a matter for boys.” All these prejudices have given rise to a deep inferiority complex in the Cameroon woman. Kris’s aunt, in *Le Roi Miraculé*, accepts the injustice she suffers, and confesses her complex quite frankly to her nephew:

“You don’t know how lucky you are being a man!
Oh, I know, answered Kris, sincerely.
No, not altogether, said the woman. If you have children of your own one day, all I wish you, with all my heart, is to try to have boys, Kris. As far as I know you, Kris, if you had a daughter you’d go as far as murdering a man if he made your daughter suffer. Because you’re a man, you don’t realise to what extent a woman is created to be unhappy”.⁷

We can see that in a world where the woman has practically no place reserved for her as a human being, in the way that the man has, she becomes an object. The man can have several wives,

⁶ Mongo Beti, *Ville Cruelle*, Presence Africaine, 1964, p. 28.

⁷ Mongo Beti, *Le Roi Miraculé*, Corrêa 1958, p. 157.

depending on his means; he can be polygamous if he wants to be. Polygamy is variously illustrated in the works of Cameroon writers. *Mission Terminée* shows us a headman marrying his seventh wife: "The headman had just married a woman, his seventh wife as far as I can remember," Medza tells us. Chief Essomba Mendouga, the authentic descendant of Akomo in *Le Roi Miraculé*, sees fit, despite his great age, to marry Anaba, his twenty-third wedding. Anaba was a "beautiful woman, above all a young woman, a little girl, fresh as he liked them."⁸ Difficulties arise frequently between a man's various wives, and there are regular and numerous quarrels over precedence. The children from each union confront one another, and all the more so because the rules of the devolution of successors are sometimes fairly blurred, and each one can entertain the hope of ousting his brothers or his uncles. *Le Roi Miraculé* gives us an example of these jealousies and hatreds which often end up with fully-fledged palace revolutions. The woman appears to be the inferior being, but one does come across certain women of strong character. They are usually very old ladies, and their very age has probably endowed them with a certain confidence. One such woman is the figure of Makrita, the first wife of King Essomba. She has none of those villager's complexes such as one comes across frequently in the Cameroon novel. When Makrita presents herself to the village elders who are gathered in the palace to announce to them that the king is seriously ill, she is "more enraged than grief-stricken, more aggressive than saddened." The expression on her face as she enters the room clearly shows that she is not the sort of woman who trembles and withdraws in the face of men, even when the men are elders:

"Having placed the lamp on the ground, the woman moved away from it and glanced over the gathering in one gesture, as if she was looking for a victim to swallow up. Then she stood there in the middle of the room, a virago whose flower-patterned and badly-tailored dress betrayed her withered hips and her skinny behind, and other misfortunes."

Her attitude and her physical portrait contribute to the notion that her mind is resolute, her mind virile. In short, she is a

⁸ Mongo Beti, *Mission Terminée*, p. 177.

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

strong woman. And in the end she dissuades the elders from going to the king's bedside, and subsequently triumphs from their tenacity.

“Makrita victoriously confronted these senile attacks, and managed to make them recognize that they would serve no purpose. It was clear she was an organised and energetic woman”.⁹

In the bosom of the family unit the child occupies a very important place. The despair which overtakes Momha's parent: after his birth, in *Cette Afrique-là* by Ikelle Matiba, the pain experienced by Kris before his old and barren aunt in *Le Roi Miraculé*, these are also proof of the importance which is attached to children in the traditional family. The native of Cameroon cannot easily conceive of a conjugal existence without procreation. This acute awareness of the main objective of marrying appears early on in the wedding ceremonies when the newly-weds ask the supernatural beings for numerous children. In the thought process of the man of Cameroon, there is a close association between marriage and fertility. The child here is thus king. Think of the joy felt by Momha's parents at the birth of their child, all the more intensely felt because they had waited eight years to see him born. But paradoxically the child-king is a poor king forced to see to his own upbringing and education almost single handed. Kellam's childhood is described for us as follows:

“What an inexhaustible fairy-land is brought to him with every new day! with no education or mentor, no books and all these native powers of perception focussed on nature, he learns about the sumptuousness of human life the wild life of this region of equatorial forest. The first benefit he draws from this is the exact extent of his place: he is the king, he knows he is king, but he is a naked king, in a precarious position, a king who must be cautious, tenacious, and gradually establish himself in the very midst of the wild life surrounding him.”¹⁰

⁹ Mongo Beti, *Le Roi Miraculé*, p. 34.

¹⁰ Kindengwe Ndjock, *Kel'lam, fils d'Afrique*.

We have said that the family (father, mother, child) constitutes the substratum of traditional society, but the family here is not merely limited to "daddy, mummy and baby," as it is in Europe. More extensive, it generally includes all the members of both sides of the family, that is the two families whose children have not married. Hence results the fact that the family is the unit to which, either partly or wholly, all the uncles and aunts, nephews and nieces, cousins and cousins German, or whatever, belong. Banda's family in *Ville Cruelle*, is made up of his mother and his two aunts Sabina and Régina, not forgetting the old uncle who has been carrying on his tailor's craft in Targa for the last 25 years. Sabina and Régina go with the young man to market, because Banda's mother is sick. Nobody is at all concerned by her sickness, incidentally; and Banda is safely surrounded by Sabina and Régina who make perfectly good substitutes for his mother. They give him some very sound pieces of advice, and they weep over the misfortune which befalls their nephew. Régina begs and begs the inspector to be more indulgent.

Above the family we find the clan, a larger unit than the family and one which is sometimes confused with the tribe, which we shall discuss at a later stage. The clan is a complex of several village families, all of whose members recognize a common ancestor. The finest illustrations of the existence of clans in Southern Cameroon can be found in the novels of Mongo Beti, *Le pauvre Christ de Bomba*, and *Le Roi Miraculé*. In the former we follow Father S. Drumont on his parish visit to all the clans which live around the Bomba Tala Catholic mission, clans such as the Evindi, Ekokot, Ndimi, Kondo and Kota, etc. These are localities where the small clans live; their names, by the way, are sometimes to be confused with the names of the clans and the quarrels which can arise between them when the king, or more exactly the polygamous headman, Essomba Mendouga, decides to return his wives to where they came from, except for the one, Anaba, so that he can live in accordance with the prescriptions of the Catholic faith, into which he has just been baptised. Once this decision has been taken by the chief, it provokes an argument between the Ebibot and the Ekabmeyong—to clans who have all given their daughters in marriage to the chief. Jealous of the privilege accorded to Anaba alone of remaining

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

the one and only wife of the king, the Ebibot attack the you women, and her own people decide to defend her.

A tribe is formed by several clans, and generally occupies whole village. Thus in *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba* the Tala a Ekokot clans, and so on, all form the tribe of the people living at the Bomba Catholic mission and in the immediate neighbourhood. In Benjamin Matip's *Afrique, nous t'ignorons*, Bidoé is village in which a whole tribe lives; we are introduced to the patriarch-chiefs of the clans such as Lambo, Billon and Laché. *Le Roi Miraculé* enables us to penetrate the life of a Southern Cameroon tribe, the Essazam. The sub-title of the novel is 'chronicle of the Essazam.' And at the beginning of his work the author talks to us about the Essazam as a tribe:

"In 1948 the important confederation of the Essazam, somewhat crude people, was scattered over a vast area of territory, and was fairly well-removed from modern influences. The tribe had not completely settled its upheavals although at the turn of the century it had managed to sustain the formidable rigors of German colonization, an experience shared by thousands of clans who were keen to preserve their autonomy. It lived parsimoniously from hunting, basic agriculture, and a certain amount of palm-cattle-raising; it also earned a slight revenue from growing cacao, which was nonetheless not very widespread... although it had often changed its appearance and location the village of Essazam was considered as the cradle of the tribe, and the Ebazok clan which inhabited the village was considered as the nucleus which, by developing, prospering and spreading, had given birth to the other clans."¹¹

* * *

The administrative organisation appears extremely complicated. It is nevertheless possible to single out the main element. At the head of each clan sits an elder, generally the eldest male in the clan. He plays the role of chief and patriarch at the same time. The chief of whom Mongo Beti talks in *Mission Terminée* is without doubt one such elder. The small village of Ka

¹¹ *Le Roi Miraculé*, pp. 7 and 8.

here Medza finds himself at the Mission has at its head a venerated and respected chief. We see the villagers of Kala take his seventh wife to his dwelling: this act runs contrary to the customs of these parts where the fiancé generally seeks out his wife for himself. Furthermore the family brings a large number of presents to the chief, and makes no pains about showing their satisfaction in having brought about this marriage.

