

Questioning the Past, Instructing the Present and Casting the Future: Refocusing the Emerging Debates and themes in Cameroon Historiography

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Abstract: History as a master of the past; a commander of the present and subtle compass of the future is continuously bulging in length and breadth as new facts, intelligible methods of construction and auxiliary tools are discovered and used by professional historians to refocus emerging themes and concepts. With these new discoveries, the historical enterprise is expanding rapidly with a deal of both concord and disagreements arising from the analyses of commonly investigated historical facts. The ability of modern history to float freely and fittingly within the world of science and that of arts; further polished by its dynamism to use the other disciplines of the social science family to assert its causation and unique kinds of Historical truth, places the course on a complex paradigm. On a broad plain, European and western historians have fought hard to minimized disagreements on their historiography but African history and historiography is still bedevilled by the scourge of bias, misinterpretation and ignorance. The Republic of Cameroon at any point in time is a fine fitting to showcase the re-investigation of the past, understanding the present and casting the future. Going by colonial history, Cameroon shares a triple experience (German, British and French).By geography, her coastline gave her wider exposure to the Atlantic slave and legitimate trades and her geographical position permitted her to be influenced by historical developments in both west and central Africa.This paper from its various sources refocuses and interrogates the emerging debates and contrasting themes like colonial misgivings, self-centeredness of early nationalists and irresponsible leadership blamed for current multifaceted problems of Cameroon historiography today. It argues that the actors behind these themes and episodes can only be better appreciated and comprehended in the light of the prevailing circumstances at the time. Such a scholarship enterprise will create a sense of positive approach to Cameroon historiography thereby, giving us a command of the present trend of issues and casting an assuring future. It further perceives the diverse Cameroon historical heritage and the harm done to it by Eurocentric writings, not as vices but as potent episodes that reminds us of our foundational frames pointedly awful but worth being used to stimulate development and hope instead of remaining steadfast in the apportioning of blames in an era of abounding opportunities.

Keywords: Cameroon, Causation History, Historiography, Sciences, Africa, Eurocentric.

INTRODUCTION

Except otherwise stated, the comportment of people and societal structures at present is always a consequent of the past. The past therefore is the material ingredient for the understanding of the present. An inadequate mastery of the past makes the management of issues in the present sound reasons why the questioning of the past is always an abiding responsibility in all fields of humanities and social sciences. Responsibility and academic probity in approaching human issues is not only a call for ethics, psychology and sociology but out rightly, the main trusts of all guilds or disciplines of knowledge. This call concerns history in its wholesome length and breadth. Cameroon historiography for the most part has yielded

to this call with often confusing and inconsistency offers. Though keys concepts that inescapably run across the broad spectrum of Cameroon historiography like Colonial legacies, Self-centeredness of the Nationalists alongside irresponsible leadership have been a subject of intense debate, this paper refocuses this debate and argues that such themes, concepts and episodes should be placed within the ambits of a broader historic scholarship carefully anchoring the dimensions of pedagogy, citizenship and the social utility of history both as a course and as a discipline. After placing the importance of history to man in its broader social science family, it posits that the teaching and writing of Cameroon history should always be done with a positive mind set. It validates the fact that the

absence of a true Cameroon soul in writing and teaching of Cameroon history has left the mastery of key concepts and main tenets of event to wallow in absurdity or systematic doubt.

