

Of Citizenship, Public Spaces and National Imagining in Cameroon

NANTANG JUA

bbenjua@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

“*voirité*” that center-staged the problematic of citizenship in Africa is not an ivorian exception. All over Africa, new forms of exclusion and inclusion, though subtle but with similar insidious consequences, are being imagined. That this is not just an African phenomenon was brought to the fore recently by Jacques Chirac’s comments that Eastern European countries, which decided to join “the coalition of the willing” *ont manqué une bonne occasion de se taire*. The subtext was that their alignment with the American position would compromise their chances of acceding to European citizenship. Ostensibly, Cameroon is an exception to this trend as its political discourse emphasizes vigilance among its citizens with a view to cordoning off the country from this polemic. Yet a hermeneutics of its politics shows this as just a rhetorical strategy designed to obfuscate the centrality of identity politics in Cameroon. Promotion of the philosophy of *camerounité* is essentially concerned with the creation of a symbolic order on which national integration is predicated. But the Cameroonian reality reeks of an Ivorian syndrome in the making.

Most of Cameroon’s post-colonial history is replete with ‘universalizing’ narratives of national unity. Neurotically pursued, this quest to efface differences culminated in President Paul Biya’s declaration that the country had to move beyond unity to a higher stage of national integration. To attain this, it was “necessary to make every Cameroonian feel that he is fundamentally equal to all other Cameroonians”(1986: 30&37). Biya assigned towns, the “symbols of modern life, learning and wealth” (1986:10) as a privileged role in this process. Underlying this emphasis was an acknowledgement of the historical role that they had played in the quest for independence. Pointedly, a critical mass of educated Africans who nursed accumulated grievances against the European colonial masters, especially in the wake of their decision to rule with culturally more legitimate allies

(Mamdani, 1996:74) were found in this space. For others, it was a hub. Credentialing had helped to nurture a feeling of possibility among this class. Whereas Anderson stresses that this imbued them with "bilingual literacy" (1990:107) and correctly so, I would emphasize more its role in promoting a dialogical process of identity formation and world-disclosure. Consensus engendered by this linguistically mediated intersubjective interaction that cannot be validated by rational reflection alone are crucial for the establishment and reproduction of identities and traditions (Habermas, 1994:109). Contextually, this consensus enabled identification with what was essentially a political myth, Cameroon.

The relational rapport enabled by this consensus is critical for the birth of a discursive democracy¹ which holds together citizenry as a whole "by a substantive consensus not on values but only by a consensus on the procedures for the legitimate enactment of laws and the exercise of power" (Habermas, 1994:148). Though simple visibility in public space is a necessary condition for this citizenship (cf. Rogers, 1998:207), emphasis should be on the procedure for defining "a general corpus of rights, duties and activities of individuals and groups relevant to the expression of their interests with regard to public sphere decisions affecting life opportunities, quality of life and/or representation to others in society" (Vertovec, 1998:188). Inclusiveness is important in this process as it enables all the participants to realize the plurality of forms of identity through which they are constituted with a view to their insertion into a variety of social relations. It therefore requires that citizens as active agents be seen to be equal. To borrow from Ronald Dworkin, they should be treated with "equal concern and respect" or what is referred to as 'procedural equality'.² Arguably equality implies, if not foregrounds or is synonymous with justice. And justice, Young suggests, "lies in a set of unrealized possibilities which, as it were lie just beneath the surface and can therefore be drawn out." Underlining its political, social and ethical dimensions, she argues that this process can be impeded by the

¹ John Stuart Mill emphasizes this attribute when he contends that the instructed minority should be granted more votes because they can correct the abuses of the majority power by a superior capacity for reflective rather than instinctive decisions. See *Representative Government*, Dent, London, p.218.

² This was borne out by an empirical study carried out by Chilean sociologists just before a plebiscite in the 1990s. They found out that people wanted reconciliation, which would enable a feeling of citizenship with a view to reducing social, cultural and political distances needed to create a sense of belonging to the same whole. See Alain Touraine (1998), "Social transformations of the

'five faces of oppression': exploitation (in an economic sense); marginalization (the expulsion of people from useful social life); powerlessness (the lack of authority, status and sense of self); cultural imperialism and violence (cited in Vertovec, 1998: 210). Active participation that is intrinsic to the civic republican tradition can only be fulfilled granting the elimination of these forms of oppression.

Against this backdrop, there is a need to nuance Mamdani's argument that in the colonial state, citizens were found in urban areas where they spoke the language of civil society and civil rights as opposed to subjects indirectly ruled by a customary organized tribal authority in rural areas (1996:18&19). This is a rendering of Voltaire's thinking that the city constitutes the core of individual freedoms and therefore challenges the false hierarchies of traditional rural society. But even in the African context, it must be noted citizenship was in its embryonic stages and the threat to its deepening several. Emancipated Africans still suffered from cultural imperialism and violence (even if this be only symbolic), exploitation and to a certain extent powerlessness. In essence, they were subjected to a double hegemony in their relationship with the colonial and pre-colonial worlds. Hybridity in itself – citizen-subject connoted the impossibility of attaining full citizenship in the Western sense of the term. Not even the sprawl of cities in post-colonial Cameroon has enabled its nurturance. That is, freedoms that are a function of plenitude have not been realized with the advent of independence. Enigmatically, some of the freedoms experienced in cities under the colonial state have been rolled back in the post-colonial cities. But their similitude with Western cities as "the lived space not only of the uncertainties (of citizenship) but also of its emergent forms" is remarkable. But as a caveat, African cities are not "challenging, diverging from and even replacing nations as the important space of citizenship" (Holsten & Appadurai, 1996:189). Further exacerbating this in the Cameroonian case, I would argue, is the state's embrace of the German tradition of citizenship where it is understood principally as an effect of state action, standing in a passive relationship to the state (cited in Turner, 1992:52).

This impositional approach is an inherent feature of the territorial-trap. The state is seen as a pre-existing container of society and social relations which lead to defining a substantive idea of the good are conceptualized and examined within its fixed spatial boundaries (Agnew, 1994).

twentieth century" in *International Journal of Social Sciences*, 156, p.171.