“The chief’s tribe by marriage reached Kala in the mid-afternoon, at the hottest time of the day. A long procession of young country girls dressed in appalling taste, and old fogeys armed with fly-swats, their bellies exposed, their loin-cloths trailing round their ankles, strutting along with false dignity, and rather sloppy, their faces already complacent and satisfied, their mouths visibly prepared to flourish words of eternal friendship and alliance.¹² When he had “taken delivery” of his wife, the chief started to dance, and everybody hurried to make him their offerings. Every two or three minutes a man would come up and kiss the chief, interrupting his dance with the words: Chief, you dance so well I cannot resist the pleasure of offering you two thousand francs, or: Chief, I shall offer you two sheep, or: Chief, I offer you fifty kilos of cacao.”¹³

The chief of Kala is a grotesque figure, and the author intentionally gives him a ridiculous aspect; he intends to portray for us a decrepit, base old man who abuses his position by marrying a young girl, his seventh bride! It is no less true that all the inhabitants of Kala respect their chief; they love him, and are proud to find favor with him.

The patriarchs whom Benjamin Matip mentions in *Afrique, nous ignorons* are more respectable. These wise old men are concerned with the safeguard of their various clans, and originate from the Basaa tribe of Bidoé. Guimous, Lambo, Billon and Achée hold a meeting to decide what they should do now that war has broken out between the White men.

The administration in traditional Cameroon thus seems to have been of the collegial type. No single person could limit the

¹² *Mission Terminée*, p. 181.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 186.

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

power to himself. Cameroon writers provide abundant examples of this. In *Le Roi Miraculé* chief Essomba Mendouga, who wants to send his wives back to their villages, meets with considerable opposition from the other Essazam dignitaries: "The tribe elders, who were extremely numerous at Essazam, held a council meeting and unanimously decided that there was no hurry at all, and that any unconsidered haste would be reprehensible; they decided that for the moment the former wives of the chief who in any case still remained the wives of the Ebazok clan could continue to reside at Essazam where they might feel as if at home, until any further developments."¹⁴ No doubt the elders of Essazam are not in a position to decide anything final but their decision is important, and it will be respected by Essomba Mendouga. At a later juncture all the chief's wives remain his wives on the same status as Anaba: "Never had the wives been so joyous as when, once the alert had passed over the chief went out to meet them again, with gratitude," the author tells us at the end of the chronicle.

Again in *Le Roi Miraculé* we can perceive the type of relationship which can exist between authority and its subjects. The latter do not appear to owe absolute obedience to authority. One could say that between the chief and his subjects there is less a relationship of administrator to administrated than of a man worthy of respect to other men capable of respecting, with nothing further attached. The subjects do not hesitate to disobey the chief when the occasion presents itself. Essomba Mendouga cries in vain to try and stop the Ebibot and the Ekabmeyong from quarrelling; nobody listens to him: "Having come down from his palace to exhort them to peace, the chief shouted, bellowed, raged and cursed, but he could not make his voice heard nor could he soothe the ardor of the combattants."¹⁵

* * *

In order to introduce us to everyday life in the traditional environment, Cameroon writers present us, above all, with country people, peasants, who make up the great majority of the population of their country. The main character in *Village*

¹⁴ *Le Roi Miraculé*, p. 159.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 199.

Cruelle is the young peasant, Banda. Although older, peasants also predominate in the figures of Meka in *Le Vieux Nègre et la médaille* and Nkonda in *Sola ma chérie*.

The peasant of Southern Cameroon goes to his plantation in the morning and returns from it in the afternoon. While the women prepare the evening meal, the men go in search of palm-wine, and sit around together drinking and talking about whatever they have seen and heard in the course of the day. If there is a stranger around everyone hurries to inform themselves about him. They go to the neighbour where the newcomer is a guest. Thus we see the house of Medza's uncle (in *Mission Terminée*) filled with all the villagers who have come to see the young intellectual. The whole village of Kala is practically celebrating this occurrence, and Medza has become the object of admiration for the whole village. Everyone issues him invitations and offers him sheep: "The invitations and late-nights snowballed. I was no longer my own master... The day after each visit, people brought large gifts to uncle Mama. The gifts were nearly always sheep."

We are in a world where there is no writing. It is therefore not hard to assess the importance of oral expression in such an environment. If one makes use of such devices as the tomtom to summon witch-doctors and every kind of practitioner "from every tribe" to come and heal the sick king in *Le Roi Miraculé*, it is above all the word which remains the means of expression of the oral literature. This living word, as ethnologists call it, can be perceived in three aspects: prose, poetic prose and poetry so-called. We shall point out straightaway that this division of the oral literature of Cameroon is purely artificial. In this literature, in fact, it in effect seems difficult to separate poetry from prose; the two generally alternate in the same piece. But the two are not confused in the actual mind of the Cameroon native.

Under prose one can include the story and the fable. The story is a narrative in which the ordinary heroes are men and geniuses. The story does not necessarily have any moral meaning and import. It introduces us to the realm of the marvellous, a world where the soul lives essentially by emotion. When it does have a moral meaning and import, it overlaps with the fable, which takes us

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

into the real world of facts and appearances. In the fable man has often lost his sense of divine presences, and is no more than an existentialist concerned by his own life and by his relationships with his fellow-men. In *La Perdrix Blanche* (Three moral fairytales) Jacques Bengono gives us a sample, translated into French, of this type of fairytale-cum-fable which one finds in Cameroon.

Poetic prose generally includes proverbs, conundrums and enigmas, in which one finds certain poetic procedures such as the concision of formulae, striking juxtaposition of words (these procedures can naturally only be perceived by the person who knows the language in which the proverb is expressed); the proverb is a device in current use; it represents a manner of expression which has the advantage of being impressive and at the same time obscure to the profane stranger, all the more so because it relies for the most part on ambiguous words. Conundrums and enigmas expect a reply. They appeal to the listener's imagination and sharp-wittedness. Below are some conundrums, proverbs and enigmas translated by Basile J. Fouda in his literary work:

I went to see my friends. Only the dead ones spoke to me (the dead leaves which crackle when you tread on them).

These three pigs can eat the whole year's harvest (the three hearthstones). Two ever-open doors (nostrils). A throng of warriors, marching along, brandishing their spears (the epic swine).

"The proverb is a true petrified psychology. As the most expressive form of human behavior, the proverb exposes, naked, the collective soul, in a way which is at once particularized and condensed. This is why the proverb, a summary of the people's convictions, is a rich and practical deontology which addresses the heart and the mind. Hence results its essence, at once pungent and serious."¹⁶

¹⁶ Fauba B., and H. de Juliot, *Littérature Camérounaise*, p. 20.

Who, then, can pierce the abscess of an ant? There would be nothing left.

The man of action does not have fat calves.
A hand cannot wash itself alone.

Poetry, rightly so called, occurs in the songs of the witch-doctors, love poems, elegies and dirges. The witch-doctor is a figure at once genealogist and musician; with his instrument (Mvet) the witch-doctor presides at all festivals, marriages and meetings of any importance. His repertoire is pretty huge: genealogy of important families, traditional musical pieces in praise of important families, improvised eulogies in honor of people listening to him.

Poetry is not confined to the songs of witch-doctors. In Cameroon there is another sort of poetry which is to be found on the margin of family and religious life. The lament of the orphan singing the palmiped in *Mission Terminée* makes one think of this elegiac and lyrical poetry.

“It often so happens that an old woman scolds me
Then I remember my mother
And I say to myself: Oh what does it matter!
How unhappy I am, oh! mother,
But really, what does it matter.
It often happens that a man bullies me.
Then I think of my father and
Say to myself: this strength, what a sham.
I feel so unhappy, oh! father!
Really, what a sham this strength is!”¹⁷

Most often this poetry is satirical because it is always addressed to someone being sung to by making allusions to his adversary or enemy. Thus the song improvised by Anaba in *Le Roi Miraculé* chaffs the other royal wives, who are jealous of the king's favorite young wife. Here is her song:

Tell me, dear sisters a-listening
Tell me, sisters, how does our language call
Those women, hooked-clawed salamanders
Women who, though repudiated, expelled, disgraced

¹⁷ *Mission Terminée*, pp. 164-165.

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

Insist they stay and serve and beg.
Tell me, o sisters a-listening
If in our language these women
Who, when repudiated, insulted and disgraced
Insist they stay and serve and beg,
Are not like glue.
How this word suits them!
Though repudiated, dear sisters a-listening
They insist they stay and beg and serve!
Lament the unhappy, the naive man,
Weep with that fine man,
Poor bird who, because of this glue,
Takes so great pains! whether he flounders, weeps or
[cries
Invokes God, whatever, or his mother or his forbears,
Weep with him, dear sisters a-listening.
How will he ever manage to liberate his limbs?
Weep with him, lament with him..."¹⁸

IN SEARCH OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS:
A DIALECTIC IN THE SENSE
OF COMMUNITY AND THE INDIVIDUAL.

