

Research Article

Options for a National Culture Symbol of Cameroon: Can the Bamenda Grassfields Traditional Dress Fit?

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Abstract: The national symbols of Cameroon like flag, anthem, coat of arms and seal do not in any way reveal her cultural background because of the political inclination of these signs. In global sporting events and gatherings like World Cup and international conferences respectively, participants who appear in traditional costume usually easily reveal their nationalities. The Ghanaian Kente, Kenyan Kitenge, Nigerian Yoruba outfit, Moroccan Djellaba or Indian Dhoti serve as national cultural insignia of their respective countries. The reason why Cameroon is referred in tourist circles as a cultural mosaic is that she harbours numerous strands of culture including indigenous, Gaullist or Francophone and Anglo-Saxon or Anglophone. Although aspects of indigenous culture, which have been grouped into four spheres, namely Fang-Beti, Grassfields, Sawa and Sudano-Sahelian, are dotted all over the country in multiple ways, Cameroon cannot still boast of a national culture emblem. The purpose of this article is to define the major components of a Cameroonian national culture and further identify which of them can be used as an acceptable domestic cultural device. The research methodology adopted for this study is the historical approach with the qualitative method of primary and secondary data collection. The major findings are that although a Cameroonian culture is being forged through ways like nationalization of land, harmonization of the chieftaincy institution and national integration, this effort can only be deciphered through symbols such as cuisine, language, music, dance and dress. While the first four of these elements are multi-faceted and labourious in nature, it is easy to identify a dress that is distinctive to the nation.

Keywords: National culture, Bamenda Grassfields, Cultural symbol, Athoghu attire, Kabba ngondo.

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INTRODUCTION

Notwithstanding the fact that culture has been widely studied, its actual meaning is still contested with over 160 definitions registered so far. Since its explanation is sometimes related to the state of development in art and thought or improvement of the mind or body by education or training, concepts like civilized, well educated, refined and cultured are often used to describe it (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). One definition takes a societal stance that culture is the outcome of man's interaction with his environment for the provision of physical, spiritual, emotional and psychological needs. This gives rise to "shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives and are transmitted across age generations" (House et al., 2004). The divergences in definition aside, there is however, consensus that culture has principal characteristics. First of all, it is a layered phenomenon, socially constructed through values, beliefs, and assumptions shared by a group of people but expressed through symbols, artefacts, structures and behaviours; it is learned and transmitted from one generation to the next; is shared by most members of a given social group although with variations; has to be exposed over time to historical, geographical, and economic forces for it to develop (Adaba, 2017).

As a way of doing and understanding things, culture is often expressed in collective representations signifying shared identity, mutual obligations and certain exclusive norms in symbols, emblems or totems (Eriksen, 2007). "From time immemorial, songs sung, chants chanted, banners unfurled, flags waved" uniforms, monuments and ceremonies often constitute symbols that remind people of their common heritage and cultural kinship as well as make them to identify more strongly with their nation and fellow citizens. These symbols are also useful in condensing the knowledge, values, history, and memories associated with one's nation (Faajjii, np, nd). They impact people's attitudes and actions, direct public attention, integrate citizens, motivate public action, create bonds and reinforce goals among citizens (Faajjii, np., nd).

Apart from political emblems, there is an abundance of cultural signs that identify people the world over. Since the major thrust of this study is to decipher which aspect of Cameroon national culture (cuisine, music, dance, language or dress) can be adapted as a cultural symbol, the work begins with a demonstration of the concept of national culture in Cameroon by explaining its meaning, divulging its rationale and elucidating its manifestations. It goes further to paint a picture of the concerted efforts made formally and informally to create one. The last part explores various aspects from which a cultural emblem can be designed for the entire nation.

NATIONAL CULTURE IN CAMEROON

This section synthesizes the concept of national culture and thereafter presents a synopsis of the cultural groups that make up the country by locating them, stating their ethnic composition and cultural features like religion, administration, language, economy, etc. National culture is hereby understood as the collective mental programming of a group of people in a specific country so that they possess the same beliefs, values and compartments (Hofstede 1980). In simpler terms, it is the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experiences, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving (Spencer-Oatey, 2013).¹

Cameroon's population of about 25 million inhabitants is streamlined into approximately 250 ethnic clusters that are further categorized into four large regional-cultural groups called Fang-Beti, Grassfields, Sawa and Sudano-Sahelian. Fang-Beti is the only one among them whose appellation is not a reflection of geography and history as it is the actual name by which the people call themselves. The term Grassfields was derived by ethnographers from a vegetation-type that is predominantly grassland savannah whose extensive coverage denotes grass-covered plains and hills. At independence and reunification in 1960-61, and by virtue of Cameroon's two official languages,² people of this ecological zone fell into two segments. The Eastern Grassfields corresponds to the West Region in Francophone or French-speaking Cameroon, while the Western or Bamenda Grassfields corresponds to the North West Region in Anglophone Cameroon. Sawa is a word in the Duala language meaning seaside and from the early beginnings, its use was limited to the immediate coastal and mangrove areas of Cameroon. But later on, it was extended to the forest people of the Littoral and South West Regions of the country. The label Sudano-Sahelian is a product of the geo-historical background of people in the northern part of Cameroon, most of whom are Muslims. A majority trace their origins to Sudan while their vegetation is the arid Sahel savanna type (Ngwoh, 2012). Table 1 shades more light on the principal features of these cultural zones.

¹ According to Hofstede (1998), national culture has six dimensions, namely 1. power distance: the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is unequally distributed; 2. uncertainty avoidance: the extent to which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity; 3. individualism/collectivism: the level to which people are integrated into groups; 4. masculinity/femininity: masculinity signifies a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material rewards for success, while femininity implies a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak, and improved quality of life; 5. long-term/short-term orientation: long-term-oriented cultures attribute more importance to the future. They foster future-oriented values like persistence, saving and capacity for adaptation. However, short-term oriented cultures promote values related to the past and present, such as steadiness, respect for tradition, reciprocation and fulfilling social obligations (Hofstede and Bond, 1988); and 6. indulgence/restraint: indulgence is the degree to which that society allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun. On the other hand, restraint stands for a society that suppresses the gratification of needs using strict social norms

² Most of the territory known today as the Republic of Cameroon was a German protectorate from 1884 when she was annexed to 1916 when a joint Anglo-French force evicted Germany during the First World War. This protectorate was divided into British and French Cameroons in 1916 and confirmed, with some slight modifications, by the Milner-Simon Agreement of July 10, 1919. They were Class B Mandated Territories of the League of Nations until 1946 when they became United Nations Trust Territories. British Cameroons and French Cameroun were separate legal and political entities wherein Britain and France instituted two different cultures, the Anglo-Saxon and Gaullist respectively. When the two territories reunified in 1961, the bilingual nature of the country was established as English and French became the country's official languages on an equal status.