Consensual definition of this good in multicultural societies where identity tends to be emptied of all collective experience is problematic. As an ersatz, fellow citizens emphasize the principle of freedom and equality for all. By implication, citizenship is seen "not as a legal status but as a form of identification, a type of political identity; something to be constructed, not empirically given" (Mouffe, 1992:231). Because of its constructiveness, it becomes part of the hegemonic process, which is continuously contested. Identity recognition is sometimes predicated on this contestation in public spaces. Alisdair Rogers sees public spaces as "more than just the sites for the exercise of pre-given modes of citizenship, they are also the grounds for the imagination of the possibilities of citizenship as well as fields for the making of relational identities" (1998:207). Though actors driven by the "will to participation", they are also acted upon by "technologies of citizenship" that underpin the normalization process through which autonomous individuals see themselves through the optic of the social. Recently empowered individuals now converted into citizens-subjects, thereby become committed to the group and the social through a range of concrete norms. These, I would argue, inform and recast moralities that at all times define good conduct and sanction unacceptable conduct. Though power driven, the existence of different moralities impact not only horizontal but also vertical relationships. Government, Foucault notes, is not limited to the actions of the state as it entails an entire set of techniques, knowledges, strategies for acting, notably through indirect means, on the conduct of others under a range of different authorities, and the practices for acting upon the self by the self (1988, 1991, 1994).

Enabling Citizenship? A way forward to the past

Context, socio-political as well as economic, is important in the way citizenship is conceived, perceived and lived. The history of post-colonial Cameroon can be divided into two phases, the early post-colonial phase and the liberal phase. However, common to both phases is the state's determination to convert Cameroonians into citizens-subjects. The citizen-subject "is not to be dominated in the interests of power, but to be educated and solicited into a kind of alliance between personal objectives and ambitions and institutionally or socially prized goals or activities" (Rose, 1989:10).

Early Post-colonial state

Only those with cultural capital were invited to be citizens in the colonial state. Though truncated as indicated above, this status allowed access to local reciprocities, enabling its beneficiaries to enter into a political discourse necessary for the formation of a collective identity. Its emancipatory potential was brought into broad relief during the anti-colonial struggle. Cities where this class was located served as the locus of this struggle. In the wake of independence, there has been a burgeoning of this class as well as cities. Intuitively, this translates into a corresponding increase in citizenship.

However, psychological as well as structural factors have pre-empted the unfettered transition from subject to citizen. Arguably, cultural capital enabled its beneficiaries to become hybrids as they had to articulate a European epistemology on an African one. Because of this, the Cameroonian is caught between *Gemeinschaft* (traditional, organically linked community) and *Gesellschaft* (a community based on discourses). Being in a permanent transition is not anomalous as one cannot begin to celebrate the homecoming of any identity. Identity, as it were, is always becoming or contingent. Problems only arise when the citizens who suffer from a double hegemony are unable to deal with the present dialectical moment. Structured by the contradictory 'inter-presence' of the past and the present, its resolution holds forth the possibility of a future that is neither of the past nor of the West. Unable to deal with this 'inter-presence' (Laroui 1976: 108), most of the Cameroonian elite have continued to privilege communal self-regarding over individual self-regarding frames in the definition of self. These frames are incompatible with the latter on which citizenship is grounded. In the psyche of elites/citizens, they are always already social indebted to their societies and failure to pay this debt leads to social death (Mbembe, 2001). This position cannot, nor should it be regarded as final or static, especially when it is seen as a hegemonic practice that can always be contested.³ Yet, this is what Chabal and Daloz

³ Orlando Patterson has argued that as a mode of oppression – for the coercion and control of society- social death for slaves in the United States had three constituent elements: the slave's social death, his utterly powerlessness and his overwhelming sense of dishonor. Together, these conditioned the slave to perceive his situation as perpetual and inheritable, a condition that Patterson calls 'natural alienation' in Orlando Patterson, (1982), *Slavery and Social Death*, Harvard

(1999) do when they argue deterministically, and mistakenly as I would show later, that nothing in Africa begins to suggest the possibility of the emergence of the degree of individual differentiation that is a defining factor in Western citizenship. Suggesting a teleological ontology, they ascribe this penchant for identity closure to biology - the predominance of the African gene over the European one.

Structurally, the ruralization of Cameroonian cities, which gives the various neighborhoods their ethnic coloration, contributes (inordinately) to enhancing this psyche. Thus, it is commonplace to find, for example, Bayangi, Bamoum or Hausa *quarters*. Symbolic of an 'imaginative geography', it institutes "a kind of intra-urban orientalism (that) fixes spatial boundaries as well as social ones (Rogers, 2998:210). Social relations are largely carried out within these safe havens, a trend that discourages inter-neighborhood flows. Reifying "undialectical ideas of identity over relational ones" converted these cities into bounded spaces comprised of strangers (Young, 1990). The state (un)consciously gave statutory recognition to this cognition, a separate but equal doctrine when it promulgated Decree No. 77/245 of 15 July 1977 recognizing traditional authorities as auxiliaries of the administration. Third degree chiefs were reproduced in cities. Per Article 2 of this decree, their jurisdiction corresponded to a village or *quarter* in the rural and urban areas respectively.

Its fecundity was increased by a Presidential circular recognizing chiefs as mediators between their peoples' and the state. The importance of this strategic positioning was evident in the realm of revenue allocation where ministers had to consult them among other brokers in determining the relevance of all big investment projects broached for an interested population (Jua, 2002a:5). That ethnic groups became worthy of recognition rather than censorship, arguably, explains their sprawl in towns as well as the stranglehold that chiefs, who legitimated them in the eyes of the state, had over them. But from the point of view of state incorporation, this signaled a preference for preference for consociational or differential, contra uniform incorporation, where individuals hold their citizenship through their inter-group identifications rather than directly (Smith, 1969:446). Control of these groups by chiefs whose powers/authority had mystical foundations

only helped to expand their sphere of influence into modern public space (Jua, 2002a) and in the process convert their members who owed them an unquestioned allegiance into subjects. In this variant of clientelism based on a reciprocal exchange, clients whatever their civic status remained only their subjects in this dyadic relationship with the state at the apex.

Subjection was furthered following the creation of the monolithic party, the Cameroon National Union (CNU) in 1967. A hegemonic party, its normalized members were "comrades" who were neither to desire power nor become empowered – that is see themselves as capable and having the right to determine their lives. Structured along what Michels dubbed the "iron law of oligarchy", the party promoted discursive neutralization, disabling the dialogical process that is crucial for group will formation. Because of its zero tolerance to differences, it lacked adequate structures and process but also access and information which enable citizenship as 'effective participation' (Hill, 1994:7). Analogous to a totalitarian state, the state secret police, *Direction Générale des Etudes et de Documentation* (DIR.DOC) was also used to foster silencing. Its recourse to torture, especially in their camps (Beti cited in Joseph 1978:96) turned ambient fear into a, if not the mode of consciousness. Because of this, most Cameroonians in their encounters with the ruling class carried their anxiety with them. By allowing this fear to 'violate' them, they became agents of a hegemony dedicated to negating them. This led to the naturalization of subjection as can be inferred from a poem read out to Ahmadou Ahidjo in 1970 on the tenth anniversary of the country's independence from France: "the voice of the child-people echoes with pleas for your help and your pardon" (cited in Jackson & Rosberg, 1982: 153).