Substantiating the Issues on Menu

Historical knowledge gives us both broad and specific awareness of where we came from, what we did in the past, how we did it, the circumstances that enabled us to do what we did and the immediate impact of all of that to our society. Such knowledge locates us in space and time definitely giving us an appreciable mastery of the presence. A mastery of the past in the spirit of the presence places us on a broad plane to determine the future with a fair degree of accuracy or approximation. The past in our context is being questioned not with a viridity that will ultimately bring about a replay of dates and stale facts but it envelops a virile desire to document and provide adequate answers for current successes and predicaments. Documenting the history of a people with a multi-faceted and multi-focal backgrounds and attempting to reposition the debates lingering around the main tenets is indeed an exceedingly complex task. In such an enterprise, there is need for an employment of sound methods and intelligent collection, observation, interpretation and analyses of matter by skilled or professionals in the discipline.¹The results of such an endeavour may bear some slight differences but in the mind of this paper, will ultimately bring about (A) order to even generalized reality (b) create harmony and clear understanding of relationships within established phenomena(c) distinguish what is important from what is not important or less likely and (d) from a sound awareness of the past help to direct people unto a path where their goals can be attained.² It is an established reality that absolute truth meaning (everlasting history) as obtained in theology and other exact sciences is almost a forgone alternative in the historical production. Any historical conclusion must be made within the historical fourth dimension of time and with regards to the author's position, ability, relation and conditions enabling the establishment of truth.³ Closely related are

¹ If history is to be brought out of its encasement of plane narration of events of the past such a task must be wholesomely established and scrupulously followed. To see how this can be done see John Cannon (1980) *The Historian at Work*, Boston: George Allen and UNWIN. The whole text deals with the different assignments of a professional historian.

² See Samuel P. Huntington (1997) *Clash Civilizations, Remaking World Order*, New York: Touch Stone Books; Simon and Schuster.p.30.

³ As an integral unit of the human sciences, absolute truth is not only obtainable but entirely impossible because of the ever present role of subjectivity and time revealing sources that always emerge with time. Dates provide appropriate stand points for historians but the

the elements that ignite bias and subjective judgement of facts to both professional and amateur historians.⁴ This too is further sustained by the continues emergence of new research tools and fields of knowledge that provides raw material for the history industry and makes already known historical matter either just time relevant, or colossally wanting and begging for fresh insights. This gives us the latitude to opine that the history of any society young or old, complex or single, advanced or primitive can always be repositioned for investigation though some rare cases may bring about similitudes of truth earlier produced.⁵

The development of history across the broad spectrum of time has undergone significant twists and turns. At the beginning it was seen as plane records of past events which were utterly abandoned and allowed to fallow in research centres like archives and museums. History grew to scorned throughout the broad timescale of the classical age to be as Philip Sedney puts it best;

*[...] loaden with old mouse- eaten records, authorising himself[sic]for the most part upon the histories whose greatest authorities are built upon[sic] the notable foundation of hearsay, having much ado to accord differing writers and to prick truth out of partially better acquainted with 1000 years ago, than with the present age and yet better knowing how this world goeth... curious for antiquity and inquisitive for novelties and wonder to young folks and a tyrant in table talk.*⁶

The work of a historian going by this account was an exceedingly difficult and boring exercise having the main duty of providing amusing therapies to young folks and nothing to offer on the tables where decisions were made and policy formulated. These were accusations which Leopold Von Ranke and his disciples never took lightly. History continued to gain appalling heights as it was accused at the level of wider

information therein is always revisited to see whether it still owe relevance. At some restricted ends dates too are subjected to thorough questioning. See Arthur Marwick (1981) *The Nature of History*,^{2nd} edition, London Basingstoke: Macmillan Press limited, pp. 56-9.

⁴ An amateur historian are those writers who donot display a historical culture in the collection analyses and construction of facts. He swims and not rides in the waves of historical causations and results.

⁵ Husband Christ (2002) *What is History Teaching, It strengths and its Weaknesses*, Sedney: Passing Press.p.44.