The information given to us by writers about the society and culture of the various Cameroon peoples enables us to make out the major psychological characteristics of these peoples. The social structures seem highly complex to us. The Cameroon native finds himself "enclosed in a tight network of vertical and horizontal fellowships which bind him and support him at the same time." In the first place, then, he is closely attached to the community. This sense of community life arises from the way in which this society is structured. As well as being a member of a family, the individual is a member of a clan too, member of a line, a tribe and an ethnic identity; and this sense of the group is here accentuated by the further implications of the fact that each individual belongs to a fraternity based on age, a brotherhood based on secret ritual or a corporation based on craft or profession. Zambo, Johannès the palmiped, Petrus son of God and Abraham the boneless are all undoubtedly members of

¹⁸ *Le Roi Miraculé*, pp. 195-196.

one and the same clan, of one and the same tribe; but they also comprise the fraternity, based on age, of the young peasants of Kala.

The community attachment that one thus finds in the Cameroon native enables us to uncover a first important feature of the psychology of this people: this is its social character. The Cameroon man is a member of a group, and his individuality seems to merge in with the anonymity of the group to which he belongs. Situations are not group affairs. The same situation in other peoples would rather be occasions for the various individualities to affirm themselves. Take for example the case of adultery as described for us by Mongo Beti in *Mission Terminée*. In our country, bed-games, which are known by that big word adultery in Europe, do not exactly leave everyone indifferent, but they hardly unleash bad passions. But one should not forget that in general such acts are located within the framework of the tribe: they happen in the family; although the gravity of adultery is always established by the real or sentimental distance which separates the two tribes, that of the unhappy husband and that of the lover. It is already an almost serious thing for a woman to give herself to a man from a neighbouring tribe, and it is tantamount to a curse if she gives herself to a man who is no longer part of his native province.”¹⁹ This example shows us a people in whom any kind of sublimation seems to be absent because it is predominated by a sort of empirical concern with the earthly, and the social.

The social character and the group sense entail a characterological consequence which is: attachment to the past. Reading Cameroon authors one is led to think that, in its traditional aspect, this people enjoys reviving the past, its own past, which it adapts, on each occasion, to its feelings of the moment. In the Cameroon native there is a need to prolong affectively (and non-actively) the past. He is a person who is constantly trying to create a means of pleasure out of his own past. In Ferdinand Oyono's *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille*, Meka evokes the glorious life of his ancestors who never bowed their heads before

¹⁹ *Mission Terminée*, p. 22.

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

anything or anyone: "The Meka were like lions, men of thunder, men of heaven. It was they who vanquished the first White Man." In the twilight of his life, Essomba Mendouga draws up the accounts of his life. There is no doubt that this reckoning proves that he is the authentic descendant of Akomo." Perhaps this is what convinces him of his affiliation with Akomo. It is the indecision of this problem which has kept him a state of some kind of discomfort. From his youth, events themselves had encouraged his belief in this ancestry, by the constant idea that they had made of him a new incarnation of the legendary figure, to whom he himself had always conceded something more than the weight of reality."²⁰

Attachment to the group has shown us two characterological features in the people in question: their social sense, and their attachment to the past. In another aspect, and this is what constitutes the paradox or characterological dialectic of the group, the Cameroon man is also endowed with an individuality. Before we see how this individuality always shows up on a certain level, despite the essentially community-oriented environment in which one would expect to see it obliterated, let us first see how this individuality is safeguarded from childhood onwards. We have seen how the Cameroon child would receive no kind of consecutive and programmed education, as in Europe. Kel'lam is described to us as "a child without education, without mentors, and without books." This description merits a certain explanation. Its over-categorical nature might lead one to a mistaken understanding.

It should not be forgotten that the education and upbringing of the young Cameroon child within the framework of the collectivity is a matter which involves everyone. The child is summoned and commissioned, corrected and rewarded by any adult, or any senior member of the group. Thus he learns the manners built on courtesy and good behavior with which he should treat other people. Apprenticeship in a craft or trade under a senior or an adult is done by the transmission of experience. This apprenticeship itself serves merely to bind the child to the community. If the idea of lack of education is mentioned here,

²⁰ *Le Roi Miraculé*, pp. 22-23.

this is a way of saying that the child faces the outside world more or less on his own, as he does the reality of a hostile nature which contains wild animals and other dangers inherent in the natural environment in which he lives. Furthermore his education is made by a series of interdictions. This negative education cannot truly be called education, because it can favor a certain hypocritical individualism in the adolescent. The domain in which the child's individualism will be developed most of all is that of games and initiation rituals, which he practices or undergoes with his contemporaries. The majority of such games and initiation rituals with their essentially competitive character, give rise to a spirit of emulation and rivalry in the adolescent. And we know that there is nothing so useful as this spirit of emulation in making an adolescent become aware of his individuality. In these games and rituals the child learns how to stand alone. Rivalry generally depends on a quality. The winner will take all, as it were. One of such games practised in Cameroon is described to us by Mongo Beti in his novel *Mission Terminée*. It consists of a large vegetable ball which is hurled in the air; those playing the game have to pierce it with their assegai. The author of this exploit is "covered with kisses by his people"; they acclaim him because he is the best of all the other young men. At the same time as the young man learns to preserve the honor of his family, clan or tribe, he also learns how to preserve his own honor as an individual. The young men we see playing in *Mission Terminée* are divided into two teams, each of which is keen to win to prove the superiority of its village over the neighbouring village. The narrator describes it to us: "Words of encouragement and urging-on burst from the spectators, making me realise that the village of Kala was vying for supremacy with another village, and that this match which I was watching, would be decisive."²¹ But in another sense each player has a sense of vanity (or self-respect) which is independent from his allegiance to whichever group it may be. Zambo, for example, is well aware of himself; he is strong and finely muscled. He is the one who hurls the ball for his team. Each time he pitches, the applause mounts, and exceeds that given to any member of the opposing team or even of his own

²¹ *Mission Terminée*, p. 41.

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

team-members. The young man makes no bones about pride: "... no matter what the strength of the opponent's ball was, Zambo never once moved from its path: he would waylay it, juggle with it, disguise it, hit it; he was often the first to reach it; and with his arms crossed he would shout: Zambo, Mama's son, as if to sign his own prowess."

The individualism preserved during childhood appears at the adult age. The occasion presents itself at this juncture to contradict the traditionalists and theoreticians of African socialism who habitually use African peasants to demonstrate that the peasant life in traditional Africa is a basis upon which one might easily construct socialism. Banda (in *Ville Cruelle*) and Meka (in *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille*) and others are all peasants, but the image given to us of each of these figures by Mongo Beti and Ferdinand Oyono is not altogether that which is often displayed by the theoreticians of African socialism. However, this image conveyed by Cameroon writers is very proper. Banda's family owns a cacao plantation. In fact Banda and his family are small property-owners, who would have to provide for their own needs if the colonial regime caused a general upheaval. Furthermore Banda finds himself waiting for the money from the sale of his cacao in order to allow him to get married. One can therefore say that Banda is fighting for life, his own life. Family solidarity thus stops at a certain point, and gives way to individualism. In *Mission Terminée* where the village becomes something of the central figure of the novel, we see the village waging a struggle—which is clearly a discreet struggle—in order to change its way of life. Medza, the young high-school boy, finds himself on holiday, having failed the second part of his baccalaureate (which the villagers do not know about, by the way). For these villagers of Kala Medza is an intellectual, and a real intellectual. Because he finds himself in the village, he has to impart his knowledge to the villagers, and we see the young man having to give a fairly tricky geography lesson. A few souvenirs and a little improvisation soon enables these peasants of Southern Cameroon to have an idea of America and New York. Unfortunately America leaves these people fairly cold. But when Medza talks to them about the Soviet *kholkoz*, the enthusiasm of the class can be felt:

“There the people are certainly very wise... How they must love one another... It must be good to live in a country like that...”²²

These are the remarks made by the peasants. What are they thinking of when they make such observations? They are thinking about having another kind of life, of living in the twentieth century, of working their fields with tractors provided by the state, and not of having everything in common, in the true sense of the word. These two examples show us that Africa is not altogether in line with the theses of socialism which are apparently based on the absence of the concept of ownership, in other words, of individualism in Africa and in this case, in Cameroon.

* * *

Through the humor and satire of oral expression we can detect the reflection of a tremendous joyfulness in life, and this in turn betrays a deep affective intensity. Humor and satire already emerge in the laws which regulate human conduct. Anthroponomy: the name is not only a consecration and tradition, it is for the most part the reflection of a fantasy. It is the translation of a strange and amusing character. This name is often a nickname, a surname which the community has given to a particular member because such and such an individual idiosyncrasy (either physical or moral) has struck the imagination or appealed to the sympathy of the group as a whole. The names of the two main figures in *Ville Cruelle*, Banda and Koumé, are fairly typical examples of this. “How many times have I told you: you never want to do like everyone else does,” is the reproach which Sabina gives her young nephew Banda. In a practical sense, here, Sabina explains for us the meaning of the name which her nephew bears. The word Banda in Ewondo (a dialect of Southern Cameroon) calls to mind an intrepid man. In the novel Banda plays the part of courageous people. Do we not see him stand up inspectors and regional guards? It is always his aunt who reproaches him and reminds him of the characteristic which has given him his name.