Seen from a Rabelian perspective, this may have been paradigmatic of the capacity of post-colonial Cameroonians to act as *homo ludens*. Though empowering to a certain extent, it did not negate the fact comrades were powerless in public space. However, powerlessness was not a common denominator among Cameroonians as official discourse also acknowledged the presence non-comrades that it to as citizens. Essentially a rhetorical device insofar as these citizens as active agents were denied a role in the mainstream of the political process, it only contributed to inflating the political grammar. Those who sought to remain active migrated or simply went underground or into the *maquis*. Prominent among this group

were the members of the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC), a party that had advocated for radical nationalism.⁴ Deterritorialization, however, led to a quest for new modes of exercising their citizenship.

With a review to reversing this trend and jumpstarting his New Deal project or democratizing in the party, Paul Biya who succeeded Ahidjo as President noted: "the citizen (should find) in the various party and public events a school of tolerance where one learns to respect what is different, that is respect for others and their opinions". This revealed as much as it obscured. Its end goal was the birth of "disciplined citizens" (Cameroon National Union, 1985:29&30), a concept that remains fuzzy insofar as it placed reins on the comrade as active participant and also failed to engender the development of a concurrent attitude in public space outside the party.⁵ In the party's agenda, participation within the party was supposed to precede generalized participation. This suggested a serial rather than concurrent development without a time line. Addressing those who had settled outside of the country with a view to exercising new modes of citizenship and as a tact recognition of the unnecessary injustice⁶ that they had suffered, Biya urged them to return, promising that they would not be persecuted for their ideas. In the wake of this promise, Cameroonians like Mongo Beti, whose literary works had been banned from Cameroon in an attempt to control the discursive world, returned home. Seemingly, the pluralization of public space was now considered as an acceptable policy option. But as I show later on, this policy was dogged by performative contradictions at the implementational phase.

⁴ Though exiled and self-exiled because of their heretical discourse and beliefs, Cameroon's constitution pointedly proscribed neither party pluralism nor pluralistic politics.

⁵ Against this background, I want to suggest that the concept of the disciplined subject is analogous to what William Connolly has referred to as the "overdisciplined self", where the self has been penetrated too densely by disciplinary powers and standards so that even benefits it receives begin to indent it. "One begins to experience uncertainty, contingency, and fragility residing in the status, power and the opportunities bestowed on one. For anything given may also be taken away". in *Identity/Difference*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1991, p.25.

⁶ An unnecessary injustice is an undeserved injury caused done to one somebody and which can be redressed within the extant order of things. William E. Connolly(1991), *Identity / Difference*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, p.34.

The Liberal phase

As a result of the downward spiral witnessed by its economy in the mid 1980s, Cameroon signed a Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) with the World Bank in 1987. This reduced the role of the state, heretofore a major economic actor, to providing an enabling environment for economic activity. Preoccupation with right sizing precluded it from playing an active role in guaranteeing economic rights for its citizens. Against this backdrop, the struggle for material insecurity becomes part of quotidian temporality. Involution or the downward spiraling of ever worsening (economic) conditions (Cliffe, 1974:38) and the disintegration of traditional safety networks fosters discursive indenture. The struggle to overcome scarcity becomes the site *par excellence* for the construction the economic and political subject (Mbembe, 1996:1).

In this environment of uncertainty (Berner & Trulsson, 2000), people resorted multiplex livelihoods (Byceson, 2002) which impacted on the quality of citizenship. Notable among them was reverse migration to rural areas (distress migration) and its problematical reinsertion of the *grand* (citizen) into the world of the subject with its uncontested functioning of cultural hegemony. Socially ruptured from the rural community during his stay in towns, it required that the *grand* become a *petit*, or be socially devalORIZED. Reverse osmosis provokes the loss of all prerogatives of citizenship: "The villagers await aid from those returning from towns..., they await this aid, but abandon you when they realize that you have nothing" (cited in Durang, 2000:144). Relegation to the bottom of the social ladder is symptomatic of the powerlessness of the returnee and acceptance of strategic marginalization is normally the price to pay for his admission into social reciprocities. Social remittances that he brings back from towns, such as ideas that contribute to the growth of citizenship, are rejected because of their capacity to unsettle the extant relations of power. Pushed to its maximum, marginalization may lead to virulence, that is a form of violence is viral, operates like a contagion, by a chain reaction, and little by little destroys all our immunities and our capacity for resistance (Baudrillard, 2002:18). Its contribution to what has been referred to as a climate of collective apathy in Cameroon (Durang, 2000: 131) is significant.

Even continuous residence in towns as an avoidance strategy is not efficacious. Dependence, which engendered feelings of gratification toward one's benefactors as well as symbolic violence caused a slippage in the

quality of citizenship. Those subjected to this could not *manque une bonne occasion de se taire*. In a survey study of laid off workers of the urban transportation company, SOTUC, Durang found out that among the 45% who were not engaged in any economic activity, 47% of them depended on aid. 39% of them depended on aid from their families while 11% depended on aid from friends (2000:132&134). As beneficiaries of social perfusion,⁷ they continue to be citizens but are unable to maintain the open door policy that previously eased the integration of their kith and kin into the urban environment. Remarkably, even those who still have a steady source of revenue are also closing up their doors. Seen through another prism, the changed economic context has prompted a reconfiguration of the value system in some Cameroonians who now tend to privilege individual over communal self-regarding frames in defining self. Failing access to these 'homes' that had played a liminal role in the rite of passage from rural to urban areas (Jua, 2002b:352), it is not surprising that the "bright lights" of the towns have lost some of their glow. To the extent that this discourages out migration from rural areas, it would contribute to reinforcing *Gemeinschaft* while stifling the transition from subject to citizen.

As a caveat, this dislocation is no longer a guaranteed pathway for the transition from subject to citizen. Previously, directly entry into the labor market from schools/ apprenticeship had enabled this transition. This is no longer automatic as revealed by a recent study of youths in Yaounde. 24.5% of these youths suffered from massive unemployment of a *longue durée*. And 75% of them in the informal sector that served as the only outlet for employment and was already saturated were underemployed (Kouamé, A. *et al*, 2001:25). Understandably, youths suffer not only from high rates of marginalization but social disaffiliation.⁸ Robert Castel notes that people in the latter category occupy a floating situation in a sort of no-man's land, not integrated and *inintégrables* (unintegratable). Not plucked in into the circuits of productive exchange, they have missed the train of

⁷ It has been noted that dependent uncertainty engenders a character type whose explicit consent to its way of life is laced with generalized resentment. See William E. Connolly, (1991), *Identity/Difference*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, p.22.