Table 1: Characteristics of Cultural Groups in Cameroon

No	Name	Geography	Ethnic Composition	Cultural Features
1	Fang-Beti	This group is located on the south-eastern portion, occupies 46 % of the nation's land surface, constitutes 18 % of the population. They inhabit the tropical forest area, part of the coastline and live in three of the country's ten regions.	The Beti-Pahuin (Fang-Beti): Ewondo: Yezum, Yebekolo; Bane: Mbida Bane, Mvog-Nyenge; Eton-Beti, Eton-Beloua, and Beloua- Eton; Mvelle; Eki, Manguissa, Bamvele (Tsinga), Evuzok, Omvang, Yebaka, Yetudi; Fang: Ntumu, Mvang (Mvae); Bafia (Banen): Ndiki, Ntundu, Lemande, Yambetta, Bape, Bekke; Bulu: Bulu, Zaman, Ewondo; Speakers of Makaa-Njem Languages; Yambassa; Tikar: Ngambe Tikar, Bbang-Heng, Bankim, Ditan, Iina, Ngambe, Ngume, Ue, Yakong; Bassa; Babuti (Vute); Other Tribes: Bajem, Baki, Bamun, Bulu, Fa' (Balong), Gbete (Kepere), Gunu, Lafa, Maka, Nnjauti, Nyokon, PPori; Pygmy: Baka, Babaya, or Babinga pygmies; Bantu People: Maka, Bajwe, Nzime, Njem, Mpo, Mpoman, Kunbabeeg (Makaa-Njem Language Group); Baki, Pori, Bajem, Kwa, Eki, Kwakum, KaKa, Bageto;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economy: Farming, hunting, fishing, commerce - Religion: Christianity, African Traditional Religions - Administration: Semi-centralized political system; traditional ruler is called Nkukuma - Languages: Ewondo, Bafia, Bulu - Cuisine: Bobolo, Okot, Kpwem - Dress: Obom - Music: Bikutsi, Assiko - Festivals: Ening Beti, Nguma Mabit, Gunu Adamawa-Ubangi (Sudanese) People: Gbaya, Kuo, Gbete (Kepere), Bangantu; Speakers of Fulfulde (Senegambian Language): Hausa and Mbororo (Shuwa Arabs); Mabi, Ngumba (Numba), Mabea (Maboa); Batanga, Bakolo (Bakole), Bakola;
2	Grassfields	The population of these western highlanders is estimated at 32 % and they live on approximately 7 % of the land, that is 31, 684 out of 475, 442 square kilometers. The Grassfields are located on the north western part of the country	In the Eastern Grassfields or West Region, the major peoples are Tikar groups namely Bamileke and Bamoun. The Bamileke are further streamlined into language groups like Fe'fe', Ghomala, Kwa', Ngwe, Mengaka, Ngiemboon, Ngomba, Ngombale, Nda'nda' and Yemba. The Mbororo are also found in this area. In the Western Grassfields or North West Region, the major ethnic groups are the Tikar, Chamba, Ngemba, Aghem, Jukon, Mbororo and Widekum. The Kom and Bum live in Boyo Division; Nso, Oku, Noni inhabit Bui Division; in Donga Mantung, there are Tang (Nsungli), War, Wiya (Ndu), Misaje, (Dumbo, Nchanti), Mbembe, (Njari), Mfumte, Kaka (Mbem), Mbaw. As for Menchum Division where Tikar dominate, there are Aghem, Fungom, Beba-Befang, Esimbi, Jukon (Kunabe). Mezam Division has Chamba, Widekum and Tikar like Ngemba, Bafut, Bali while Momo has Widekum divided into Mogamo, Mememo (Meta), Ngie, Ngwo, Oshie. In Ngo-Ketunjia Division, Tikar and Chamba predominate. The Mbororo are spread all over the Grassfields and beyond.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economy: Farming, hunting, fishing, commerce, cattle-rearing - Religion: Christianity, Islam, African Traditional Religions - Administration: Centralized political systems, traditional rulers are variously called Fon, Batum, Kedong, Sultan - Principal Languages: Mungaka, Lamnso, Wimbum - Cuisine: Achu, Mbuh, Meluh, Kondre - Dress: Athoghu - Music: Njang, Bottle dance, Manganbeu - Festivals: Lela, Nguon, Ferngkyi, Doua, Medumba, Samba, Abinifor, Fulengang Female Regulatory Societies: Ufarp, Takumbeng, Fumbeun, Ndongunfumbui, Anlu Male Regulatory Societies: Kwifoa, Ngwerong, Ngomba, Ndau Ntsu, Nfu, Ukoum, Takibu
3	Sawa	These are coastal and tropical forest peoples living in the Littoral and South West Regions of Cameroon with a population of 12 %. They occupy roughly 10 % of the land	Banen, Bankon, Bakoko, Bakole, Bassa, Batanga, Bonkeng, Duala, Ewodi, Subu, Limba, Mbo, Mboko, Mungo, Nyantan, Pongo, Yabassi. Bakweri, Isubu, Wovea, Mungo, Balong, Mboko are found in Fako Division; in Kupe Manengouba we have Bakossi, Bassossi, Mbo, Abo, Miamilo, Baneka, Muanean, Muange, Bareko, Bakaka, Babong, Balondo, Manehas, Bongkeng, and Bakem. Groups in Lebialem are Bangwa, Mbo, Mundani, Nkingkwa, Wabane; Manyu Division has	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economy: Fishing, farming, commerce - Religion: Christianity, African Traditional Religions - Administration: Semi-centralized political systems - Principal Languages: Duala, Bassa, Mokpwe, Kenyang - Cuisine: Eru, Ndole, Mitumba, Timanernbuzra - Dress: Sanja, Kabba - Music: Assiko, Makossa