²² *Ibid*, p. 98.

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

“You should have heard yourself with the inspector... You don’t jeopardize two hundred kilos of cacao like that... you never want to be like everyone else.”

As for the name Koumé, research has lead us to think that this was an anagram of the word *Ekoum*, which, still in Ewondo, means a stump. And tradition in these parts of Southern Cameroon has it that a tree-stump is the symbol of strength and resistance. “A stump doesn’t shake before the storm.” This is the translation of a proverb of the forest region of Cameroon. Endogolo, one of the names which one comes across in *Mission Terminée*, is a rather ironical name or nickname. The term makes one think of a slender individual. Endogolo is the long-legged wading-bird. Morally speaking he is a worthless man. The word is onomatopoeic, translating the noise of a empty barrel rolling along over pebbles. “Wongolon. Dongolon in Ewondo dialect. According to Medza this character is bordering on abnormality: “Endogolo was a large boy, a little boorish, not very polished... (He) thought he had to laugh at any little thing.”

The tendency towards laughter can be seen in the names given to other people too, but this is not the only area where one encounters laughter. In Cameroon one laughs at everything, and whenever the occasion presents itself one makes others laugh too. Here is how the palmiped speaks of his father-in-law:

“In fact I remember I never did eat that salamander. I sent it to the man whose daughter I wanted to marry. You remember that? He asked me for some salamanders in exchange for his daughter. Old men like their food you know. Well, I didn’t send him any salamanders. If I had wouldn’t his daughter have been my wife today?”²³

The young people of Kala want the women reaping the harvest to give them some ground-nuts. This is how they went about it:

“My friends quickly borrowed three baskets from some women and started running through the fields, saying each time that they were going to take them to a woman over there:

²³ *Ibid*, p. 158.

Have pity on us poor people who ask you for a little charity. Give us a few ground-nuts. God will reward you one day...

The woman stood up, started laughing, and in the end always gave them a few handfuls of ground-nuts.”²⁴

Starting from these examples, we can say that the person in question is eager for laughter. This eagerness itself betrays a deep need for emotion; “when emotionalism ceases to be a test undergone to become the subject-matter of a mental search, an objective, it changes into the need for emotion,” writes Le Senne. The taste for diversion and playfulness is in itself a specification of the need for emotion.

“Playfulness is often the ally of alcoholic drinks,” he writes. This remark is confirmed here. The man in question has a strong tendency to alcoholism. What do people drink? Arki, or African gin, a sort of alcohol made from maize, as used by Meka and his neighbours in Mama Tati’s house in Oyono’s novel (*Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille*), palm-wine as used by the people of Kala in *Mission Terminée*, maize beer as used by the villagers around Bamila in *Ville Cruelle* and red wine such as is used by Nkonda and Joseph Abumu in René Philombé’s *Sola ma Chérie*.

The workman in the last work states: “Alcohol gives warmth to the biceps and makes hard work pass quickly! Alcohol comforts a widow, lightens the burden of mourning! Without alcohol, says the man in the street, the human race would be shrouded in permanent hibernation, the sun would look black, the flowers would all be grey and our existence on earth would be utterly gloomy.”²⁵ People drink and dance and shout. Sometimes the scene takes on the appearance of a real carnival. Here we see the natives’ Tanga described, at night:

At night life changed its general direction. The Tanga of the north slope recovered itself and broke into an incredibly effervescent rhythm. It celebrated each night its prodigal children... In North Tanga every fifth house became a liquor store! Red wine equally mixed with bad

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

²⁵ *Sola, ma chérie*, pp. 72-73.

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

water, ill-preserved palm-wine... Those initiated also knew how to obtain African gin, a famous local drink with a high alcoholic content... The dance-halls were irresistibly attractive to the inhabitants of both sexes. Starkly lit with electric light-bulbs, rowdy, melodious and generally cacophonous, ringing with tambourines, filled with a special fun... luckily they didn't cost much. So it was quite common for two or three people to meet up in a house around a gourdful of wine, and beat on empty boxes for want of tom-toms, and pluck the strings of a guitar or banjo, thus improvising a party in which imagination was the rule, and in spite of the mean resources of the place."²⁶

* * *

It is the social structure in themselves which reveal for us the way the peoples in question are actually structured. We have seen that at the head of each clan there were several chiefs or patriarchs. These are not representatives of their clan in the eyes of any higher authority. The chiefs of different clans are not necessarily in league with one another. Each single clan retains a deep sense of autonomy and pride. Within the clan itself, as we have seen, practically no one individual has control of the power. In a system such as this one can perceive a poly-stemmed type of structurization. Perhaps a certain anarchism.

The traditional Cameroon native sees in religion a complex of cults and rites whose effectiveness is in the first instance of an earthly and material order. In the scapulars and rosaries which Father Le Guen carries with him, chief Essomba Mendouga sees fetishes or greegrees. "The man contemplated the scapulars and rosaries hanging from Le Guen's arms. Perhaps he was regretfully reckoning the extent of the revelations to which these objects might have introduced him if, by giving them his confidence, he had adopted them in time. Perhaps in this way he might have been convinced of his affiliation with Akomo; it was the indecision of this problem which had kept him all his life in a sort of discomfort."²⁷

²⁶ *Ville Cruelle*, pp. 21-22.

²⁷ *Le Roi Miraculé*, pp. 22-23.

One can thus see that for this chief religion is above all else something temporal. And we know that is the very opposite to Christianity, for example, which prepares a person for a happiness which is conferred somewhere other than down here, which is not always immediate and tangible, a happiness which will emerge in a world to come. The people of Bomba and the other village round about are used to witch-doctors and greegrees; they therefore take the priest to be some sort of witch-doctor himself. When Father Superior Drumont realises his failure, and asks himself why these people are as impervious now after twenty years of continuous evangelization as they were on the first day, his native cook, Zacharie, answers him:

“The first of us who came running to religion, your religion, treated it like a school where they might be able to acquire the revelation of your secret, the secret of your power, the power of your aeroplanes, your railways, the secret of your mystery... Instead of that you started talking to them about God and the soul and life everlasting.”²⁸

This conception of religion betrays a materialist mentality. It contains a kind of existentialism which is not totally removed from metaphysics, but which rather tries to master it. Is this really a lack of beliefs, as one has always tended to think of it? No. We would rather say that these are sceptical minds. To them God does not appear to be directly concerned with men, as they would hope; he is too distant and perhaps too great when compared to men; and so they have to be content with using greegrees, fetishes and magic incantations, which, in a word, are visible and immediately effective.

II. THE SEMI-WESTERNIZED PEOPLES

Cameroon's contact with Europe has brought to light within the society certain new figures, men of little means, a kind of Cameroon picaroons. In the first instance they are catechists, cooks and boys. Zacharie and Denis, who number among the main characters in Mongo Beti's novel: *Le pauvre Christ de Bomba* are respectively cook and boy to the Father Superior,

²⁸ *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba*, p. 56.

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

Drumont, the priest in charge of the Catholic mission at Bomba. Toundi is also a boy; he is the hero in Ferdinand Oyono's novel: *Une Vie de Boy*. Then there are the old warriors like Nkonda in René Philombé's *Sola ma chérie*. And lastly one should include all those young former pupils without the means to continue their studies, who carry on their different little trades. They are the laborers, the small-time tradesmen, the mechanics and the inferior officials who live in the town or at the Catholic or Protestant mission. Koumé is a mechanic at Tanga. Aki Barnabas is a tout with Kriminopoulous. Let us consider Aki's line of business for a moment. There are several people involved in this job. The young boys go around shouting and calling to the villagers to bring their cacao; they grab the loads and carry them to their bosses:

"Every shop had its tout, and we delivered the stuff together, puffing and panting, fighting off the cold while we waited for customers. We drew ourselves up in lines, fidgeting about in the twilight gleam, along the commercial center where we looked like some unreal crazy row of poles, little telegraph poles, scarcely any wider than the shop-front where he was employed. And these revolting baskets full of big grass lumps, garbage and animal dung, like violent reactors to your feelings of honor and our instinct of cleanliness: we were ready to sacrifice our lives for them, or the next person's life."²⁹

When Europe came to Africa it brought with it its civilization, its culture and its ways of life. The new figures we have listed have, generally speaking, preserved their village mentality because of their very low intellectual status. Consequently they appear to be more village-oriented than westernized. The very superficial contact which they have had with western civilization and all the abuses inherent in the colonial system itself have been at the root of behavioral patterns and attitudes which lead the observer to think that a sort of decantation of the psychological characteristics has taken place. All the features which we came across in the traditional Cameroon native have remained; but some of them emerge this time round as having considerable variants, and others even tend to disappear completely.