⁸ I have noted elsewhere the remarkable oppositional consciousness that inheres from the daily lived experience of oppression in this social category. See Nantang Jua (in press), "Body and Soul: Economic Space, Public Morality and Social Integration of Youth in Cameroon" in Bryceson, D.F. (ed), *How Africa Works*, International Publishers, London.

modernization and remain on the platform with very little baggage (1999:665-666). Stories on gangs that have divested from the common good as well as *feymen* carried on Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) on a daily basis bears out the prevalence of this group in them. Constituting and constituted as a problem, this lost generation (O'Brien:1996) does not aspire to citizenship as they put an undue emphasis on the claims of self and immediacy. Furthermore, their deviant behavior has helped to unleash a social war in which citizens are forced to invest their diminishing resources in a social war, even if this impacts negatively on their quality of life. Though the state may launch a crusade against this internal other, its chances of success are mitigated by impossibility of launching one against their interior other (that is strains of abnormality, subversion and perversity that may reside within anyone) (Connolly, 1991: 206).

Attempts to apportion blame for the economic decline that caused a decline in the quality of citizenship and the ensuing contestation only provoked polemics that Foucault identifies as a powerful political model. "It defines alliances, recruits partisans, unites interests or opinions, represents a party, it establishes the other as an enemy, an upholder of oppressed interests against which one must fight until the moment that this enemy is defeated or either surrenders or disappears (1984:382-383). Instead of discursive communities forming, the debate took on the semblance of a categorical conflict, where positions were determined not by rational arguments but by one's essence (Fliener, 2001:31) and its emphasis on psychological bonding (i.e., feelings of common fate, reciprocal support, kinship and belongingness). The prominent role played by the elites in this conflict revealed their commitment to national integration as a mere dissemblance.

Biya in his maiden visit to Bamenda as President had exhorted all Cameroonians to feel at home, to be welcomed, accepted and treated as such and to consider, think and behave as such (cited in Collectif Changer le Cameroun, 1992:78). But even this position was not consensually shared among the ruling elite. Emah Basil, the Mayor of Yaounde and Treasurer of the CPDM wondered why only people from a majority group talked about national integration and why this policy targeted only towns like Douala and Yaounde (Collectif Changer le Cameroun,1992:107). Granted the Cameroonian government may have been giving its spin on the 17th century *Staatslugheitslehre*, notably Machiavelli's famous dictum that 'princes should delegate to others the enactment of unpopular measures

and keep in their own hands the distribution of favors' (Machiavelli, 1961:106). Growing adhesion to his position led to the emergence of a new politics of belonging. And to give effect to this politics, elite-led groups, created ostensibly to protect group interests, mushroomed across the country. Engendering identity closure, they were also indicative of a deficit in civic engagement. I have referred to this elsewhere as the problem of double articulation in Cameroonian political discourse: where on the one hand people are encouraged to settle where they want but on the other, they are seen as strangers, if not denizens (resident non-citizens) (Jua, 2001:39).

Foregrounding the Allogeny/Autochtony Binary

Arguably, this policy –the politics of belonging- crystallized or congealed because of the normative justification that it had from conceptual territory. Firstly, the World Bank's pre-occupation with protecting "disappearing cultures" led it to bring into the mainstream of development literature the need of protecting "minorities" and "indigenes". Though it used this concept to refer specifically to hunters, gatherer and pastoralists, this did not deter it from being given a more elastic connotation in Cameroon's political grammar. Thus, the meaning recovered from this concept and not the concept *per se* was problematic. Secondly, Cameroonian scholars produced political literature, not of seeing the country but on a way of making and changing it in time and space. Prominent among them was late Professor Gabriel Roger Nlep who provided conceptual clarity to a fuzzy doctrine with his coinage of *le village electoral* (electoral village).⁹ Acknowledging the centrality of "integration" in Cameroonian politics, Nlep granted that people should be integrated in the place where they live. However, "this presupposes that there is not *un autre chez soi* (another home area)."¹⁰ Organic intellectuals provided further validation for this

⁹ Nlep somehow eludes classification – that is, it is not clear whether he was an organic or pure intellectual. Suffice to point out here that he was a member of the Technical Committee that elaborated the 1996 Constitution and may have belonged to the group of Cameroonian scholars involved in what Jua and Nyamnjoh have pointed out elsewhere as the "circle of reciprocal seduction" see "Scholarship Production in Cameroon: Interrogating a Recession" in *African Studies Review*, Vol.45, No.2, September, p.58.

¹⁰ See special issue of *La Nouvelle Expression*, 1996, p.18 on Minorités, autochtones, allogènes et démocratie.

doctrine. Mono Ndzana, considered as the ideologue of the party and a professor at the University of Yaounde I branded opponents of this doctrine, especially if they be from a majority group such as the Bamilekes, as *ethnofascistes* and their arguments against a politics for the protection of minorities as *gauchissement du tribalisme* (leftist tribalism) (Geschiere & Nyamnjoh, 2001:219).

These served as intellectual lineage for the concept of the protection of minorities that as introduced into the 1996 Cameroon Constitution. While noting the need to "further consolidate our unity" as "one and the same Nation, bound by the same destiny", the Preamble states: "the State shall protect minorities and shall preserve the rights of indigenous populations in accordance with the law". Seemingly, this is not to be the detriment of the individual. Analogous to the 1972 Constitution it also reiterates his "to settle in any place and move about freely, subject to the statutory provisions concerning law and order, security and tranquility" (cf. Geschiere, Nyamnjoh & Socpa, 2000:8). Its ambivalence to the "procedural equality" can be gauged from Article 57,3 where it is stipulated that each regional council "shall be headed by an indigene of the Region", though adding on the same breath that the "Regional Bureau shall reflect the sociological components of the Region". In Cameroon's political grammar, indigenes are seen as *autochtones* while settlers are *allogènes* and these terms constitute the criterion for inclusion/exclusion.