⁶ The whole text and its corollary commentaries are found are cited by C N L Brooke, 1957, *The Dullness of the Past*. The whole text is dedicated to comment on the absurdities of History.

scholarship to be vague, cliché ridden and devoid of any basic standards and form as well as in the popular lowlands of being pedantic and over-centred on the detailed search of the insignificant.⁷ These criticisms rather gave anxious moments to the scholars of history and it culminated to the establishment of an assembly of methods carefully pieced together to remove the discipline from the confines of ranked boredom to gain witty consideration in all policy formulations.⁸ By the end of the 19th century Ranke, Gibbons, Mach Bloch to provide just a shortlist, could boast to have removed history from the paradigm of boredom to gain central position in the ordering of Human behaviour in a foreseeable future. It was in this realm that Ranke positivist school of thought gained repute for giving history a grand scale utility and recognition.⁹

History before Ranke and his disciples was hardly conceived to be playing any key role in ordering people actions, guiding choices and casting the future as it came to be after him. Through intense research, the historical guild incidentally grew into an industry and expressed the need for professionals who could give and develop methods through which, mute facts about man, about his successes, plight and failures and ultimately, about his environment could be carefully examined and documented. It was tactfully and carefully reawakened and made virile enough to communicate the past with the voice and effrontery of the scientific method. It was on account of this development that Leopold Von Ranke never minced his words in declaring that "...to History and I add [History alone] has been given the higher office to question the past, instruct the present for the benefit of the future"¹⁰

History from the days of Thucydides became eclipsed in ignorance until the 19th century. With regards to European and world, History existed and could only be made when and where written sources existed. Any discourse about the past whose foundation was not written down in form of a letter, a speech, a memorandum, an agreement, a contract, a declaration, a communiqué and a report could not be considered history. It was only later in the 19th century that the historical research frontiers expanded to engulf other disciplines of the social science family like Archaeology, Sociology, Anthropology Geography and Psychology to name but a limited few, that historiography could boast to have hired all faculties of

knowledge to question the past and provide answers to the present.

The Case with African Historiography/Colonial Amputation

The problem African History and historiography is that it suffocated under the yoke of colonisation even long after Independence. It was studied and presented in a way that pertinent questions of the past and beams of reflection for the presence could not play a central role in shaping the presence. If history can give an account to man of his far and nearest generation, then it has informed him of where he is coming from in that sense definitely giving him a vague or sure awareness of where he is going to else, he will continue to stay adrift in the endless sea of time and space.¹¹ Colonialism was not patient and prudent enough to give African history that role. They strove to raise the standards of their slanted and parochial conception of African history to the heights of a religious dogma and throughout their colonial mission in the continent; battled to make Africans not only to belief in that but also to worship it as such.¹² In the mind of the colonialist; history and especially European history was not only what was worth knowing but was given the noble role to set the pattern of investigating the past of any society. The African past in this realm, had to be studied and presented through the scientific and cultural lens of the colonialist and not through any kind of indigenous contentions and cultural tenets.

For quite some time, Africans societies were held not only to be void of a history of their own worthy of world recognition but were also held not to be in any witty position of producing one. In this thinking, any effort geared towards the investigation of African past was to be seen as an attempt in futility. They were therefore subscribing to Hegel's parochial conclusion about the people, cultures and societies of Africa. In this kind of makeshift arrangements for just no cause of their own, Africans of all walks of life were alienated from their past in time and space. In the colonizers mind-sets, the formal education enterprise was a tactful onslaught designed for the nurturing of minds and personalities who could serve in various capacities like clerks, tax agents and other subaltern areas of

¹¹ See Victor Bong Amaaze (2002) *History and the Historical Method*

¹² George Gwane (2004) *Way Foreword for Africa*, Limbe: Design House Publication, pp.18-22. He paints a graphic passionate picture not only of the damage done to Africa by colonialism but also the confusion that animated Africa mindsets during the colonial onslaught. Walter Rodney (1972) in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* called the European tinted effort to enslave the African on home and away grounds as an act of armed banditry. See pp.223-5.

⁷ Arthur Marwick (1981) *The Nature of History*, pp.12-3.

⁸ Ibid. p.49

⁹ See Agatha Ramm write up on "Leopold Von Ranke 1795-1890" in *The Historian at work* edited by John Cannon, pp.36-54.