			Banyang, Ejagham, Akwaya, Boki and Ayang. Meme has Bafaw, Bakundu, Balong, Barombi, Balundu and Mbonge while Ndiang Division harbours Oroko: Mbonge, Bakoko, Balondo, Bakundu, Bafaka, Ngolo, Batanga, Ekondokondo, Balue, Barombi.	- Festivals: Ngondo, Ndie, Malee, Lenya Male Regulatory Societies: Ahon, Bomambok, Mwamkum, Ekpe, Obasinjom Female Regulatory Societies: Ekpah, Liengu, Ndem
4	Sudano-Sahelian	They are found in Cameroon's grand north that covers three regions namely Adamawa, North and Far North, occupying 35 % the land with a population of 38 % These are descendants of the Sudanese, Hamites and Semites. Other Groups: Matal, Wuzlum, Vame, Muyang, Mokolo, Dugwor, Marva, Mofu, Cuvok, Merey, Zulgo-Gemzek, Mbuko, Buduma	Speakers of Fulfulde (Senegambian Language): Hausa and Mbororo (Shuwa Arabs); Bantoide Language Speakers: Ndoro, Nyem-Nyem (Suga), Vute, Mambila, Konja, Tikar; Adamawa Language Speakers: Mundang, Tupuri, Pere, Kali, Mboum, Dii; Chamba, Fande, Gimbe, Komandera, Vere, Doayo, Ndupa, Dugun, Voko, Mond, Mambeya, Fali, Fali Bbussime, Fali Durbeyi, Fali Kangu; The Kotoko People: Afade, Logone, Makari, Kuseri, Maltam, Jina, Majera, Kera, Zumaya, Massa; Nilo-Saharan Language Speakers: Kanuri; Ngambay Chadic Language Speakers: Kirdi, Mandarawa, Glavda, Gvoko, Turu, Mabas, Matakam, Kapsiki, Hya, Bana, Zizilivikan, Jimi, Gude, Bulahai, Buwal, Gawar, Besleri, Sharwa, Tsuvan, Mazagway, Daba, Muturwa; Njanyi, Gudar, Bata, Zim; Ubangi Language Speakers: Gbaya	- Economy: Cattle-rearing, farming, commerce, fishing - Religion: Islam, Christianity, African Traditional Religions - Administration: Centralized political systems; traditional ruler is called Lamido - Language: Ffulfulde - Dress: Gandoura - Festivals: Nyem Nyem, Tokna Massana, Feo Kague, Podoko, Elwarta Regulatory Societies: Fada, Jahda

Source: Ngwoh, V. K. (2012). "Traditional Rulers and Nation Building in Cameroon", Buea: privately circulated, pp. 78-89

Although Cameroon does not have a laid down policy on national culture, there have been concerted efforts across the country since independence³ to create one from the tangible and intangible elements of various groups to the extent that ethnic cultures have crossed the frontiers and entered into a national heritage. The nationalization of land, harmonization of chieftaincy institution, institutionalization of national integration, creation of the Ministry of Culture, putting in place of the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism, internal migration and the near destruction of the Anglo-Saxon cultural heritage are some of the efforts made towards achieving this goal.

The nationalization of land was one of the earliest measures to make Cameroonians look to the same direction in terms of culture. This was intended to harmonize the numerous tenure systems across the country, break down social barriers and check customs that denied land rights to vulnerable persons like women. Besides, it would protect every body's interest and not that of a particular group, curb haphazard dealings that underpinned land transaction, promote its maximal use through a more rational system of allocation and eliminate the customary notion of inalienability of land thereby assuring proper administration to engender growth. This would further facilitate security of tenure for customary land owners through land registration to enhance agriculture thereby converting users into bourgeois planters. This was in contrast to the traditional system founded on the right of access as a member of the community (Fonjong, Sama-Lang and Fombe, 2010).

Land was nationalized through Law No. 74-1 of July 14, 1974 that established rules governing land tenure in the country. Section 1(2) of the ordinance provides that the state is the guardian of all lands and it may in this capacity intervene to ensure its rational use, the imperative interest of defense, or economic policies of the nation. This law classifies land into four categories including national land, private state land, private corporate and the land of

³ After the Second World War, the United Nations (Article 76, b) explicitly called on the British and French to administer their respective spheres of Cameroon towards self-government. It called on the Administering Authorities to "promote the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants of the Trust Territories, and their progressive development towards self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstances of each territory and its peoples". On January 1, 1960 French Cameroon gained independence while British Cameroonians were to decide in a Plebiscite as whether to gain independence by joining French Cameroon or associating with the Nigerian Federation. On February 11, 1961, they chose the former option.

individuals. Its supervision and management was placed under the Ministry of State Property, Surveys and Land Tenure as well as national consultative boards chaired by local administrative officers in the sub-divisions, divisions and regions (Ngwoh, 2019).

Still within the context of building a national culture and by virtue of the variety and diversity of Cameroonian traditions, the management of traditional administration was harmonized through the promulgation of Law No. 77/245 of July 15, 1977. This piece of legislation outlines the functions and powers of chiefs, classifies them according to several geo-political strengths, defines royal families and qualifications for chieftanship, lays down the procedure for designation of chiefs and stipulates the competent authorities to do so. These chiefs or traditional rulers play an important role in rural communities as leaders or heads of quarters, villages, clans or ethnic groups. Together with local dignitaries, they take decisions on aspects like land disputes, marital and family problems. As cultural authorities and auxiliaries of the administration, they are assisted by elders in council set up in accordance with local tradition and are empowered to appoint representatives to deputize in their absence (Metiege, 2012).

Generally, chiefs are nation builders since they are positive visionaries, pioneers and independent thinkers whose contributions are legendary to the creation, sustenance and integration of the various polities in the country. They unite their people, protect their lives and ensure their survival by providing, expanding or defending their natural resource endowments. Chiefs constitute the soul of the country and have been performing different functions since time immemorial as kings, priests and prophets. In 2007, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ENECA), highlighted three other roles played by traditional authorities.⁴ To all of these should be added administrative, political, economic and social functions that are crucial in decentralization. In this context, the administrative task that these custodians of ancestral values could possibly play comprises that of supplementing executive and other state agencies as auxiliaries or local representatives to promote democracy and development. By virtue of their legitimacy and proximity, they are in the best position to mobilize the local communities and provide leadership (Ngwoh, 2011).