In any society, the constitution usually embodies prevailing morality. Ascertaining this morality in Cameroon with a view to seeing if the 1996 Constitution reflected it is rather problematic. Public morality in civic space found mostly in urban areas where there has been a rupture in historical consciousness and space can however serve as a pointer. In the case of Italy, for example, it has been posited that these spaces, characterized by the absence rather than openness of partisanship enable an acceptance of the reality of conflicting interests as well as creative compromise in politics (Putman, 1992:105). Empirical evidence for Cameroon, even if fragmentary, can be obtained from studies such as the one carried out by Ethno-Net CIREPE, a group in independent scholars where 81% of the respondents in urban areas claimed to be more interested in the political programs of parties than on the ethnic origins of their principal leaders.¹¹ Though

¹¹ This study on *Democratization and Ethnic Rivalries in Cameroon* carried out in the wake of the

showing that ethnic affiliation as residual, one should be cautious to imbue these perceptions, which crucial in discursive will formation, with undue intentionality and centrality in the political decision-making. That the constitution was out of sync with prevailing morality may begin to explain the government's refusal in 1996 to submit draft Constitution to a referendum. Ultimately, the marginality of the respondents, which would have denied the hegemonic group in the government its claims on history, detracted from the force of their position-taking. The hegemonic group group, seen in another register as the eyes and ears of the people, had to remain at the center of the hegemony in space and in time. And they could defer to them, even if this be in the upstream of the social process, not because of any intrinsic value that they had but because of their contribution to the collective prominence of groups. Enhancing this perception was the preference of the postcolonial state for consociational incorporation.

To argue that the liberties of market and the rights of the political process both function, albeit unintentionally, to erode the capacity of minorities to sustain their essence as communities is essentially correct. Overcoding or the assigning of a code to a people and a people to a territory (Connolly, 1994:22) was used by front-line officials to give effect to the corrective measures spelt out in the 1996 Cameroonian constitution. Yet doing justice as an obligation to these groups did not require relegating others to a position of ontological interiority. Harping on this, Habermas argues: "Every autonomous morality has to serve two purposes at once: it brings to bear the inviolability of socialized individuals by requiring equal treatment and thereby equal respect for the dignity of each one; and it protects intersubjective relations of mutual recognition requiring solidarity of individual members of the community" (1989-90:47). Nurturance of citizenship that is neither fragmented nor emptied of all collective experience could be fostered only to the extent that the state promoted and protected these dual goals.

But the reverse obtained as overcoding, by some convoluted logic, was seen as connoting that people in urban areas should go back to vote in

introduction of political pluralism in 1990, covered the ten Provincial capitals in the country. It also foregrounded the existence of regional variations in this identification. In the Northern cities, only 27% of the respondents knew what a party program meant (1998:9).

their village or *terroir*.¹² To a large extent, the state saw this as a mode of maintaining the political purity of these spaces. Its views on this issue converged with those of other politicians, whatever their position on the political spectrum, from these areas. Mola Njoh Litumbe, chairman of the Liberal Democratic Alliance, for instance, averred that "national integration would be better achieved, not by the misguided policy of suffocating the peace-loving indigenous minorities by an overzealous immigrant population" but by a policy "based on diversity" (Jua,2001:39) while Jean Jacques Ekindi of *Mouvement Progressite* (MP) tried to upstage the government by spearheading the creation of a pan-cultural movement, "SAWA", that would regroup all the coastal peoples. In short, the goal was to give recognition to groups that felt asphyxiated by the political process. This prompted a political striptease among the political parties to the extent that a successful appropriation of this terrain guaranteed it a competitive edge in the process. And parties presented and perceived as distancing themselves from this position were vilified.

It is this vilification that prompted political protests in the port city of Douala following the victory of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) in the 1996 municipal elections. Indigenes decrying the fact that it invested only one indigene as mayor in the five Douala districts invaded the streets with placards saying "Democracy: Yes, Hegemony: No" and "A Majority Vote Based on Ethnic Votes Is Not a Sign of Democracy but Expansionism". To further the appeal of ethnicity as a mobilizational resource, the crowd sang songs in Douala like "This Shall Not Happen in Our Homeland" and "Where are They Going to Dump Us." It is in this context that five "Sawa Chief" petitioned against "Bamileke domination" to Biya. Claiming that the attitude "of certain ethnic groups who are bent on flouting the spirit of peaceful coexistence among all Cameroonians" was threatening national integration, they implored him to enact "ordinances and laws aimed at defending and protecting the interests of minority groups" with a view to safeguarding their

¹² Geschiere and Nyamnjoh (2001) point out that politicians and authors tend to distinguish between *territoire* (territory in a general sense) and *terroir* (area of belonging) "Autochtony as an Alternative to Citizenship: New Modes in the Politics of Belonging in Postcolonial Africa" in Eisei Kurimoto(ed.), *Rewriting Africa: Toward Renaissance or Collapse?*, JCAS Symposium Series 14, National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan, footnote. 9. I want to emphasize on the etymology of territory which derives from *terre* and *terrere*, and means to frighten or to terrorize as well as *territorium* which is "a place from which people are warned" in Latin.

"socio-cultural and historical heritage" (cited in Geschiere, Nyamnjoh & Socpa, 2000:9-10).

This political effervescence and the urge of the CPDM, the incumbent party to capture its commanding political heights emboldened it to adopt policies favoring the exclusion of *allogènes* from the political process. Already laws, with restrictive clauses, regulating participation in this process had been enacted. Per section 8 of Law No92/010 of 17 September 1992, candidates for the Presidential elections, considered as a founding election, had to be "Cameroonian citizens by birth and show proof of having resided in Cameroon for an uninterrupted period of at least twelve months". Thereafter, eligibility conditions for citizens as candidates in public elections have been characterized by opaqueness, if not opacity. Absent codification, arbitrariness reigned supreme. The Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINAT) had a free hand in validating or disqualifying candidates. Mongo Beti's candidacy in the 1997 Parliamentary elections on the list of the SDF in Sangmelima, for instance, was rejected. Pretextedly, his double nationality –Cameroon and French- that rendered him apocryphal explained his decision. This was just a subterfuge, since in popular consciousness most Cameroonian politicians, who in a quest for their social promotion and prestige use France as a referential horizon, have this same status. Unable to use the "son of the soil" or *autochtone* argument to reject his candidacy, MINAT invoked the nationality clause. But this was just to cover over its fear that Mongo Beti, already dubbed *l'homme de l'autre* (a lover of the Opposition) might win the election on an opposition ticket. *Autochtony*, like ethnicity was strategic, though malleable enough to enable one switch from one Other to another (Geschiere & Nyamnjoh, 210:232). And the right to civil participation was isomorphous not with this concept as such but with party identity.