¹⁰ Ibid.

administration of the territories under colonization under their watchful and continual supervision. In whole, they did not only fail to lay emphasis on the study of the African past but took considerable pains to destroy any effort that moved in the direction of resurrecting African past. As pointed out shortly, this kind of nonchalance almost got an official certification when Hegel came up with the absurd but widely belief conclusion that Africans had no history. As if this indictment was not enough, he callously went ahead to conclude that even when this existed, it was no worth knowing. Africa to this kind of slanted conclusion, definitely laid within the ambit of the unhistorical confines of the earth.¹³

This was of course just an assorted figment of the colonial amputation of African substantial elements. The colonialists at any point in time, grossly fought to destroy anything worthy of recognition about African past or at best, strove to transform pristine African institutions to respond to demands best understood by their hierarchical structure. Central to the colonial enterprise too was the fact that they did not only keep Africa out of the brackets of historical research but took pains to install a misleading and misrepresenting notions about this continent and the people therein. This kind of bad faith on the part of the colonialists amounted to open self-disrespect because it happened just a time when the historical guild was being compartmentalised in space and time. Their attempt not to study and understand Africans from their socio-ethnic and political configuration suffice to explain why in spite of their exploitation and balkanisation, their civilising mission was in a tragic disrepute by the end of the second World War in 1945. The African past and Cameroon being African in miniature, had a huge deal of unanswered questions about its past prior to and immediately after independence.

This paper makes no false claim that the African past was a full scale black box before independence but that even when some worthy efforts were made, bugging questions whose answers could find convincing explanations from the wisdom of historical count, still circulated on or around; slave and legitimate trades, the contribution of African civilizations to world civilisations, the African political systems, African traditional and industrial sites and above all, Africa as the original home of man.¹⁴ In sum,

¹³Basile Davidson in his book titled; *The Lost Cities of Africa* describes this kind of Eurocentric ready-made scholars as “bearded monsters whose reasoning is incapable going beyond the orbits of their nostrils”.

¹⁴ These unanswered questions provided the soul of an avalanche of research majoring from scholars like Al Masuri.Fage, Ade Ajayi, A B C. Awonbinko, and the ground breaking discoveries of the earth oldest bones at Uduvai Gorge by doctor Leakey in the great lake region

it sounds fair to say that African historiography throughout the colonial period was enslaved and scantily emancipated to suit discourses purely out of the true African realm of thought. This in no little way continued to anchor themes of pertinent interest and animated debates long after African History gained space in scholarship.¹⁵ The way this survived can be depicted from a cursive re-visitation of Cameroon historiography and teaching methods.

Cameroon Historiography and Teaching Methods Revisited

The decolonization of African historiography bringing into fore the conscious use of archaeology and oral accounts as key sources and a meticulous borrowing from other disciplines never left Cameroon historiography in the broad while. In focus, it should be emphasize that History as advertised by the colonial school was a mere academic subject designed to inculcate and where possible, attempt to sale the structure and functioning of the colonial empires to the Africans on wholesale basis. Secondly, it was seen and considered by many as a subject that offered broad opportunities to majority of weak arts students to get certificates. In this thinking, the real substance of history was incidentally shifted to the rear and placed squarely within the confines of platitudes. Indeed, same as African independence could not take shape without the integration of a true African soul in the governing business, Cameroon historiography emerged from the aegis of deliberate attempts by Cameroonians to inject the Cameroon soul¹⁶ in investigating and understanding its past.

of East Africa. In no way can we make claim to have given an exhaustive list here but it suffices to know that the political decolonization of Africa greatly anchored the decolonization of Africa history as well.