²⁹ Oyono F., *Chemin d'Europe*, Coll. Litt. Afr., F. Nathan, pp. 47-48.

* * *

Among the characteristics which we have noticed in the traditional Cameroon native, we have found the important feature of this people's healthy enjoyment of life. This enjoyment makes itself manifest in their sense of humor as illustrated by anthroponomy, for example. This same anthropomony has also enabled us to see that the process of choosing a name was based on imagination or sympathy (in the etymological sense of the word) on the part of the person choosing the name. A name often recalls an event or an idiosyncrasy which has struck the imagination or appealed to the sympathy of the person's parents or relatives. We can employ other terms here and talk of a deep sense of emotionalism which presides over the choice of a name. Other manifestations of this enjoyment of life—such as the demonstrativity which we can perceive in their taste for laughter—always enable us to uncover, from beneath all these outward manifestations, a sense of emotionalism which lies at the basis of behavior, attitudes or even knowledge. With regard to the usual symptom of emotionalism, Le Senne writes: "This can be recognized in the pattern of life by the disproportion between the objective importance of an event, its real seriousness, and the subjective commotion with which the emotive responds, whether one will or no, to its provocation."³⁰ René Philombé confirms the existence of this emotional feature of the Cameroon native when he talks to us about the sense of the superlative (one of the correlations of emotionalism). "For want of real pieces of news the villagers revelled to their hearts' content in false pieces of news... On the lookout for the slightest snippet of information, each one of them is naturally inclined to exaggerate and dramatize things."³¹

In the new social class with which we are dealing, we find this emotionalism once again; its principal manifestation is the admiration for European values. The people we come across in Cameroon literature adhere to some extent to western values. They do not judge them, but they attach themselves to them.

³⁰ Le Senne, *Traité de Caractérologie*, p. 69.

³¹ *Sola, ma chérie*, p. 32.

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

Think of Meka's joy when he knows that he is going to be decorated! The old Negro, his eyes a-glow, tells his people about his meeting with the commandant. He is truly the chosen one of all White Men, because he is the man who commands all the other White Men; and it is he who will come in person on July 14th to pin the medal to his chest. This news, furthermore, stirs up a general merry-making in the village, the women form groups and make a circle to dance in as a prelude to Meka's decoration. Remarks pass around at a great rate; people admire the extraordinary inventions of the White Man. First they invented the machine-gun and the cannon, and now they have just invented the smoke-bomb!

It is the same myth surrounding Europe and specifically France which we find in Toundi's—the hero of *Une Vie de Boy*—wish to live like all the White Men he sees around him.

The consequences of this admiration for European values are numerous and complex. But we can single out the most obvious. In the first instance the sense of family and community changes its appearance. The affectivity on which this characteristic was based becomes diminished. Traditions are shaken, filial devotion is reduced, and the veneration with which parents and relations are surrounded seems to vanish. Banda is not in the least disturbed to see himself detested by the whole village. In fact, when the young man returns to the village after eight years at school, he decides to avenge his mother for the ill-treatment she has undergone at the hands of the other members of his father's family. "The result," he says, "is that everyone hates me." And he adds: "And that doesn't bother me." Similarly the relations of Banda and Tonga are not at all what one would expect to see between a nephew and his uncle, to whom the nephew should show obedience. In *Une Vie de Boy* Toundi leaves his family because he hates his father who has spanked him: "For the first time in my life I thought about killing my father," he says.³² As for Medza, he fights with his father when the latter wants to beat him. The conversation between Medza and his father before the final drama would have represented a scandal unparalleled for Medza, had he not been a young man firmly resolved to shake the old traditions.

³² *Une Vie de Boy*, p. 22.

“My father calls me:

—Hey, you, where’ve you been?

—I’m not called ‘you,’ I replied in a quick retort.

—Well, well! he said. So what are you called, eh? if it’s of any interest to anyone, let him go down and find out from the registrar.”³³

If Medza has reached this point, it is undoubtedly because he has been away at school, and has come under the influence of western civilization. The school has given him a certain sense of freedom, which emerges here in the form of insolence which he shows towards his father. The latter is certainly in error in wanting to treat this grown-up boy like a small child, especially in front of the girl he loves, but Medza could all the same have reacted differently to make his discontent clear. This conversation and the argument which ensues makes one wonder if the young man’s reaction does not stem from the over-high opinion he has of himself, an opinion which is undoubtedly the result of the ‘studies’ which he has been doing. This admiration for European values is also to be seen in the irresistible attraction that urban environments hold for these young Cameroon men. Not only do they want to free themselves from the traditional life of their parents and all its restrictions, but they also want to earn money. For Banda the town represents a place where one can earn money: “This town where people earned a lot of money by doing other things than breaking the earth and messing about with (cacao) beans.” And Banda is haunted by the idea of going to Fort-Nègre. The town is a quite new environment in which the omnipotence of money shows itself as an even greater tyrant. Interest in money is also heightened there, unlike in the village situation where people could live from hunting, fishing and agriculture. “We haven’t had money for centuries... no! Never. If people only start paying you your dues when they feel like it how are you going to stay alive?” exclaims Koumé in *Ville Cruelle*.

In this context one expects to see the factor of individuality reinforced, but on the contrary it seems that one cannot really talk in terms of a reinforcement of individuality. This, to all

³³ *Mission Terminée*, p. 244.

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

appearances, remains more or less at the same level as in traditional society; namely, it only comes to light in fairly precise situations. Without doubt the economic demands will generalize it sooner or later, but for the moment this individuality is still of the same order that one finds in the attitudes of the traditional Cameroon native. Is this to say that it has been removed by the sense of community? We can simply state that the sense of community in these people of little means is transformed into a sort of solidarity among all those who share the same lot. This solidarity, moreover, is undoubtedly the manifestation of the affectivity which presided over the sense of family, clan and tribe. The best examples of this solidarity are perhaps to be found in Eza Boto's novel: *Ville Cruelle*. When Odilia tells her brother Koumé that M. T., the head-mechanic, will refer himself to the other Whites to punish them for having dared lay a hand on a White Man, Koumé replies with the words: "Yes I know. And I get along fine with my friends." Likewise when the mechanics grab hold of M. T., we see how the local guards spare the mechanics instead of arresting them:

"The lads flung themselves at the fat White and lifted him up with infinite respect, shouting all the while to the mechanics in the local dialect: 'Get out of here! but be quiet about it. Good God, what are you waiting for?'"

Here again we find ourselves faced with a sort of characterological paradox. In fact, at the same time as they admire European values, they gang up to fight the European. The fact that the man they face is a foreigner will from this moment on play a very important part in the attitudes and conduct of the Cameroon native who has assumed this culture. It is partly due to the foreigner that we can distinguish the permanent features of his psychology.

The attraction of the town for these young men and the interest they show in money gives rise to an excessive desire for adventure. Banda wants to go to Fort-Nègre; he knows that like Tanga Fort-Nègre is probably also a cruel town, but this does not make him any less resolved to go there. Toundi escapes to Spanish Guinea. Aki Barnabas goes to France.

This love of adventure supposes a fighting spirit. The man from Cameroon who has been accustomed to leading an existence which is in constant strife with the hostile nature surrounding it leaves it, full of this fighting spirit and this courage which was with him in his village; he leaves to conquer this new world, which is represented by the town. He is prepared to do anything to come through his adventure successfully. Just as he has always managed to escape the captivity in which the natural prison of the forest tried to keep him, he has resolved to struggle, because he has learnt to be continually on the alert. In the town the first thing he has to fight against are the obstacles which loom up in front of him and stop his making progress. Koumé and his friends do not hesitate to rough up their boss in *Ville Cruelle*. Aki is never discouraged when he loses the job he had; he starts looking for another one without delay. Thus he works in quick succession as a tutor, tout, hotel-boy, public scribe, before he goes to Europe.

These characters do not always exploit their power of fighting in order to pull through; from time to time they have to draw on their intelligence, their ingenuity and their resourcefulness. They wheel and deal, they plan intrigues, they adapt to the environment to have a better chance of finding a way through it. Most of the time this chance comes as the result of a carefully planned intrigue, carried out with a relative or friend. Whole days are spent waiting and talking in the corridors of administrative offices where a cousin of some sort—often many times removed—is working. This cousin will be the person who finds a job for his relative, by putting in a word with the administrative authorities. For his part the cousin or friend asks for a kid in return, or a sum of money and sometimes even the favors of the pretty sister of the candidate for typist or filing-clerk. Once the job is his, it is in turn decided to take advantage of it, in the same way that the cousin or friend did. This aspect of the love of intrigue in the young Cameroon citizen has not yet been sufficiently exploited by the writer. And yet the Cameroon Figaro is a very real type in modern Cameroon society.