This isomorphism was foregrounded in cities (towns) with their multicultural populations. Use of *allogeny/autochtony* binary led to the introduction of differential entry costs in politics. *Allogènes* seen as "invaders" and predisposed to vote the Opposition were consistently disenfranchised and thereby denied visibility in public space. To enable this, a length of stay qualification was made a prerequisite for registration in the electoral registers, though the law only required that one show his national identity card as proof of nationality. In the South-West Province, for example, one had to show proof of continuous residence in the town for "a six month

period" as well as a tax receipt for the past three years, as a condition for obtaining a residence permit from the chief. And failing this permit, (s)he could not register. At the same time the directive emphasized that the "traditional rulers issue the permit diligently". Ostensibly, its goal was to disenfranchise about 40% of the voters in the Province who are from the North-West and West Provinces with a view to guaranteeing what Peter Oben Ashu, the Provincial Governor dubbed as the "democracy of tribalism" (cited in Geschiere, Nyamnjoh & Socpa, 2000:11).

An 'imaginative geography' that engendered and nurtured an intra-urban orientalism facilitated the disqualification of whole neighborhoods or *quartiers*. In Buea, for example, the Molyko neighborhood with a heavy *allogène* population and its *quartiers de mini-cités* that harbors students who are mostly *allogènes* or are known for the post-modern tendencies, the rate of disenfranchisement stood at more than 90%. It was a generalize practice as can be inferred from the fact that in the Yaounde IV Electoral District, the number of registered voters dropped from 70,371 in the 1992 Presidential election to 43,500 in the June 2001 twin elections (*The Post*, 21 June 2002:2). Sifting in this case was facilitated, I would conjecture, by the fact the *Sécurisation de la nationalité camerounaise* (SENAC) project had a data base indicating ethnic origin of all adult Cameroonians. All Cameroonians applying for the national identity card *must fill out* a form showing their ethnic origin. Since it carries a repertoire of ethnic groups within which one must fit,¹³ information from these forms contributes to this "sorting out" process "that never fails". Though, its resemblance to J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* "sorting hat" used to allocate pupils to the various houses in the school of wizardry is unmistakable (1997:117-118), its nuisance value is disturbing. Even if it has not taken on the proportion of Rwanda where the indication of one's ethnic identity facilitated the genocide, there is no denying that it has led a net decline in the quality of citizenship -as access to social goods - in these areas. While revenue collection is reinforced in these neighborhoods, they suffer from a kind of punishing politics, if not exclusion, in revenue allocation. Declining investments in these *quartiers* is meant to relegate its inhabitants to bottom of the urban social ladder and exacerbate social, cultural and political distances which

¹³ Revealingly, this contravenes the provisions of Law No. 99/154 of 20 July 1999 which tend to emphasize not ethnicity but nationality. To this end, everyone applying for this identity is supposed to produce a certificate of nationality.

enable reconciliation and by the same token feelings of citizenship. Superimposing a horizontal fracture on these areas that are already vertically structured has only produced a justification for feelings of exploitation, dependency, and frustration (Putman, 1992:111).

Generally, *allogènes* are asked to go and vote in their homes. But they are caught between Scylla and Charbydis for once at home and for the purpose of denying them the role of political agency, they are asked to go and vote in the places of residence. That *autochtony/allogeny* are used principally for the purpose of political expediency or electoralism was brought to the fore in the June 2001 elections with the organization of electoral charters. Thus, whereas *autochtones* were denied the right to vote in towns like Dschang in the West Province, charters brought in *Beti allogènes* who were given not only the right to vote but the privilege of multiple votes.¹⁴ Whereas the goal was to disenfranchise people from the North-West and West Provinces who harbored opposition tendencies anywhere in the country, it must also be pointed out that *autochtones* in the South-West and other Provinces who were infected by this virus were similarly expunged from electoral lists. Notable is the case of Professor Ndiva Kofele Kale, the SDF candidate for Buea Urban who could not even vote. Similarly, *autochtones* who had any filial relationship with people from the North-West were also excluded from the list. In a classical case, the mother-in-law of the son of John Ngu Foncha, a former Vice President of the country as well as the CPDM, whose Bafaw pedigree could not be doubted was asked to produce a residence permit before being registered in Kumba. Attempts to exclude her were spurred simply by her daughter's marriage to a North-Westerner. And since cultural miscegenation engendered political miscegenation and by the same token negated the claims of *autochtones* to transcendental privilege where the group is seen as the incarnation of goodness, it had to be discouraged (Jua, 2001:40).

¹⁴ According to Jeremie Engolo who was the leader of the "ambulant voters", they were hired by the Minister of Towns, Claude Mbafo and Mme. Mebara and transported to Dschang where they could several times with a view to guaranteeing victory for the CPDM in this municipality. In return, they were to be paid handsomely as well rewarded with government contracts (*The Post*, 19 July 2002:2). Those imported into the North-West Province (in Santa specifically) where they were lodged and fed were promised the sum of 15.000 francs for their transport fares back to their homes (*The Post*, 1 July 2002:3).

Though *autochtony/allogeny* contributes inordinately to promoting the vertical interests of the elite, its purchase is increased in the lower classes not by its claims of *autochtones* to transcendental privilege but by the materiality of the discourse. Concern with the latter explains the focus on a new politics of land in Cameroon. It provides the common man, preoccupied with recovering his dignity, an opportunity to reappropriate land previously ceded legally to the *allogène*. Ava Jean averred in *Le Patriote*:

The ideologists of western fascism in our country tell us that the Bamileke is a superior being who has the right to settle anywhere in Cameroon. They arrive somewhere, hands outstretched and mouths full of insults, begging for land in the name of national unity. Since it is common knowledge that Ewondo men cherish red wine, discussions take place in the bar nearby. It is through this process that the shameful exploitation of Ewondo land occurs (Geschiere & Nyamnjoh, 2001:219).

Ownership of land by *allogènes* in this context resonates with internal colonialism. And the politics of belonging is celebrated to the extent that it leads to its reversal by reintroducing arbitrariness into a realm that had been codified. That is, it empowers *autochtones* to repossess their lands, albeit the 1974 Land Law that defines rules for the ownership, control and management of land (for details, see Fisiy, 1992). The urge to benefit from this reversal explains the political realignment where the emphasis is not on social class but place of origin. This identification does not translate into automatic benefits as politics is predicated on a *quid pro quo* basis. In Cameroon speak, it is a process of *scratch my back, I scratch your own*¹⁵. This was brought out succinctly by a lecturer from the South-West Province in the Bilingual Training Institute in Buea who bemoaning the downward mobility of workers caused by the disregard of the regime, also complained of his inability to cast a sanction vote on it because South-Westerners had to take their cues from the chiefs.¹⁵ And in this case, the chiefs had declared themselves "campaign managers for the CPDM" (*The Post*, 14 July 2002:1). Mortgaging one's political autonomy seemed an insignificant

¹⁵ Conversation at the Tennis Court, Buea Mountain Club, 15 January 2003. This is not to claim that all South-Westerners subscribed to this as social identity theory shows that only persons with insecurity identity express pride in the ingroup. Believing that of the self is tied to that of the ingroup, they perceive the intergroup context in terms of conflict and competition. Jay W. Jackson (2002), "Intergroup Attitudes as a Function of Different Dimensions of Group Identification and Perceived Ingroup Conflict" in *Self and Identity*, Vol.1, Issue 1:18.

price to pay in terms of the promised rewards – repossession of land. The overdisciplined self resembles Heidegger's "standing reserves", that as an antithesis of citizenship, willingly submits to elites. This reading of *autochtony* as the right to repossess lands to the extent that it engenders and exacerbates mistrust between *autochtones* and *allogènes* disables the construction of discursive communities across this divide. Albert Hirschman sees trust as a moral resource that increases rather than decreases through use and can be depleted if not used.