¹⁵ The battle of African history to be registered in the world scholarly map was an extremely fierce one. Though it came with the general wind of decolonization, it became difficult to sort out how African causation could be made solid enough to stand the test of time. Africa had the fortune of having scholars of African breed and origins like Chiehk Anta Diop, Joseph Ki Zerbo, Franz Fanon, Davidson Basil, J F Bayart, Walter Rodney, Joseph A. Richard who used specialized frames to document the African past. In whole, they set the pattern for the documentation of the African past.

¹⁶ The Cameroon soul is used simply to refer to a general consciousness on the minds of Cameroon researcher about the specificities of Cameroon concordant with its scattered past and socio-political and economic realities. Central in this thinking was the broad base employment of the interdisciplinary approach.

Reasoning in this order, a new paradigm that animated historical research and teaching emerged which consistently buttressed the inculcation of the Cameroon soul and collective memory in judging its past. This was sourced in the fact that, there was a growing importance of historical memory to the society. It was this memory that pushed research to the archaeological debris of Shum Laka, in the North West Cameroon by Raymond Asombang, the discovery of the Sao civilization of North Cameroon not leaving out the human sites of central and South Cameroon that were investigated by Eno Beilinga and Joseph Marie Esomba.¹⁷ It was more than an arduous task to involve the Cameroon soul in documenting Cameroon history because pioneer indigenous historian of Cameroon did a job which our freedom of interdisciplinary approach permits us to call critical review of contemporaneous literature. Sidney and Beatrice Webb hold this kind of historical assignment to be akin to the job of;

*[...] a professional physiologist who restrict himself to [the act of] piecing together from the heap of dry bones the skeleton of human body. [a historian does this by questioning] documents [and people] whether they take the form of general statutes or local acts, treaties [...], Customs statistics, minutes of meetings and financial records.*¹⁸

They definitely had to proceed with clean mental slates identifying the evidences, questioning and pricking them to talk and continuing this act like skilled craftsmen by adding flesh and logic to their talk and at the end, convey a kind of historical truth akin to no other discipline but history alone.

An onerous practice which most of the early writers of Cameroon history put on was their almost colossal failure to make oral or eyewitness accounts a key element of their evidences. To this should be added the fact that they saw history to be having the chief concern of studying great events and people and not of minute institutions. If this kind of error was left to blossom, it could have created short circuits in historical understanding because big events grew from the ashes of small ones. This task was carefully taken into account when oral history was integrated as a key area of Cameroon History. In contemporary historical

discourse, oral evidences with their strengths and weakness play a key role.¹⁹

It should be noted that the re-unifications of the two Cameroons in 1961, gave history and historians of all walks of life new and arduous responsibilities. The need for the implication of the national soul in the writing and teaching of history became almost indispensable. With the colonial educational structures and philosophy still alive in both sides of the country, tact was required to efface them or at best forced them to become remote concerns in the teaching and writing of Cameroon History. Makeshift solutions were put in place to inculcate the Cameroonian soul through and within the teaching of Civics Education but such a design failed to bring forth amazing fruits because it limited itself with the teaching and mastery of rights and responsibilities of citizens; a far less offer to what history of Cameroon borne in the prescient of the Cameroon soul could have provided.²⁰

Another interesting outgrowth of the Cameroon post-unification history and historiography was that; history for the most part was still patterned along the lines of pre-unification thinking. Scholars in both parts of the territory still hung unto the old traditions where the teaching of the Course and discipline in French or British Cameroon colonial institutions, people, events and structure of power took prime place. For quite some time, history in Cameroon meant and was popularly held to be the study of the people, institutions and the evolution of power structures and trends of the former colonial barons. Even at this, it became difficult to study and teach events and issues that circulated around colonial and decolonization encounters.²¹

The frenzied onslaught for the national soul in the documentation of the history of most African countries as from the 1970 grew from the fact that history consistently proved to be the only single discipline whose mastery could (a) Inform, nurture and

¹⁹ Jean Vansina in the 1970 launched a full scale crusade for the potency of oral evidence in understanding the African past and succeeded in the main to bring it into an acceptable focus. See (1978), "For Oral tradition (But not against Bruadel)" in *History in Africa vol.5*, published by African Studies Association, pp.351-6.