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

* * *

Without being a xenophobe, the Cameroon man is never keen to lose face in front of a foreigner. His great ambition is to show the foreigner that he is a person with a strong sense of dignity and respectability. Is not one of the large tribes of these parts called the Beti tribe, the tribe of the Lords? Several texts show us this strong pride and this sense of honor in the attitudes and conduct of the semi-westernized Cameroon subject. The departure of Barnabas from Kriminopoulous testifies to this pride. One afternoon, we read in Ferdinand Oyono's *Chemin d'Europe*, the young Aki Barnabas was seized with the desire to play a trick of some kind on his boss. He went to the sweet shop and acted in such a way that the Cretan would surprise him red-handed in the act of stealing. But Kriminopoulous merely showed intense scorn for the young tout. Seeing this scorn, Aki left the shop forever, abandoned his job and did not even ask to be paid.

“What is more I planned a trick which would make Mr. Kriminopoulous jump up from his sleep and surprise me with my hand in the sweet-jar; but the man was sleeping in the lethargic slumber that overtook him on boiling hot afternoons. But the Cretan, beyond his cataleptic sleep, shows me his scorn for me in his personal and emphatic manner. As for the object of my boyish covetousness, I forgot about it in favor of the veranda... with my jacket over my head I left Mr. Kriminopoulous's shop forever, and walked outside into the African sun...”³⁴

This pride and sense of honor lead the person in question to make a protest of some kind whenever the chance arises. This spirit of protest and banter is clearly the major psychological characteristic of the native characters of the Cameroon novel. Throughout the work of Mongo Beti we come across the same spirit of argument. The fact is that in spite of his sense of hospitality and friendship the Cameroon subject cannot tolerate petty humiliation or servitude. So through practically all his characters Mongo Beti shows us this essential psychological feature

³⁴ *Chemin d'Europe*, pp. 23-24.

of his fellow countrymen. The protest is directed against the administration, against the missionaries, against the authority of parents and against established customs. In *Ville Cruelle*, Banda vigorously protests against the decision of the cacao inspectors who say the young man's crop is of poor quality.

"Poor cacao... very poor quality. Burn it!" say the inspectors. And Banda quivered with rage. His eyes filled up with tears. No, he roared, it's not true! My cacao is good! And he leapt after the inspector's henchmen."³⁵

Koumé also protests about the dishonesty of his Greek boss. His action, incidentally, is more effective; in fact he steals ten thousand francs from the Greek and excites a riot.

In church, Banda unleashes a cry of protest against Father Kolmann's sermon and puts in question the very usefulness of Catholicism in Africa.

"But where does it get you, all this catechism and mass and rosaries and confession and matins and vespers and all the other fads? Didn't our ancestors believe in God before the White Man arrived?"³⁶

It is this same spirit of contestation and banter that we see in the young people who were to free themselves from the authority of their parents. In the attitudes of these young people towards their parents there is clearly a conflict of generations, but it goes further than this: it is a question here of a mentality which does not greatly accept any authority whatsoever; this mentality is extremely jealous of its freedom. Medza shouts pointblank at his father: "First, I don't want to go to college, I don't want to take any more exams. If there are people who think it's easy, let them go instead of me."

And then: "It's all over and done with now. I don't want any more beatings. And no one's going to beat me any more. It's all over now. Is that clear?"³⁷ What is more, Zambo

³⁵ *Ville Cruelle*, p. 46, Ed. Présence Africaine, 1971.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

supports his cousin; Medza: "Well done, that was fine, little cousin! very fine!" he called out to Medza after the latter's outburst. The chief of the Essazam finally doesn't accept to reject his wives to live the life of a good Christian. He finds that religion very strict. And so he is keen to shake off the heavy yoke of Christianity to "return to the joys of polygamy." The man of the people has a spirit of protest within him, but he is also good-hearted and a joker:

"In the face of real or feigned anxieties I kept up a certain sense of humor which has often labelled me as a shallow and amoral person. This keen desire for drollery is a more or less absolute criterion to which I referred. It caused my father to despair. He was a pious old man with a slap-happy hand."

This, in a few words, is how Aki Barnabas talks to us about himself in *Chemin d'Europe*.

The new world in which the young Cameroon man lives has not caused him to lose his sense of humor and satire—that psychological characteristic which we have already seen in the traditional Cameroon native. This characteristic appears this time with a special reinforcement because the humor and pleasantry are directed against the foreigner. At any given moment the latter is made to look ridiculous. The white man is given nicknames: the superintendent at Doum in *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille* is given the name of "bird's gullet" by the townfolk, obviously because he has an exceptionally large Adam's apple. The author of *Kel'lam* also tells us of this aptitude in the Cameroon people to give Europeans grotesque nicknames. We shall quote this page in spite of its length, because it is full of truth:

"There is another area where the observant mind of the Black, his cunning irony and his intuition constitute real assets: nicknames. Those, above all, which he pins on Whites. It's obvious that a large nose will be called Buceros, a large belly: half-barrel or full-pot; a tall bald man: dry tree; door without a flap: a gaping mouth; all eyes: a man with a bulging expression; mushroom: the one-legged man; some big-breasted old woman: papaya bearer; umbrella:

a big head on a little body; sealed pot: someone deaf. These are physical features which can be compared with familiar objects. But it must be agreed that the stigmatization of certain people involves a special genius. A bat that laughs right into the sauce would be a face wrinkled in a perpetual grin, exposing a row of yellow teeth (but who could understand this without having seen the smoked and withered mummy of some bat destined for the *pot-au-feu*?). This rhythmic phrase will follow him henceforth, just as the Iron-which-gets-no-bigger will follow someone who is healthy but scrawny.

But it is not so much the physical features as the actual character which is painted by the well-found nickname, in good humor. Hot water, cold water: someone versatile; bag of Manians: an awkward customer; empty snail's shell or rotten trunk: someone who it is not wise to trust; truck without a steering-wheel: someone untrustworthy, etc."³⁸

III. STRONGLY WESTERNIZED PEOPLES

We saw at the outset that the ethno-psychologist is interested by works of Cameroon literature. The same goes for the authors of such works as well. The latter reveal to us their strong feeling of the ego. First and foremost they talk about their country and themselves. But this testimony is peculiar. The subjects dealt with by writers, for example, are chosen by design: they talk of themselves so as to be able better to talk of others, and to condemn them better. This condemnation is shown clearly in the satire which is already present in these works. It has been frequently observed that Cameroon writers are at once satirical and humoristic, but an in-depth study of these writers shows them to be more satirical than humoristic, and the distinction is without worth. This distinction between humor and satire can in fact enable one to perceive the characterological background of these writers.

M. Panenborg distinguishes the two concepts of humor and satire as follows: "The term humor means benevolent jesting, the sensation of the laughable on a backcloth of sympathy."

³⁸ *Kel'lam fils d'Afrique*, Father Carré, pp. 128-30.

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

Hazewinkel writes that a disposition to indulgent jesting is essential to humor. In other words, jesting must brush against compassion; if it does not, then there is no question of humor. On the contrary, satire is outrageous jesting; it is malignant, hard, uncharitable. Using the formula above, with a variation, we could say that satire is "the sensation of the laughable on a backcloth of antipathy. Satire does not have the indulgent and tolerant properties of humor. The result is that humor entails some kind of relative factor, whereas satire entails something absolute: an unreserved condemnation which makes no account for mitigating circumstances."³⁹

We can say that Cameroon writers in whom satire is always present appear to be people with fairly egoistic tendencies. Is this short poem by Nyunai not fairly significant in itself?

I don't like
People to bother about me
I mistrust anyone who says he trusts me
I hate anyone who says he likes me
I flee
All my admirers.⁴⁰

And critics have seen fit to write about the poet as follows: "Nyunai's poems are the work of a very young man, brilliant to the point of virtuosity, intelligent to the point of intellectuality, and self-conscious to the point of egoism."⁴¹

It is this same egoism which one can perceive in the type of deficit of family feelings in Oyono and Mongo Beti. Both these writers talk of their family with disrespect; at times they present us with astonishing situations when one knows what the family represents for an African. We can certainly ascribe this to a contamination of western hyper-individualism, a contamination which is all the greater because these writers have been cut off from their families for a very long time. Toundi felt like killing his father, whom he saw as an egoistic and

³⁹ Pannenberg: *Les écrivains satiriques*.

⁴⁰ Nyunai, *Sagesse*.