They have a multidimensional political role to play in decentralization especially as they embody an old political institution that cannot be washed away in the business of modern state governance. Their meaningful role in local assemblies is indispensable since they can be more responsive to the needs and interests of the people. They command a lot of influence in both the rural and urban areas because they are considered as people with customary legitimacy and therefore are seen as important unifying and stabilizing factors in local governance. The system has once proven to be a very important source of mobilization of physical, human and financial resources for local development. In the socio-economic domain, they possess the capacity to generate local intelligence for enhancing security of persons and property, the provision of social collateral in the form of confidence for investment and building land banks by ensuring speedy resolution of land disputes in order to discourage the settlement of disputes in court (Ngwoh, 2011).⁵

This law classifies chiefdoms on a territorial basis into three categories following demographic and economic considerations. A First Class Chiefdom covers at most one division; Second Class spreads over at most a Sub-division while Third Class corresponds to a village or quarter in the rural and urban areas. Their designation falls under the respective competences of Prime Minister, Minister of Territorial Administration and Senior Divisional Officer (Metiege, 2012). Since September 13, 2013 these custodians of culture have been on government payroll with a monthly wage of FCFA 200,000, FCFA 100,000 and FCFA 50,000 respectively. They are chosen from families that are customarily called upon to carry out a traditional leadership role among people sharing the same bloodline and lineage. When the throne becomes vacant because of death, destoolment or abdication, the competent administrative authority consults the king makers with a view to finding another ruler.⁶ The catching ceremony or consultation is made during a public meeting that

⁴ The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ENCA) published these in a concept paper titled "Integration of Traditional and Modern Governance Systems in Africa" in 2007. The roles include the participate in the administration of regions and districts; complementing government efforts in mobilizing the population for the implementation of development projects by sensitizing them on health issues, such as HIV/AIDS, promoting education, encouraging economic enterprises, inspiring respect for the law and urging participation in the electoral process; and taking part in conflict resolution.

⁵ In recent times, especially during the on-going Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon, some traditional rulers have been subjected to the greatest ridicule. While most in the Anglophone regions have fled their chiefdoms to safer zones, some were kidnapped, molested and killed. This situation has cast doubts in the minds of post-modernists concerning the authenticity of claims about the spiritual powers and legitimacy of chiefs.

⁶ In traditional phraseology, a chief is never said to be ill, dead or buried; he is looked upon as an institution where continuity holds sway and so is believed to be immortal and hardly in a state of morbidity. He incarnates life, not death; and health, not illness. Any indigene, who by commission or omission pronounces him dead commits an offence that the blood of all the goats, pigs and fowls in that community cannot cleanse. This explains why in some societies, the chief

enables the local community to participate in the identification of the person they want as their chief and ensure the candidate's bond to his community.⁷ Such a gathering is presided over by the Senior Divisional Officer in the case of first and second class chiefdoms and by the Sub- Divisional Officer in the case of a third class chiefdom. When a candidate is caught, a file is constituted for him comprising a Certificate of Non Conviction, copy of the birth certificate, medical certificate of fitness, certified letter containing death certificate, letter of abdication or deposition or medical report ascertaining a vacancy and this file is forwarded to the competent authority for official endorsement by the state (Metiege, 2012).

The National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism (NCPBM) is one of the institutions put in place to engender a national culture. Although it was created in 2017 as one of the measures to stall the Anglophone Crisis,⁸ its mission is to give a fresh impetus to Cameroon's unity in diversity; create a conducive environment wherein all Cameroonians give and take in their interaction and integration especially within a context of win-win partnership; uphold and harness the rich and diverse cultures of the country in order to wipe out the sense and feeling of superiority or inferiority that greatly frustrates the essence of living together, inter alia (Qui, 2017).

One advantage the country has is that there are cultural affinities between people who inhabit it. For example, Bamileke living in both Anglophone and Francophone regions have a common language; the Nso and the Bamoun are of common origin, so also are the Ngemba who live in Santa and Mbouda. There are Anglophone and Francophone Mbo while the Bakweri and Duala are of common stock. Close ties exist between the Bakossi, Balong, Bangwa and Mbo people living in the English and French-speaking sections of Cameroon (Ngoh, 2011). Colonialism laid the substratum by bringing together a people whose country is described as a decentralized unitary state with the watchword "one people, one nation, one destiny" (Awasom, 2004). This was the work of the Germans⁹ who fashioned a nation out of a hotchpotch of cultural zones thereby initiating the earliest modern mixing or shuffling of the diverse human components. Even though this was both forced and voluntary (Ejedepang-Koge, 2011), it crystallized into three German legacies, namely "a memory, an idea and the hope" (Kofele-Kale, 1980).

Even the intermixture of lexical items from indigenous languages is in line with the creation of a national culture because there are words cutting across linguistic boundaries whereby some concepts are mutually intelligible. For instance, the word Fon, derived from Mfon, in the Mungaka language of Bali-Nyongha, which means paramount traditional ruler, has almost become universal: Fo in Mankon, Foh in Akum, Nfor, Nfon and Nfua respectively in Kenyang, Bafaw and Esu. In the same vein, the words Mafo, Tagne and Magne, meaning Queen mother, father of twin

does not set eyes on a corpse or an open grave lest the twin floodgates of disease and death should invade the land. However, he is recognized as an individual human being who is liable to all human afflictions that must be described using special terminologies. He is also perceived as the light of his community. In the traditional society, only fire from wood gives light and when illness befalls him, it is said that there is darkness in the Palace. When he dies, it is said that the fire is out. Even if he dies, his name must not perish and so when the dead Fon is buried, it must be said that he is missing and the entire community is in search of him. The designation of another ruler is said to be the return of the chief.

⁷ The expression "catching ceremony" is used to describe a meeting of members of the royal family intended to elect or designate a successor. The one on whom the choice falls usually attempts to run away causing the other princes to catch him and sit him on the throne by force.