²¹ These were issues President Ahidjo hated to the core not because knowledge about such occurrences was itself bad but because such awareness could prick minds and ignite a revolution. The need to respect and sustain the accords of cooperation signed with France at independence too made Ahidjo to guard against anything that could make the French in Cameroon and French government at large feel uncomfortable.

¹⁷ Together with Claude Tardits and Bruens who studied the language patterns, the Cameroon past was brought into a very serious and pertinent scientific focus. Each their findings established links that was variously employed by writers of Cameroon history.

¹⁸ Sidney and Beatrice Webb (1975) *Methods of social study*, New York; Cambridge University Press. p. 117. NB all the interpolations in the square brackets are mine.

make mature minds that could develop inner self-realization and place articulate premium on the contextual realities of the past,(b)through the cultivation of the spirit of self- awareness enable citizens(nationals of all walks of life) to cultivate tidy and articulately disciplined thoughts towards received traditions as well as the ability to pro-act and react intelligently in a given situations AND(c),make the society to see that the past in its overlapping constituents and respect to the time factor, always percolate into the presence ultimately budding frustrations and successes as the case maybe. To these specific appealing considerations should be added the general contentions held across the disciplines which holds History to be like; ...a Jewel with a thousand faces, clever, sophisticated, creative, and often poetic almost always entertaining and instructive [in all] history is a vision of God revealing himself in action to souls that were sincerely seeking him.²²

With regards to Cameroon History it was not the entertaining or poetic qualities of this course and discipline that were required but a frank commitment by the powers that be to understand over and above everything that, the present grows into maturity in the mould of the past. On this count, History will be gratified to have placed Cameroonians in a broad sea of knowledge to know that the present no matter how complex, is inextricably cued up with the knowledge of the past and more resolutely, that a mastery of the present gives us a sure compass to measure the future. The overriding relevance of history and in our context Cameroon Historiography was and this paper still suggest should be that, themes and concepts that ran through the full length and breadth of Cameroon history and historiography should to be appreciated and constructed with a special regard to the special circumstances that circumvented the events and issues in focus. Crucial historical issues like Ahidjos 'overlapping autocracy, Fonchas' selfishness/ naivety and the colonial encounters to name just a few, have been styled and whole heartedly blamed for anything undesirable in Cameroon today. Fertile and praise worthy as their evidences and historical logic may suggest, this paper from the on-going considerations argues that a different approach that must take into perspective the circumstances, political offing and the cultural tenets that operated at the time of the event is required in teaching and writing Cameroon history. If

²²This information is retrieved word verbatim from A .Ndi(2013) *Southern West Cameroon Revisited; North-South West Nexus 1858-1972, Myth, History and R A Murphy(1990)Background to the Bible, An Introduction to the Scripture*, Michigan Servant eality, Bamenda: Pauls Printing Press.p.172.He too was paraphrasing Richard T Books and Arbor p.196.Also see Arthur Marwick(1985)*The Nature of History*, Macmillan Publishers Ltd.p.16.

this not done,this discipline will in the near future negotiate bends which may categorize and class it as a dangerous course whose prime mission is only to blame ,judge and sentence the past and the people that made meaning to it.

Seen this way Cameroon history will have a noble mission in its art of performing an academic function by budding knowledge and nourishing brains. It will also play moral functions by taming spirits and anchoring hope through its ability to provide a long yardstick with which future action can be charted and thirdly, it will play a role of citizenship by building a true nationalist spirit (soul). These are all key conditions for nation building. Seen and accepted as such, the holistic mission of history will be to nourish brains, expand the frontiers of know-how and know-which as well as, give individuals the latitude to adjust and integrate freely by summoning all the faculties to tap from the wealth and opportunism that may arise thereof. Such a noble role of history is not just necessary but completely indispensable for a country like Cameroon with a treble heritage namely; German1884-1916, Britain and France 1922-60.The fact too that Cameroon as it came to be after 1961 had a multiplicity of ethnic groupings with various socio-political configuration, combined to create a curiosity which only history reasoned in the mind of the above stated, treble character could muscle the academic fist to provide convincing answers.