Ruse or Reality: The Case of the Bakweri Lands

The government's reluctance to pass enabling legislation for the protection of minority rights as requested by the Douala chiefs only encouraged a polysemous reading of this clause. Despite the penchant of frontline officials for overcoding, it soon became evident that its inclusion in the constitution did not enlarge the legal space for action. This was brought into broad relief by the state's non-recognition of the Bakweris as stakeholders in the privatization of the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) Tea Estates. As litmus, it showed the state's unwillingness to give effect to its commitment to the protection of minority or group rights. Arguably, in the phenomenology of power, it serves only as a (political) convenience clause for politicians driven by the will to power.

Early into the colonial state, Cameroon's integration into the capitalist economy was facilitated by the introduction of plantation agriculture by the Germans. Most of these plantations were located on the fertile volcanic soils expropriated from the indigenes around Mount Cameroon in the present Fako Division of the South-West Province. Natives dispossessed of their lands were virtually quarantined in native reserves. Expropriated in the wake of World War II, these plantations were transferred to a newly founded agro-parastatal the CDC. To further enhance its capacity, and its contribution to capital accumulation as well as national and regional development (Konings, 1993:35), it leased 100,000 hectares of land from the British government in 1946/47. In 1954, CDC created its first tea estate.

As far back as 1947, the Bakweris had sought to reclaim their patrimony with the creation of the Bakweri Land Committee (BLC) which tendered for control of the ex-German plantations. Preoccupation with curbing risk 'amplification' caused their request to be denied - Bakweri peasants were

seen as 'backward farmers' or 'lazy farmers' or 'not farmers at all'. Bolstering this point, Konings (1993:38) cites a 1946 report:

His Honor is yet to be convinced that more land is necessary for the Bakweri since it is undoubted that they are lazy farmers and tend to grant rights freely to strangers.

Rejecting these arguments, the BLC sought to have the United Nations Trusteeship Council rescind the decision that deprived them of their ancestral lands. To appease the Bakweris, the British asked W.M. Bridges, a Senior Divisional Officer to study the problem and recommend appropriate solutions. Assuming that 15 acres of land would be adequate for every Bakweri household, he proposed that a surrender of 25,000 acres of CDC land would satisfy Bakweri land needs. And as marinade, the CDC was supposed to provide technical advice on food crops produced on this land on a controlled tenancy basis as well as market facilities for them and social welfare services. The proposals were never implemented since the BLC made its cooperation with the government or the CDC contingent on an *a priori* recognition of the Bakweri claims on the CDC lands (Konings, 1993:159). The United Nations seemingly validated their position by recognizing that transfer of indigenous lands occupied by the German to the administering powers was synonymous to a transfer of ownership rights. In essence they had only usufructory rights on this land. The UN position meant that henceforth the Bakweri claims were no longer predicated only on resistant sensibility which sees "the legal subject within aboriginal narration of oral history understood as legal discourses grounded in ontology as distinct from the epistemological basis of the dominant legal discourse" (Fiske, 2000:5).

Recognition of minority rights in the 1996 constitution helped to re-energize the Bakweri claims to their patrimony. To articulate and aggregate their interests, they resuscitated the BLC, thereby fulfilling the promise made by Chief Gervacius Endeley to the British Resident in Buea that struggle to recover the lands "shall continue as long as Bakwseri people live" (Letter No.BLC/2/1 of 18 January 1946). However, it was renamed the Bakweri Lands Claims Committee (BLCC). This change is significant because 'naming' has a sedimented history of its own which renders it important to ask how the present historical instance of 'naming' repeats or recuperates

the general economy of the 'name' (Radhakrihnan, 1991:58). Plausibly, consciousness of this fact explains the state's denial to incorporate the BLCC as a limited liability company. It was in the wake of this rejection that they sought and obtained legal status in the Texas in the United States (*The Post*, February 21, 2003:6). Though constituted to act locally, they manifested proof of a global consciousness and thereby rejected the territorial trap.

Claims of ownership of the Bakweri lands by the Cameroonian government may explain its reticence to register the BLCC. Its Vice President, Chief Molineg of Muea disputed this when he questioned rhetorically:

Is it not dishonest when the government claims ownership of all CDC lands while it has at the same time been receiving rents for these same lands from the CDC? How can someone pay for his patrimony?

In his view, CDC was paying the rents to the state because the Bakweris were not organized. "Today the BLCC, in (their) name is asking either for the rents that have been received by the government since the departure of the colonial masters or their conversion into shares which would permit the Bakweris, who are not in principle opposed to the privatization of the CDC, to be partners in the new structure" (cited in *Le Messager*, 18 January 2003:3).

Attributing the failure of the state to register BLCC to its non-inclusiveness, as some chiefs from the powerful elite side have done,¹⁶ is to deny a fundamental principle of law. Also denuding the veracity of this claim was the recognition of the BLCC as the sole spokesperson of the Bakweris on this issue of the Bakweri patrimony by the South-West Chiefs Conference (SWECC) as well as its endorsement by the Fako Chiefs Conference.¹⁷ Focus on this procedural point should not be to the detriment of the

¹⁶ See for example, arguments by Chief Ephraim Inoni, the Chief of Bakingili and Assistant Secretary General at the Presidency of the Republic in *The Post*, July 8, 2003:5 and claims by Chief Endeley that only the Fako Chiefs Conference is competent to talk on this issue in *The Post*, February 21, 2003:6.

¹⁷ See letter of January 2001 from Chief Mukete President of the South-West Chiefs Conference to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Cameroon and Resolutions of the Fako Chiefs Conference taken at CEFAM on June 28, 2001. cited in http://www.bakwerilands.org/50years_protest.htm

substantial issue raised by the BLCC – recognition of the Bakweris as stakeholders in the privatization of the CDC. But the government failed to acknowledge this argument for group rights when it ceded the CDC Tea Estates to the Cameroon Tea Estates (CTE). CTE as the majority shareholder has 60% while the government and the workers have 35% and 5% respectively. Though several reasons, some subliminal, may underlie this decision granting workers equity shares, it is intriguing if seen through the prism of *autochtony/allogeny*.