⁸ The Anglophone Crisis is a manifestation of the Anglophone Problem. The crisis can be defined as the civil unrests that have been rocking the North West and South West regions of Cameroon since October 2016. *Civil resistance movements, started by Anglophone lawyers and teachers in the aforementioned date, relating to marginalization and sectoral demands, later articulated with petitions of secessionist groups for independence. These then metamorphosed into a social crisis that escalated into violent extremism. On the other hand, the Anglophone Problem can be defined as the complexity (difficulties, troubles or dilemmas) faced by people of North West and South West regions of Cameroon (by virtue of their origins and who were formerly under British colonial administration), in their endeavour to have the same privileges based on an equality of status with their Francophone brethren in the nation's socio-economic and political set-up. This predicament can also be seen as the clash of Anglo-Saxon with Gaullist culture leading to the absence of equal opportunities for both parties. The Anglophone Problem is manifested in various ways including, but not limited to domination, marginalization, assimilation, provocation, discrimination and the systematic destruction of their Anglo-Saxon uniqueness, heritage and institutional foundations. Anglophone reactions to the problem were swift and diverse, including the formation of more than 60 pressure groups, recourse to international justice, diplomatic offensives, organization of conferences, writing of petitions and memoranda; resignations of top Anglophone officials from government, protests, boycotts, armed confrontations and imposition of self-exile by prominent elite.*

⁹ Germany colonized Cameroon in 1884 and ruled the country till 1916 when she was evicted by a joint Anglo-French force during the First World War and this led to the partition of Cameroon into English and French zones

and mother of twin respectively, as used by Bamileke in Francophone Cameroon correspond to Mafor, Tanyi and Manyi in Anglophone Cameroon (Echu, 2002). Their similarity makes them symbols of national identity, and thus the expression of a national culture. The fact that cultural concepts or notions are shared at the national level implies that at a given time, they cease to be considered simply from an ethnic perspective and so go beyond to the level of a national culture (Echu, 2002).

National integration, which is understood to be the practice of socio-political development or art of national construction that allows initially loosely linked communities during a *long duree* to become a common society with a nation-state corresponding to it, has been a major catalyst in forming a national culture. The policy is intended to bring together different ethnic communities into a natural and genuinely amalgamated society so that leaders and the citizenry can consciously cultivate a national identity, a sense of belonging based on shared values, tradition, history and aspirations. National identity is the foundation of social cohesion with the grand aim of constructing or structuring a global image using the power of the state so that inter-ethnic solidarity should lead to the gradual elimination of present sectarian tendencies in favour of a more integrated social environment (Biya, 1987).

Such a measure is necessary in ethnically defined constituencies where there is conflict and competition for scarce resources. Since they are socio-cultural entities, they consider themselves culturally, linguistically or socially distinct from each other, and most often view their relations in actual or potentially antagonistic terms (Cox, 1970). In order to benefit from what the whole country possesses by virtue of its varied physiographic nature, this nation-wide construction is necessary for the citizens so "that although the rooster (cock, male chicken) belongs to one person, it crows in the morning for the whole village" (Jua, 2004).

As has already been stated, Cameroonians are burdened by three broad cultures namely, indigenous, Gaullist or Francophone and Anglo-Saxon or Anglophone by virtue of their colonial past. This Anglo-Saxon culture was identified with "civility, broad-mindedness, hard work, moral probity, accountability, forthrightness, duty consciousness, and above all, the assertive, fearless ability to stand up for one's rights and convictions in the face of adversity" (Ndi, 2005). It should be added that self-reliance, solidarity and truthfulness were also key virtues of this unwritten ethical code of conduct that became the identity card, the hallmark typical of the Anglophone (Nfi, 2014). It has been noted that credit must be given to the British Colonial Administration (1916-1961), who, through "their policy of Indirect Rule, principles of personal dignity, integrity, self-reliance, self-actualization and self-confidence," imparted such a culture and identity on the people of Anglophone Cameroon. Apart from British influence, this culture was instilled by the teaching of Religious Studies and Moral Education in all public and confessional schools by which honesty, obedience, tender consciences and moral probity were moulded resulting in the Anglo-Saxon outlook (Nfi, 2014). In line with the constitutional biculturalism of the state, government recognized two educational subsystems in 1961, the Anglophone and Francophone subsystems with two examination systems and bodies.

In the course of trying to carve a national culture from the numerous homegrown customs and traditions, there occurred a clash between Gaullist and Anglo-Saxon systems in which some of the policies put in place by a Francophone-dominated state government led to the near extinction of Anglo-Saxon uniqueness, heritage and institutional foundations through assimilation, marginalization and systematic destruction. According to Amadou Ahidjo, first president of the Cameroon republic from 1960 to 1982, the assimilation process which involved independence and reunification ought to lead to national unity and the inevitable disappearance of the autonomy of the Anglophone region. There is no wonder that in 1962, the Pound Sterling used in Anglophone Cameroon was abolished in favour of the French Franc CFA, the left-hand drive traffic system was replaced with the right-hand drive that existed in French Cameroon, the academic year was aligned with that of the Francophone and the metric system replaced the British measurement units (Fonlon, 2012).

Financial and other institutions like West Cameroon Marketing Board, Cameroon Bank, the Santa Coffee Estate, the Yoke Power Station, the Tiko, Victoria and Mamfe sea/river ports, the Tiko, Bisongabng, and Bali airports were destroyed. Anglo-Saxon Common Law tradition was Frenchified by adulterating its judicial system and procedure with civil law ways in the French language, a situation that Anglophone lawyers decried (Ngwoh, 2017).¹⁰ Even the English

¹⁰ These grievances were well articulated by Common Law Lawyers when 700 of them met in Bamenda on May 9, 2015 to decry certain injustices. They requested that the president of Cameroun deploy Civil Law and Common Law lawyers to their respective constituencies and cause the translation of major texts such as OHADA and CEMAC Code into English. During that meeting, they addressed a memorandum to embassies of the US, Canada and Nigeria; the Ministry of Justice, the Senate, the Bar Council and the National Assembly. One year later, after complete government silence, they met again on the February 13, 2016 and came out with the Buea declaration. On October 6, 2016, they held another

education sub system was not spared because Religious Studies and Moral Education by which tender consciences and character were moulded resulting in the Anglo-Saxon outlook were discarded in order for the system to be akin to the Francophone one. On September 3, 1976, a Presidential Decree no.1976/385 stipulated that a pass in Religious Studies at the GCE was not to be included among the requirements for employment. With this rejection of the cornerstone of Anglophone values, its cultural identity was eroded, thereby marking the start of the Francophonisation of Anglophone scholastic traditions (Nfi, 2014).

In addition, schools and other institutions of learning in Anglophone Cameroon were staffed with Francophones who imposed their system by dispensing lessons and setting examinations in the French language or Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE). Worst of all, since there were fewer or no Anglophones into technical education, the sector was flooded by Francophones who compelled Anglophone children to sit for their examinations such as CAP, PROBATOIRE and BACCALAUREAT instead of the GCE as their end-of-course examinations. This was perceived as an attempt to eradicate the Anglophone culture through the adulteration or pollution of its subsystem of education (Nfi, 2014).¹¹

Internal migration in Cameroon has transformed almost all village communities into cosmopolitan zones through the agglomeration of mixed ethnic groups as well as the creation of ethnic spaces in urban places that have been turned into focal points for sociological changes necessary for the consolidation of national awareness and the nurturing of a consolidated culture (Jua, 2004). Government policy that Cameroonian citizens could serve in any capacity anywhere in their fatherland regardless of their ancestry, ethnic origin, language or religion goes a long way to water the roots of national values. In the course of doing so, such servants and their families usually get immersed in the cultural aspects of the people they serve with the tendency of leaving indelible marks through marriage and other relationships. By virtue of the fact that intermarriage creates close social interaction between people of different ethnicities, it is one of the most ultimate measures to break down socio-cultural barriers (Fru, 2018).