⁴¹ Lilyan Kesteloot, *Neuf poètes camerounais*, p. 25, Clé, Yaoundé.

tyrannical old man (*Une Vie de Boy*). Aki Barnabas leaves his father's house because, he tells us, his father is a "pious old man with a slap-happy hand." Once he has been a tout the young Aki is off; he gets himself hired as Miss Gruchet's tutor. One day he decides to go to mass. In the church he recognises his father's humpback and puts a few Christians between himself and his father. Oyono describes the scene through the mouth of his hero:

"I had got as far as the front pews, or would have done, had my eye not fallen on the wretched hump on my father's back. My eyes had grown used to the gloom. Now this hump threatened to burst his pompous Swiss uniform. He was kneeling down all alone near the altar, unmistakable, more picturesque than ever, motionless in one of his comic acts of contemplation, his face propped in one hand, leaning with the other on a vulgar halberd of local manufacture, placed precisely just where a shining halo beamed down from the chandelier, not far from the tabernacle."⁴²

In *Mission Terminée* Mango Beti shows us a quarrel scene between a father and son: it is Medza, the son, who relates his argument with his father in person:

"My father managed to break the metal clasp of Uncle Mama and threw himself on me. I quickly collected in my mind all the rudiments of boxing I had learnt with my college friends, then when the moment came to hit him I didn't dare, I stepped back... He threw himself on me again. I decoyed with a slight sprint, then realising that I was outrunning him too quickly, I slowed my pace, and watched him out of the corner of my eye. Just as he caught up with me, I accelerated very quickly, like the best Welsh rugby player. My father didn't give up, however, although he was completely out of breath. Stubborn as a mule he was! He catches up with me again, and this time I didn't speed up. I hit him with a quick left hook, and fell headlong to the ground."⁴³

⁴² *Chemin d'Europe*.

⁴³ *Mission Terminée*, p. 247.

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

The deficit of family feelings is one of the concomitants of a lack of love. This lack of love is also translated into the domain of religion. The writers seem to lack any feeling of the essence of Christianity; they appear to be sceptical, at times cynical, and anti-religious.

Christianity has considerably marked the southern central area of Cameroon. It is from this region that most of the writers originate. Oyono and Mongo Beti were brought up at the Catholic mission, as were most of the present-day Cameroon intellectuals. Benjamin Matip attended the American Protestant mission school. Everything predisposed these writers, therefore, to live out their Christianity, and yet nearly all their works are satires aimed against the Christian religion. Oyono, for example, presents Aki's father to us as a man who is more or less wasting his time because he prays. Mongo Beti's novel, *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba*, is the story of a missionary failure. Father Superior Drumont, a central figure in the novel, is himself the poor and ridiculous Christ of Bomba:

"Jesus Christ and Father Superior Drumont are one and the same," he resembles Christ as depicted in religious books, "same beard, same cassock, same rope around his waist."⁴⁴

The resemblance is at once outward and inward. Father Drumont is like Jesus Christ, he is a man who can impose faith. Furthermore he is quick-tempered, stubborn, deaf to all remarks that anyone might make in his presence, and follows his own nose... "when one knows him well (he) sometimes makes one want to laugh."⁴⁵

Cameroon intellectuals can be characterized by a kind of egoism which can be detected in their high level of self-estimation, in their lack of family feelings, and in their non-comprehension of the essence of Christianity. Reading their works one is also shown a further important psychological feature of the writers of this country, namely, the extremely exalted degree of their emotionalism. This is betrayed by the disproportion affirmed

⁴⁴ *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba*, p. 12.

⁴⁵ *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba*, p. 12.

between the minimal importance of facts reported and the excessive repercussion that these facts seem to have produced in their consciousness. In these writers there is something approaching a lack of that sangfroid which should hallmark any literary creation, particularly Romantic works. The impressions are not strained; they are delivered with all the magnification accorded them by the super-emotive consciousness of these authors. The facts and situations are dilated. In short, the Cameroon novel always contains something epic in it. The characters are men of little means, but one comes across an excessive exaggeration and an excessive vehemence in the descriptions of scenes and in the accounts of the various exploits. This exaggeration and vehemence are equally the signs of this deep emotionalism which we have mentioned. A young man is sent by his uncle to go in search of the latter's wife, and what is the title of the novel? *Mission Terminée*. This pompous title is taken from detective or espionage literature, and one knows that the distinctly more striking adventures which one reads about in a spy novel have nothing in common with the short journey that the young Bantu, Medza, makes on a bike in the direction of the small hamlet of Kala. Every chapter in *Mission terminée* starts with a kind of pompously styled visiting card, thanks to which the reader expects to read a portentous episode in a great and extraordinary adventure. Here, for example, is the visiting card for the first chapter: "Chapter One, in the course of which the reader will learn of the tumultuous journey of the hero, a disturbing preamble to his adventurer's vacation. The reader will be likewise informed of his matrimonial vicissitudes, as a consequence of which a person named Niam—not to be recommended as a character—unscrupulously and unashamedly charges a young boy, almost a baby, with a perilous expedition into an unknown, if not hostile country." Medza leaves one morning on his bicycle, a true conquering knight:

The next day, at dawn, I straddled my mount which was splendid: a bicycle called a Raleigh Aristocrat (sic). I spurred it on as vigorously as any conquistador might; with its well-oiled pedals and its tall wheels it galloped along at a fine speed. Then, half-way, I slowed down to take in the sight of the roadway, an endless red ribbon

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

unfolding beneath me like the trick of some protecting fairy. The chain whirred round like some loud rosary, and evoked in my mind Pizarro's horse clacking its iron shoes across the highways of the vast kingdom of the Incas."⁴⁶

Similar magnification occurs in *Le Roi Miraculé* where a petty king in the long-lost brush of Southern Cameroon, who is gravely ill, is miraculously cured by the last sacraments administered to him.

Cette Afrique-là and *Afrique nous t'ignorons!* Here again we have two titles which are in disproportion with what is related to us in these novels by Jean Ikelle Matiba and Benjamin Matip respectively. They talk to us about the lower region of Southern Cameroon, and not about Africa as a whole.

There is a strong tendency to exaggeration discernible in the titles of these works in relation to their content. But the satirical factor above all else is rich in superlativism and exaggeration. Once again it is M. Pannenberg who tells us of the superlativistic tendency with regard to satirists as a manifestation of their deep emotionalism, their fundamental sense of propriety: "Their egocentric attitude, their susceptibility and their harsh mistrust, and their strong emotions are enough to explain why, in general, their opinions are stamped with a pronounced subjectivity, and why one cannot accept them without certain reservations. They are inclined to exaggeration and often to boasting; their views are unilateral and partial."

CONCLUSION

An ethnotype can be defined as an average of psychological elements observable in all the individuals of a given group. We have seen three types of men who presented characterological differences, it is true, but who, above all, have enabled us to detect the similarities between them. Certain features recur in fact in spite of the different degrees of acculturation. The overall complex of these constants can be considered as the charac-

⁴⁶ *Mission Terminée.*

terological spectrum of the Cameroon subject such as he is revealed to us by Cameroon writers. Among other aspects we have encountered in these three types a method of poly-systematic structurization which is betrayed by a kind of anarchism, an analytical thought revealed by a great spirit of observation. The Cameroon subject, furthermore, whether accultured or not, has appeared as an average worker and no more; his activity therefore seems to be on the very edge of the average; with regard to his reactivity, this has appeared as rather primary, and this primariness has been revealed by his intense enjoyment of life. Faced with another, the man who concerns us has presented certain characteristics of an individualist; in fact on several occasions and in several ways he indicates a great love of freedom, a deep sense of pride, in a word a strong sense of his "I" to the detriment of the community sense. With regard to his values, lastly, he does not appear to take them very seriously, whether these values are material or religious.

If one had to characterize these features in the manner of Le Senne, that is following the three constitutive elements of character, emotionalism, activity and reverberation, one could say in connection with the emotionalism of the Cameroon subject that he reveals an emotional factor which is above the average. The diagnostic of emotionalism always supposes that one has recognized the interests of the subject under consideration, writes Le Senne. The interest of the Cameroon subject seems to be focussed essentially on an "I". We have discovered this deep self-consciousness in the subjective commotion with which the Cameroon subject responded to any provocation. Aside from the autobiographical character of the works, the tendency to exaggerate and use superlativism, we have found in this man a great demonstrativeness which consisted in voluntarily expressing his sympathies and antipathies. All, or nearly all, Romantic works are works which are committed, or written as part of a struggle. Satire and humor are always to be found in them.

It is Le Senne again who defines for us the second constitutive property of character. He writes that the active man is he for whom the emergence of an obstacle reinforces the action taken by him in the direction which the obstacle has just cut off; the inactive man is he who is discouraged by the obstacle. Steeped in himself, proud and jealous of his liberty, the

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

Cameroon subject does not know how to take pains. He works only to meet the requirements of survival.