Despite a 'distinctly supra-ethnic, proletarian ethos' that reigns in the camps, several studies have probed into the sociological origins of the workers. In a sample carried out in 1985/86, Konings found out that 24.5% were from the South-West, 73.5% from the North-West and 1% from Francophone Cameroon. More specifically, only 5% was from Fako Division where Tole Tea Estates are located (1993:68). Overall, this breakdown reveals that *allogènes* have more of a stake in the new venture than the Bakweris. *Allogènes* who are disenfranchised politically in the Province are enfranchised economically. And as BLCC noted: "The Bakweri landowners were, as if by spite, excluded from the above equation (though) it is primarily their patrimony that has been used as a vehicle for what appears to be a scandalous and sordid financial enterprise (cited in *The Post*, March 7, 2003:3). Analogically, the state saw the Bakweris like the Indians in North America who as Alexis de Tocqueville noted: "occupied but did not possess the land. It is by agriculture that man wins the soil". Bakweri land seen through this prism could be considered as empty, "a deserted land waiting for inhabitants" (cited in Connolly, 1994:24-25). Against this backdrop, the state's commitment to overcoding was denuded and its Salvationist exhortation empties of any of its promise. It was a mere rhetorical strategy and the non-recognition of Bakweri land claims a systemic injustice –that is an undeserved injury not removable in the existing order (Connolly, 1991:34).

Exasperated by the state refusal, but also determined to assert their claims, BLCC that had already indicated its penchant to escape the territorial trap turned to the United Nations and the African Human and Peoples Rights Commission. Symptomatically, they were flagging their belief in a new form of global citizenship in which people have rights not as nationals but as human beings. Appeal to this instance is also proof of their frustration with the lack of a civic community in Cameroon. According to most philosophical

accounts, the trademarks of this kind of community are honesty, trust and law abidingness. It is this grounding that enables its citizens to deal fairly with one another and expect fair dealings in return (Putman, 1992:111). The inability of the government to protect their rights at this juncture when it privileged *allogènes* in its political discourse showed that the government's commitment to protecting minority rights through overcoding as just a ruse. In this struggle as it were between the 'will to power' and the 'will to participation', the balance of force was invariably tipped in favor of the former. Their non-recognition by the state preempted them from acting as minority shareholders in the running of its affairs. As such, it was unable to deal fairly with the state as well as to expect fair dealings from it. It grounded its position on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 21 of the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights of 1981 which recognizes the rights of "all peoples shall freely dispose of their wealth and natural resources" in their "exclusive interest" as well as the right of dispossessed peoples to "the lawful recovery of its property as well as to an adequate compensation in case of spoliation (see letter of June 16 2000 to the Managing Director of the IMF). Significantly, the Cameroonian government pleading an uncontested principle of international law – BLCC's failure to exhaust all local remedies before remedies before bringing the case before the Commission. Lack of this recognition denied it a moral personality, and by the same token, a *locus standi* in Cameroonian courts.

Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that minorities are increasingly resorting to foreign and internal tribunals to claim their rights as citizens. Despite the recognition of these rights in the constitution, performative contradictions at implementational level make for the continued marginality of minorities. Recovering their rights as citizens or even *allogènes* has required that they seek redress from foreign and international tribunals. The Bakas pygmies used a variant of the American *long arm jurisdiction* to bring action to the court of a country where the defendant was remotely connected. In this case in point, seven villages with the help of a Non-governmental Organization, les Amis de la Terre, after failing to get legal redress in Cameroonian courts, sued the la Société Forestière et Industrielle de la Doumie (SFID), a subsidiary of the Société Française Rougier SA in a Parisian Court for "*destruction des biens appartenant à autrui, faux et usage de faux, corruption de fonctionnaires*" (the wanton

destruction of another's property, falsehood and use of falsehood and corruption of civil servants) (Nkeh Ndi, 2002:12). Similarly, Dr. Martin Luma and Dr. Kevin Gumne on behalf of the Anglophone minority filed a lawsuit against the Nigerian government in the Federal High Court in Abuja 'for the purpose of obtaining judicial relief to restrain the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria from treating or continuing to treat or regard the Southern Cameroons or the people of that territory as an integral part of *La République du Cameroun*'. Among the reasons that it proffered for this course was action was Nigeria's ratification of the OAU Banjul Charter of Human Rights. Its Article 20 recognizes the right of all colonised or oppressed people to free themselves from the bonds of domination by resorting to any means recognised by the international community (for details see Jua & Konings, in press).

CONCLUSION

Independence left Cameroon, like other African post-colonial states, with states looking for citizens. Endowed with an African and a European consciousness because of what Mudimbe calls the "colonizing structures", they remained hybrids – subjects-citizens. The fecundity of this double placement explains the reproduction of this class in the post-independence era. Embrace of the hegemonic project with a view to promoting state construction caused the state to adopt the Germanic tradition of citizenship where this status inheres from the state also contributed to this growth. Largely because of this, the quality of citizenship, even in cities, was truncated in the early post-colonial state with the introduction of monopartism and the "police rule of law" and a systematic denial of justice. And an unquestioned belief in the logic of fetishistic inversion where traditional authority was seen as always already possessing power (Žižek, 1993), caused the state to co-opt it for purposes of instrumentalization. It mediated state-society relations and caused people to submit to the will of the state. Generally, this led to a stasis especially in rural areas, its corollary being a non-rupture in the people's consciousness. As a result of this the state was actively involved in promoting a static view of traditional society, even if it does not withstand historical analysis (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1992: 126).

Shifts occurred as the country entered into the liberal democratic phase. The "will to power" among the ruling class conflicted with the "will to participation" as people increasingly claimed the role of citizens as active agents. With a view to reconfiguring the relations of power, the ruling class changed the political discourse. Instead of privileging a national imagining, it resorted to the use of concepts such as *allogeny/ autochtony*. Fragmenting and emptying identities of all collective experience, it discouraged the making of relational identities that underpin discursive democracy. Overcoding became part of the political landscape. Despite this, the quality of citizenship continued to decline. Consequently, Cameroonians are increasingly resorting to legal perfusion from foreign and international tribunals to sustain their rights, though truncated, as citizens. They claim these rights not as nationals but as human beings. Though the state has sometimes complied to these rulings, as in the case of Albert Mukong versus the state of Cameroon, their enforceability largely remains problematic.

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