It has been confirmed that intermarriage is still the best measure of ethnic intermixture because it dissolves ethnic exclusiveness and shuffles the various ethnic populations more effectively than any other social process (Price, 1982). Since the first requirement for a new kinship is marriage, which then creates a blood tie, its establishment forms a bond whose effects grow down through the generations and over the years among people. Intermarriage has important implications for the next generation who will have mixed or multiple ethnicities leading to assimilation, integration and hybridization (Nuri, 2012).

IN SEARCH OF A CULTURE SYMBOL FOR CAMEROON

The world over, there is an abundance of cultural symbols that identify people. A cultural symbol is a visual element that signifies the ideology of a particular people or a sensory aid that is conventionally accepted and represents any aspect of culture, including nationalism, belief systems, traditions, language and values (Gonzalez, 2017). Such insignias are very common in world religions like Crucifix in Christendom, Star of David in Judaism or crescent and star in Islam. Apart from these, others like Eiffel Tower in Paris, Great Wall of China, Cristo Redentor Statue in Brazil, Pyramids of Egypt, images of Gandhi and Mandela, Unification Monument in Yaounde and Fouban bi-cephal serpent speak volumes about the values, beliefs and heritage of their respective peoples. As far as Africa is concerned, there are indigenous cultural symbols like kola-nuts, head crown, cowries, beads, calabash, horsewhips, cocoa pod, cocoa seeds and the talking drum (Bankole, 2018). In this study, we are going to decipher which aspect of Cameroon national culture (cuisine, music, dance, language or dress) can be adapted as a cultural symbol.

meeting in Bamenda and decided to go on strike due to the adamancy of the government. On October 9, 2016 they took to the streets of Buea and Bamenda.

¹¹ On their part, teachers' trade unions of Anglophone extraction tabled a catalog of complaints to government officials on December 13, 2015 and January 5, 2016. These involved the transparent management of admission into medical and other professional schools, deployment of Francophone teachers who cannot speak English to teach in Anglophone schools, the rejection of Religious Studies as a requirement for employment, the imposition of Francophone examinations on Anglophone children, absence of teachers in science and technical subjects in Anglophone schools, the non-payment of state subventions to lay private schools, inter alia. When responses to these worries were not forthcoming, six teachers' trade unions declared an indefinite strike with effect from Monday November 21, 2016. During this strike, there was to be a shutdown of all schools across Anglophone Cameroon until definite steps were taken by the government to stop the plunder of Anglophone education.

National Cuisine

Having already established the fact that culture is the outcome of man's interaction with his environment for the provision of his material and immaterial needs, gastronomy, which is one of the components of the ethnographic triad (food, shelter and clothing), is also an object of cultural heritage with a symbolic meaning that can be used for self-identification (Bondavera, 2018). The statement by Hippocrates that "we are what we eat", fits in the context whereby diet can be used to identify a people because it possesses the material, spiritual, behavioural and organizational elements of culture. These are utensils, eating taboos, beliefs, rituals, table manners, eating norms and etiquette, day meal distribution, fast food as opposed to slow food traditions, etc.

The American Hamburger, Hungarian Goulash, Italian Pasta, Russian Pelmeni and Ukrainian Borshch have in many instances become real national symbols for their nations. Cuisine could also be a reflection of national history, character and mentality and there is no wonder that Confucius' stated that, "I share and I never forget, I taste and I remember, I experience and I understand. Apart from satisfying a person's vital need for nutrition, cuisine serves the purpose of social communication for it has traditional value with symbolic meaning (Bandavera, 2018). Due to diverse cultures in Cameroon, various food items which reflect their respective geographical backgrounds have transcended the borders of cultural niches wherein they were hitherto a reserve. The table below summarizes the various foodstuff shared by Cameroonians.

Table 2: Cameroon Cuisine

No	Menu	Origins Cultural Group	People	Description
1	Achu	Grassfields	Tikar, Ngemba	Pounded cocoyam and a type of yellowish soup
2	Afofo	Sawa	Kenyang	Locally distilled liquor from maize
3	Arki	Fang-Beti	Ewondo	Locally brewed liquor from maize, palm wine, cassava or banana
4	Bil bil (bilibili)	Sudano-Sahelian	Toupouri	Local drink brewed from millet
5	Bobolo	Fang-Beti	Ewondo	Ground cassava cooked into a paste, tied inside a leaf
6	Burukutu	Grassfields	Furu-Awa	Local drink brewed from millet and consumed warm before sunrise
7	Ekwang	Sawa	Bakweri	Ground cocoyam cooked with oil, spices, fish and cocoyam leaves
8	Eru	Sawa	Banyang/Ejagham	Local variety of vegetables (scientific name: <i>gnetum africana</i>)
9	Esuba	Sawa	Bakossi	Soup prepared from cocoa leaves with meat
10	Kati-kati	Grassfields	Nso/Kom	Chicken cooked in palm oil
11	Kegemeh	Grassfields	Esu	Cooked groundnut paste
12	Keleng keleng	Sawa	Duala	Local variety of vegetables (scientific name: <i>orchorus olitorius</i>)
13	Koki	Sawa	Duala	Type of local cake made out of ground beans cooked with palm oil
14	Kondre	Grassfields	Bamileke	Dish of plantain porridge
15	Kpwem/kpem	Fang-Beti	Ewondo	Vegetable dish from cassava leaves (scientific name: <i>manihot esculenta</i>)
16	Kwacoco	Sawa	Bakweri	Ground cocoyam cooked with oil and fish
17	Kwanmkwala	Sawa	Bakossi	Pounded cassava fufu
18	Kwacha (Nkang)	Grassfields	Aghem, Tikar	Locally brewed corn beer
19	Matango	Sawa	Duala, Bassa	Palm wine
20	Melu	Grassfields	Aghem, Esu	Raffia wine
21	Mbongo Tchobi	Sawa	Bassa	Sauce prepared with some exotic plants and accompanied with meat or fish
22	Mbu	Grassfields	Moghamo	Palm wine
23	Miondo	Sawa	Duala	Ground cassava cooked into a paste, tied inside a leaf
24	Mitumba	Sawa	Bassa	Ground cassava mixed with palm oil, locally baked and tied in a leaf
25	Nan-tara	Grassfields	Meta	Cocoyam hot pot or porridge
26	Ndole	Sawa	Duala	Local variety of vegetables (<i>vermonia amygdalina</i>) cooked with groundnut and meat
27	Njama-njama	Grassfields	Tikar	Cooked huckleberry leaves
28	Nkui (Nkwi)	Grassfields	Tikar	Sticky soup (<i>triumfetta pentandra</i>) made from back of a creeping plant with ingredients
29	Okok beti	Fang-Beti	Bulu	Local variety of vegetables (scientific name: <i>Gnetum Africana</i>)
30	Sha	Grassfields	Wimum	Locally brewed corn beer