In perspective, Cameroon historiography even as far late as the early 1980s still hung in the shaky balance but the situation was different with higher education where history constituted a whole discipline. Though evaluation accompanied by the need to get end of course certificates constituted a key element that justified the teaching of history in the University, emphasis shifted from an attempt to know assorted events to the paradigm of mastering the unison of historical discourse and its replication to wider scholarship. The teaching of History in Higher education took pains to inculcate the Cameroon soul from the undergraduate to the graduate levels. Besides this, the prime movers and actors of Cameroon history at the time like Martin Njeuma, Engelbert Mveng,Joseph Marie Essomba and ethnographers of foreign abstraction designed programmes through which different methods of studying and writing Cameroon and African History in general, got primordial consideration.²³ This is the spirit that earlier

²³ All of these prime movers of Cameroon History taught History as a discipline in the University of Yaounde. As from the late seventies they designed a history programme that responded more to national needs that colonial abstraction. The teaching of the act of researching understanding and documenting African History also became greatly revised. Their efforts were

pushed Harry R. Ruddins to reprint his book that had remained almost as a bible of the Germans in Cameroon throughout the colonial period.²⁴ Other scholars like Willard Johnson and Neville Rubin had also taken pains to publish extensively on key aspects of Cameroon History.

Developments both in Cameroon, Africa and world at large in the 1990 made it in such a way that key aspects of Cameroon history like colonial misgiving, self-centeredness of political leaders gave manifold reasons for a re-investigation or questioning. One key area where need arose for a refocus was the fact that the triple colonial heritage of Cameroon is responsible for the lack of the Cameroon soul in the conduct of public business at present. A true Cameroonian soul will as matters of fact employ the treble colonial legacies as a good starting point because it was this very soul that gave Cameroonians of all political opinions, the chance to propel progress and install change as a whole in the collection of data and the employment of a distinct historical mindedness in document their past.

The British policy of Indirect Rule though overridden by a desire not to spend a franc on matters that did not directly concerned them, Britain succeeded to bring up people in the mould of governance who had a genuine desire to love their father land and to restore boundless faith in their socio-political and economic institutions therein.²⁵ For the most part, the spirit of honesty, hard work and accountability that became the hall mark of those who ran the Southern/West Cameroon government after independence got its roots from the rudiments of the local governance which was itself the soul of the Indirect Rule system. Indeed, the teaching of Cameroon history with an inclusion of the Cameroon soul in this part of the country was good in principle but not too necessary because the people proved in the management of their stringent or “shoe

sustained by the early works of Ethnographers and anthropologist like Claude Tardits, Eno Belinga, Chilver and Kabery who had made great efforts to document a variety of issues about the Cameroon people in their wider African context.

²⁴ Harry R. Ruddins (1938) prolific write-up titled; *Germans in the Cameroons: A study in modern Imperialism* was reprinted in 1968 because of rising demands especially in the English part of the country. This was mainly because before this time, the German colonial period represented literary nothing of interest to them. This document was detailed, self-explicit and provided the key component of one Cameroon (Soul) a thing the new Cameroon leadership desperately yearned for and fought hard to see it workable after 1961.

²⁵ See Ndi(2005) *The Golden Age of Southern West Cameroon; Impact of Christianity*, pp.21-4.

string” to be conscious of their rights and responsibilities in nation building. Though Ndi²⁶ argues that these virtues were essentially rooted on the Christian norms and values, the contribution of the Indirect Rule policy to this kind of conduct cannot be completely cast away. This spirit was certainly reinforced by the early foundations put in place by the Germans.