Several symptoms, lastly, give us to suspect a lack of accumulated impressions in the Cameroon subject. Because of this one is inclined to list the latter among the primary ones. We have seen that the traditional society was headless and revealed a spirit of anarchy. The Cameroon individual is undisciplined. This lack of discipline also emerges in his great mobility. Aki Barnabas in Oyono's *Chemin d'Europe* changes trades several times. Of course he does not do so voluntarily, but at least once, when he leaves Kriminopoulous, he does so capriciously. In *Ville Cruelle* Banda has only one thing on his mind, to go to Fort-Nègre. Medza really loves Edima, he preferred her to Elise, he went as far as fighting with his father who wanted to shame him in front of his beloved, but in the end the young man in fact abandons Edima to go to France. Emotive, but not primarily active, the man we are talking about thus appears as a somewhat vigorous type. Of course one practically never finds a character type in its pure state. The Cameroon individual, by his gaiety and his good humor, and by his fighting spirit, also presents choleric characteristics at the same time; he would thus be defined as a para-choleric excitable type.

* * *

It is above all intuition which presides over the appreciations made and based on the method we have followed; and this intuition perhaps makes the ethno-psychologist take his true place among the authentically scientific disciplines.⁴⁷ Let us add to this observation the fact that there is an even more aggravating circumstance: the author of this study is talking about his own country, and what is more, his own part of the country specifically. We know how hard it is to talk about oneself without getting carried away by a certain subjectivity.

Whatever the case may be, it is our opinion that imagology and ethno-psychology in a literary sense are of considerable

⁴⁷ Also because intuition is a manner of knowledge which is not opposed to logic as people have had one believe, but which remains valid in as far as the intuition itself is supervised, balanced and completed by logic.

interest. Literature—above all comparative literature—and ethno-psychology each draw the greatest benefit from them. The latter, seen as a discipline, finds, from the methodological viewpoint in the study of literary texts, a complementary approach which would specify the results obtained by starting from other approaches. The former sees new horizons open up before it with regard to criticism.

From the utilitarian viewpoint—knowledge produced by man should refer back to him in order to ameliorate his conditions of existence—a country such as the one we have discussed draws an even greater benefit from ethno-psychological studies. The first and immediate use one can make from results obtained would be of a pedagogic order. A more effective rationalization of instruction (programs, framework for study, curriculae, etc.) could certainly be made based on character traits. The scholarization of certain regions of Cameroon which seems to pose so many problems could certainly be solved by adapting instruction to the mentality of the person from these parts. It is always thanks to instruction and education that one could work at developing, in such and such a group, such and such a characteristic which would be clearly reduced in this group. The objective of this education would be to assure a mental equilibrium in everyone, and consequently to avoid inter-tribal or inter-ethnic wars which generally originate from and are founded on differences in mentality. Once the intellectual dispositions of a given group are specified, they can contribute to a better orientation of that group—with regard to its mental attitudes—towards the occupational specialization which would be most likely to help the national complex to achieve the designated economic objectives for a determined period of time.

We have just mentioned inter-tribal or inter-ethnic understanding. When one extends the debate, one perceives the hopes which would emerge from a study of national African mentalities. Literary imagology and ethno-psychology, to which certain other approaches would be added this time, would unveil national characterological spectra, which would definitely represent the foundations of eventual dialogue between all those African countries in search of African Unity. This is the humanism of difference. It is perhaps better in the first place to know one another before a mutual understanding of one another is reached.

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

This latter would induce a mutual *entente* with a view to common action. Would it not be the ethnotype, that is, the typical representative of a people, who could alone instruct us about that people? who could enable us to anticipate if not its acts which envelop the contingency of historical circumstances and involve the freedom of its authors, at least the general characteristics of its conduct, seen as essentially subject to its own psychological motivations?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Theoretical works and articles on Imagology and Ethno-psychology.

- BINET A., *La création littéraire*, Année psychologique, 1903, pp. 1-62.
- BROSSAUD J. F., "Réflexions méthodologiques sur l'imagologie et l'ethnopsychologie littéraires," *Revue de Psychologie des peuples*, No. 4. 1968.
- FREUD S., *Psychologie Collective*, Paris, 1923; translated by Dr. Jankélévitch; 320 p.
- GRIEGER P., *La caractérologie ethnique*, Paris, PUF, 1961, 320 p.
- HEUSE A., *La psychologie ethnique*, Paris, 1953, 151 p.
- KLINBERG O., *Race et psychologie*, Paris, 1951, 42 p.
- *Social Psychology*, revised edition, 1954.
- LE BON G., *Psychologie des foules*, 13th edition, Paris, 1908, 200 p.
- LE SENNE R., *Traité de caractérologie*, 3rd edition, Paris, PUF, 1949, 657 p.
- MICHAUD G., *Introduction à une science de la littérature*, Istanbul 1950, 279 p.
- PANNENBORG W. A., *Les écrivains satiriques*, translated from the Dutch, Paris, PUF, 1955, 90 p.

General works about Africa.

- BALANDIER GEORGES, *Sociologie actuelle de l'Afrique noire. Dynamique des changements sociaux en Afrique centrale*, Paris PUF, 1955, 511 p.
- *Sociologie des Brazzavilles noires*, Paris, A. Colin, 1955, 275 p.
- *Afrique ambiguë*, Paris, Plon, 1957, 293 p.
- HEUSE G., *La psychologie des Noirs-africains. Problèmes de l'Afrique centrale*, No. 25, 1954.
- *Études psychologiques sur les Noirs soudanais et guinéens*, *Revue de Psychologie des peuples*, no. 1. 1957.
- DELAFOSSE M., *Les Noirs de l'Afrique*, Final edition, Paris, Payot 1941, 160 p.
- FONTAINE Cl., "Ma première clef pour l'intelligence de l'Afrique," *Revue de psychologie des peuples*, no. 2, 1965.
- MANNONI O., *La Psychologie de la Colonisation*, Seuil, 1950, 231 p.
- MAQUET J., *Les Civilisations noires*, Marabout University, 1966, 320 p.
- *Africanité traditionnelle et moderne*, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1967, 180 p.

Ethnic Survivals and the Modern Shift

SENGHOR L., *Négritude et humanisme*, Seuil, 1964.

N.B. The chapter headed: *Éléments constitutifs d'une civilisation d'inspiration négro-africaine*, p. 252. 286 p.

SURET CANALE J., *Afrique noire occidentale et centrale* (People and culture).

— 1. Géographie. Civilisation. Histoire. Paris. Editions sociales, 3rd edition, 1968, 399 p.

— 2. L'Ere coloniale (1900-1945). Paris. Editions sociales, 1964, 639 p.

Articles

THOMAS L. V., "Acculturation et déplacements de populations en Afrique de l'Ouest," *Revue de psychologie des peuples*, no. 1. 1961.

— "Une idéologie nouvelle, La négritude," *Revue de psychologie des peuples*, no. 4, 1963.

Critical works on African literature

Proceedings of the Meeting on African literature written in French. Published by the Faculty of Letters, Dakar. *Langues et Littérature*, no. 14, Dakar 1965, 276 p.

BENOT Y., *Négritude, socialisme et réalisme*.

— *La Pensée*, new series no. 121 (June 1965).

MALLEY F., *L'affrontement des civilisations dans le tiers-monde*.

— *Economie et Humanisme*, no. 150, Nov.-Dec. 1965.

MELONE T., *Mongo Beti, L'Homme et le destin*, Présence Africaine, 1972.

Cameroon authors and writers

BENGONO J., *La perdrix blanche* (Abbia Clé, Yaoundé, 1966) 80 p. Fairy-tale.

IKELLE MATIBA J., *Cette Afrique-là*, Présence Africaine 1963, 245 p. (Novel).

KINDENGVE NJOCK P. C., *Kel'lam, fils d'Afrique*, novel.

MATIP B., *Afrique, nous t'ignorons*, Larose, 1956, 125 p. Novel.

— *A la belle étoile*, Présence Africaine, 1962, 91 p. Short stories.

PHILOMBÉ R., *Lettres de ma cambuse*, Clé, Yaoundé 1964, 64 p. Novellas.

— *Sola, ma chérie*, Clé, Yaoundé 1966, 125 p. Novel.

OWONO J., *Tante Bella*. "Au Messenger" bookshop, Yaoundé 1959, 293 p. Novel.

MONGO BETI (EZA BOTO). Real name ALEXANDRE BIYIDI.

— *Ville Cruelle*, Présence Africaine, 1954, 219 p. Novel.

— *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba*, Robert Laffont, 1956, 370 p. Novel.

— *Mission Terminée*, Corrêa, Buchet-Chastel 1957, 254 p. Novel.

— *Le Roi Miraculé*, Chronique des Essazam, Corrêa, 1958, 254 p. Chronicle.

OYONO F., 3 novels published by Julliard: *Une Vie de Boy*, 1956, 188 p.

— *Le Vieux Nègre et la Médaille*, 1956, 209 p.

— *Chemin d'Europe*, 1960, 196 p.

— *Un lépreux sur une tombe*, 1958, in the review, *Hommes sans épaules*, Novella.