31	Timbernambuzra	Sawa	Bakweri	Ground cocoyam boiled in leaves and eaten with mbanga soup
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Source: Adapted by the Author from Echu, G. (2002). "Multilingualism as a Resource: The Lexical Appropriation of Cameroon Indigenous Languages by English and French". In *TRANS Internet Journal for Cultural Studies*, Number. No. 13, <https://www.inst.at/trans/13Nr/echu13.htm>. Accessed on March 16, 2019

The diversity demonstrated in the table shows that cuisine cannot be a national cultural emblem because it is cumbersome and perishable. In any case, different food species like mkpem, eru, ndole, achu, kpa coco, nkwi, mbongo tchopi, have assumed the status of national dishes and are consequently not only shared by everyone, but also make up the national cultural mélange.

National Music and Dance

Music and dance are some very important aspects of the customs and traditions of the people of Cameroon, manifested in various ways. They play a role in religious rituals; constitute rites of passage to mark separation, transition, and reincorporation; form part of communal ceremonies, including harvest celebrations, funerals, and coronations; offer entertainment and recreation in several forms like masquerades, acrobatics and social club as well as express local history. (New World Encyclopedia, 2019). In Cameroon, music and dance are performed at five levels namely nationally or regionally where there is a National Ballet, an annual National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFAC) and the Limbe Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC); at the level of ethnic groups, annual or bi-annual festivities are organized; there exist dance clubs in quarters or villages according to age, sex and status; dances are performed to mark an achievement while at the individual level, people make varied genres of music such as ambasibé, makossa, bikutsi, mangambu, njang, bend skin, mbaya, chacha, assiko, bottle dance and others according to their ethnic backgrounds (Nkolo, 2000).

Throughout the country, entire ethnic communities perform annual festivities during which different aspects of culture are exhibited. Examples include Nguon of Bamoun, Ngondo of Duala, Lela in Bali-Nyongha, Medumba of Bagante, Nyem Nyem in Adamawa. The people of Bamoun organize the Nguon once in two years with a variety of activities like indictment of their traditional ruler called Sultan, re-enactment of a historical war scene, fantasia in which 70 horses are paraded, etc. The Ngondo is an annual water-centered festival held by the Sawa (coastal peoples) in Douala, whose highlight is the jengu cult during which a devotee enters River Wouri to visit the underwater kingdom, remains there for hours and emerges with his clothing still completely dry. Though government banned the carnival in 1981, it was reinstated ten years later.¹²

Lela is an annual fiesta to commemorate the wars that the Chamba people in general and the Bali Nyonga in particular fought to conquer other tribes during migration. It is a four days' public event and usually takes place in December. In the Adamawa Region, the Nyem Nyem festival celebrates the peoples' resistance against colonial penetration and domination over their land (Delancey, Mbuh and Delancey, 2010). Apart from ethnic cultural manifestations, a different category of dances constitutes rites of passage or initiation ceremonies into adulthood. These are common across polities in Menchum Division such as Duoa in Aghem (Wum), Ferngkyi in Esu, Tschong in Laimbwe and Djitesem in Weh. Although these are male manhood dances, women however, play a preponderant role because they provide the solo music that stimulates the male dancers to produce the polyrhythmic moves in the performance.

National Language

UNESCO classifies language as a vehicle for intangible cultural heritage because it is an important identity of a community with a critical role in cultural continuity and a medium through which common practices are transmitted (Njiruwo, 2016). Apart from being the 2nd most diverse and 8th multilingual country of the world, Cameroon has 279 living languages, 275 of which are national or indigenous with four (French, English, Cameroon Pidgin English (CPE) and Camfranglais) being non-national (Nforbi, Moko and Kouesso, 2016). Among the four major language families of Africa, the Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan and the Niger Kordofanian are represented in Cameroon with Fulfulde, Ewondo, Basaa, Duala, Hausa, Wandala, Kanuri, Arab Choa, Cameroon Pidgin English being of wider communication (Breton and Fohitung, 1991).

Wolf (2001) is of the opinion that three main lingua franca zones (CPE, French and Fulfulde) can be carved in Cameroon with CPE covering the Grassfields and Sawa zones where indigenous languages like Ngemba, Lamnso,

¹² Like many traditional institutions, Ngondo was against colonial authorities to the extent that it allied with the UPC party that radically demanded independence. When this was achieved in 1960, Ngondo's relationship with the new leaders of the country still remained uncordial leading to its banning in 1981.

Wimbun, Mungaka, Aghem, Esu, Fulfulde, Mokpe, Kenyang, Bayang, Oroko are also common. The French lingua franca zone covers the Fang-Beti and parts of the Sawa, while Fulfulde covers the Sudano-Sahelian area (Echu, 2002). Using language as a cultural symbol of Cameroon can be a near impossibility because since independence, the choice of a national language has been problematic. Difficulties in selecting one of these to be used across the nation stems from the fact that it could create ethnic animosities leading to national disintegration (Echu, 2002). Even if the country were to be divided into language clusters, there would still be protests from the speakers of the other languages. (Neba, Chibaka and Atindogbe, 2006). Luckily, the 1996 Constitution provides some solace as it contains provisions bearing on their protection and the promotion. Based on this, a number of laws and regulations have been put in place towards their promotion and preservation (Nforbi, Moko and Kouesso, 2016).¹³

National Dress

Cameroon traditional attire which is determined by climate, customs and beliefs varies greatly from one region to the other. In the arid north where much of the population is Muslim, traditional clothing is free flowing and head coverings are common. In the rainy, forested south, dressing styles are richly patterned and embroidered. In pre-colonial times, the indigenes designed their costumes from local material like leaves, barks of trees, animal skin and raffia-skirts to produce styles like ngwashi, ndanyi, danshiki, jumpa, nsang, sanja, agbada and saro for men, while women wore the loin, kabba, bubbah and wanda (ke-wondo). When trading became characterized by exchange of European goods for African raw materials such as cotton, ivory, rubber and palm oil by the 19th century, traders induced the local rulers with gifts such as mirrors and loincloth (Mokake, 2010).