Though the German period of protectorate (1884-1916) has gained wholesale culpability in maltreating the indigenes and claiming the rights of the natives which the Germano-Doula treaty could and cannot justify at present, their material and ideological contribution to Cameroon still finds relevance to our age. The German colonial period cannot be wholesomely described as void of any worthy colonial legacy and contribution. Rudins accepts that Jesko Von Puttkamer and Liest cannot be forgiven for the harm they did to the natives but still found the German to have earned some praise in contributing to the welfare of the people. Again, the French Policy of direct rule that took the tempo of assimilation, association and differentiation even in seeking first “the colonial Kingdom” throughout their mandate assignment, never completely abandoned development and emancipation.

In keeping with their passionate mission to frenchify every aspect of public life, the French through their broad spectrum application of the policy of La “*Mise en valeur*” ostensibly improved upon the road and rail network. A few cases in point will include, the Douala- Loum-Nkongsamba Nkam –Bafang, the Fouban –Banyo-Tibati-Ngoundere and the Rail line linking Douala-Edea-Yaounde through Bertoua to Ngoundere not leaving out the roads that linked the whole Northern part of French Cameroon.²⁷ In the domain of health, significant efforts were made to improve upon the health situation of Cameroonian through the creation and opening of health institutions like the school of hygiene in Douala in 1925, the professional training of Nurses’s school in Ayos not leaving out the effort they made through Eugene Jamot to combat sleeping sickness so much that, this health havoc was almost completely eradicated by 1939.²⁸ Indeed, by 1960 when the French part of Cameroon gained independence, France had succeeded to grill a substantial portion of the political conscious class of Cameroon to think, reason and act French or in a French-like (*citoyens*) conduct but materially, there was equally much to show terms of infrastructure. The radical stance of the UPC in the political developments

²⁶ Anthony Ndi(2010) *The Golden Age of Southern/West Cameroon: An Experiment in nation Building*. This idea runs through the whole book.

²⁷ Victor Julius Ngoh(1996) *History of Cameroon since 1800*, Limbe:limbe Pressbooks, p.132.

²⁸ Ibid.p.137.

in French Cameroun grew mostly from social concerns and a feeling that the French authorities were not doing enough than benign neglect. Compared to British part of the territory that was staggering on the yoke of classic neglect, she was far advanced in everything short of genuine political emancipation.²⁹

CONCLUSION

Put together, the whole mission of colonialism in Cameroon under any policy had a number of structures and ideologies that were borrowed by the post independent governing systems. In teaching and writing Cameroon history, this paper posits that, emphasis should be laid on the failure of those who ran the different structures and ideologies of governance at the time of independence to be conscious of their past. The triple colonial heritage with its strengths and weakness needed to be harness at independence to give room for the emergence of a true Cameroon style that did not only inculcate the Cameroon soul but was largely responsive to local realities and needs. Going by this kind of thinking, it will be worth the while to suggest that the writing and teaching of Cameroon in its wider African context, care should be taken to give a positive appreciation to the role played by the various colonial governments rather than insisting that they had no mission different from the diabolic desire to exploit the valuable resources at any point in time. The same holds for the people who shaped our past either in distant or after independence. The past needs to be questioned not to apportion blames and chisel old wounds rather, to be conscious of how those that preceded us triumphed and failed in their strife to make our country a better place for posterity. This way, we will find it compelling to answer questions whether our deeds in our offices, homes, banks, have anything to bequeath for posterity. "The eyes of History are on the sparrow watching"

²⁹ To have a full grasp of the graphic presentation of this neglect and contrast see Emmanuel Aloangama Aka(2002)*The British Southern Cameroons ,1922-1961:A study in colonialism and Underdevelopment*, Madison: Nkemji Global Tech,Platteville .He emphasizes on the educational neglect arguing that on this count, French and British Cameroons were like in two worlds standing diametrically apart.

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