The influence of Christian missionaries had a mental and behavioural impact on Africans, for the converts were distinguished from pagans through their dressing styles. Consequently, non-converts had to modify their dressing habits which the missionaries sometimes considered as fetish because of their aesthetics and paraphernalia. Trousers, gowns, shirts, other kinds of dressing were gradually introduced by the missionaries to solve the problem of scarcity of clothes among Africans as well as prevent the spread of scabies and chicken pox (Ngome, 2016).

The most popular Grassfields traditional dress called Athogho (togho or Bikom cloth), which is the focus of this study, is a multi-coloured finely embroidered outfit in which cotton threads of red, green, white and yellow are skillfully knitted into a black velvet fabric with the hand following various symbols and patterns. The rich multicolored hand embroidery usually around the neck, sleeve, and finish of the costume adds to its weight, quality and makes it resistant to wear and tear. Although this dress had been in existence since time immemorial, it became famous and widespread in the 1990s because of some factors. The devastating effects of the economic crisis, exacerbated by the absence of modern industries in the area galvanized the people not only to rely on their wits but also to intensify their indigenous artistic skills. Added to the absence of deep alluvial soils for large-scale farming, they decided to project their culture by increasing the beauty of the dress whose wide scale use raised its demands and pushed them into mass production. Besides, the creation of the Ministry of Small and Medium Size Enterprises, the adoption and revival of ethnic cultural festivals, national integration and globalization, drew the attention of the world to a dress whose confines had hitherto been limited to palaces in the hills and valleys of the Bamenda Grassfields.



Figure 1: Members of the Cameroon team (dressed in the Bamenda Traditional Outfit) enter the stadium during the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games at the Olympic Stadium on July 27, 2012 in London, England.

¹³ In order to revive, promote and preserve national languages, some communities have had their mother tongue alphabets written; the New Testament of the Bible has been translated; school curricula now include the teaching of these languages; every year, a variety of activities are carried out nation-wide to mark World Mother Tongue Day while all ten regional radio stations of the Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) have weekly slots for programmes and announcements in these indigenous languages.

To produce the dress, a design artist acquires the essential fabric (black velvet), then cuts, patterns and sews it according to designated cultural standards. He or she embellishes the regalia by inventing a complex pattern of how the dress will be embroidered using a needle and wool fiber. The design for women is slightly different from that for men and while they put it on with a headscarf, the men wear a colourful cap. Both men and women also adorn their necks with collated beads to accompany the dress. More often, the men carry a traditional bag when wearing the Athoghu attire (Chaikof, 2016). The gong, sun, moon, spider, crab and the heart-shaped ideograph are symbols usually woven into the dress. The gong is one of the most popular musical instruments in the country while the sign of love, inculcated to the dress, apart from being a symbol of core romantic love, affectionate emotion and caring, is also a mark of peace, mutual sympathy and respect in the community. The crab is a strong lunar sign in different cultures which stands for rebirth based on the fact that crabs cast their shells after a certain period of time while the spider denotes infinity and the power to work magic over people and things (Chaikof, 2016).

The traditional regalia worn by the rulers or Fons is designed slightly different from that used by ordinary people in that a symbol of the sun is fitted in front and behind to symbolize their benevolent authority which shines over the territory of their jurisdiction, with a generosity as mighty as that of the sun. The central portion of the dress is sometimes also decorated with a star or moon to enhance its beauty and to recognize the prevalence of a higher power to humans.

The dress can be worn by any member of that ethnic or cultural entity as an expression of dignity, a manifestation of ethnic identity, or symbolic acceptance and satisfaction with a particular culture. The one adorned in the Bamenda traditional regalia is expected to conduct him or herself with dignity, self-respect and decorum, amongst one's counterparts or companions. Any impertinent or casual manner may be viewed as disregarding the intrinsic cultural value of the regalia, resulting in one being viewed as a cultural non-conformist. It can be put on during official outings, solemn occasions such as cultural festivals, or any other activity which calls for cultural pride. Indeed, members of royalty often adorn themselves with it while others use it during weddings, feasts and investitures of chieftains. Across Cameroon, it is commonly referred to as the Bamenda Grassfields traditional dress (Mammipi, 2015).



Source: African Unique Wonders. 2013, January 20). "Bamenda Traditional Regalia-Cameroon's most beautiful traditional

Source: Munteh, Y. Ndula. (2017, November 19). "North West Traditional Regalia: The Nation's Pride!" <https://www.cameroonbusinesstoday.cm/articles/711/fr/north-west-traditional-regalia-the-nations-pride->. Accessed on December 30, 2019

CONCLUSION

Since the issue of having and sharing a common culture has become more and more urgent in a multicultural country for the purpose of having a national character, this research set out to untangle the aspects through which national culture expresses itself in Cameroon. In the course of doing so, it was discovered that domestic values are recognizable in symbols like cuisine, music, dance, language and dress. As the work also intended to identify a cultural emblem amongst them for the nation, a number of concerns emerged: that cuisine cannot be a national cultural emblem because it is cumbersome and fragile; the choice of any one indigenous language for national use will lead to rebellion from 274 other ethnic groups while the adoption of a unique song or dance will impinge on the country's rich diversity. As far as dress is concerned, the Bamenda Grassfields traditional regalia variously called Athoghu or Bikom cloth could be

adopted as Cameroon's cultural symbol. Tribal dressing styles like the sanja and kabba of the Sawa and Fang-Beti, gandourra and boubou of the Sudano-Sahelian and Athoghu of the Grassfields have all overflowed their geographical confines. But whereas the regalia of the other three cultural groups are akin to those of African peoples in other countries, the multi-coloured hand embroidered velvet Athoghu attire of the Bamenda Grassfields has remained unique, having been used on several instances to represent the country in international gatherings like Olympic Games. Citizens should embrace it just as they have done to some Western costumes and the fact that it can be patterned differently lends credit to its being weather friendly.

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