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Ambiguous Transitions: Mediating Citizenship Among Youths in Cameroon[1]

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Abstract

This paper examines the subject of youth transition and its relationship to struggles for citizenship in contemporary Cameroon. It is premised on the assumption that the end of youth transition is not simply adulthood but precisely, full social and political citizenship, and that for many young people today this end is elusive. Against this background, young people have begun to redefine their identities and aspirations in relation to the state, thus questioning local meanings of citizenship and success. The paper contends that while several studies have explored youths' differential responses to Cameroon's economic and political crises, none of them have accounted sufficiently for the different biographic trajectories mapped out by these young people. By means of case studies and ethnographic detail the dynamics of youth politics and the ambiguities of youth transition are analysed in relation to the wider political landscape in Cameroon.

Résumé

Cet article étudie la période de transition des jeunes, ainsi que leur relation aux luttes pour la citoyenneté dans le Cameroun contemporain. L'article est basé sur l'hypothèse selon laquelle la fin de la période de transition des jeunes n'est pas uniquement symbolisée par le passage à l'âge adulte, mais également par le passage à une véritable citoyenneté politique et sociale; il soutient également que pour un grand nombre de jeunes, cette transition est aujourd'hui difficile à réaliser. Dans ce contexte, ces derniers se sont mis à redéfinir leurs identités et leurs aspirations par rapport à l'État, remettant ainsi en question la signification locale de la citoyenneté et de la réussite. Cette contribution explique que même si plusieurs études ont analysé les réactions différentielles des jeunes aux crises économiques et politiques du Cameroun, aucune d'entre elles n'a suffisamment pris compte des différentes trajectoires biographiques de ces jeunes. La dynamique de la politique des jeunes, ainsi que les ambiguïtés de leur période

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de transition sont analysées au moyen d'études de cas et d'éléments ethnographiques, et relativement à la situation politique globale du Cameroun.

Introduction

More often than not, ethnographies of Africa have treated 'youth' as a supporting category rather than a subject of exclusive inquiry (cf. Furlong 2000; Durham 2000). The academic marginalisation of youths has prompted Caputo (1995) to describe them as anthropology's silent others. That is, 'silenced' by academia but not necessarily by the social contexts and structures they find themselves in (cf. Mbembe 1985). Thus, the notion of youths as the silent others pertains to the claim that comparatively less scholarship has been devoted to this social category until the late twentieth century. Today, however, there is a vibrant trend which allows for substantial debate and intellectual exchange on the general subject of youth. Anthropologically speaking, one could suggest that scholarship in this domain has come of age (Diouf 2003).

In Cameroon, most of the research on youth has focused on the predicament of youth in the context of prolonged economic crisis and the country's flawed democratic transition (cf. Fokwang 1999; Onana 2000; Nna 2001; Jua 2001; Konings 2002, 2003; Nyamnjoh and Page 2002). Researchers have also investigated patterns of political socialisation (cf. Njoya n.d.) and the ways in which youths appropriate symbols of state power, particularly in their art and dance (cf. Argenti 1998). Another interesting domain of youth research that has emerged in the past two years is the involvement of youth in fraudulent schemes known in Cameroon as feymania (cf. Malaquais 2001). This refers to the art of trickery or the use of crafty underhand ingenuity to deceive or cheat. Feymania has gained tremendous notoriety in Cameroon since 1990 and today, it constitutes a fully-fledged profession for a good number of young adults–a profession that ties in neatly with Cameroon's growing reputation as a corrupt state.

Some of the studies have shown in varying degrees, the coping strategies of youth and the role of new youth movements in negotiating transition to adulthood for its members. Scholars have paid attention with varying emphasis to President Biya's Youth (PRESBY) (cf. Jua 2003) and Konings (2003) has recently investigated the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL), a youth movement advocating armed struggle as a mode of achieving independence for the two Anglophone provinces from Francophone-dominated Cameroon. However, none of these studies have dealt explicitly with youth experiences and discourses of citizenship. While some of the studies have argued that youths have responded to Cameroon's

economic and political crises in differential patterns (for example see Jua 2003), none of them have accounted for the different biographic trajectories undertaken by young people in the context of Cameroon's political and social (dis)order. My study seeks to fill this gap and to explore further, the relationship between youth transition and citizenship as localized experiences in the current global era.

This paper addresses the subject of youth transition and its relationship to the struggles for citizenship in contemporary Cameroon. It is premised on the assumption that the end of youth transition is not simply adulthood but precisely, full social and political citizenship, and that for many young people today, this end is elusive. It is against this background that young people have begun to redefine their identities and aspirations, thus transgressing local understandings of citizenship. John Urry (1999) has argued that the struggles for citizenship around the world constitute one of the most powerful organising processes of the late twentieth century. This is because citizenship, at least in its broadest sense, defines those who are and who are not members of a given society (cf. Barbalet 1988). This implies that citizenship deals with identity as much as with boundaries. Increasingly, this definition has been contested particularly in the era of globalisation, characterised by high degrees of flows and closures (cf. Meyer and Geschiere 1999). For instance, there is current talk of 'global citizenship' (cf. Urry 1999) and it is doubtful to what extent this is tenable to Cameroonian experiences particularly in a context where national citizenship is bereft of any substance for the bulk of young people, including adults. Citizenship has two broad classifications namely, political and social citizenship. The former is defined by an individual's capacity to participate in certain political institutions and processes, especially in the election of government (local or national) and in the welfare and taxation systems. The latter is rooted in the assumption that an individual has the right to the prevailing living standard in society, especially education, health, housing and social welfare (Jones and Wallace 1992:21). This paper will draw heavily on the concept of social citizenship which underpins the critical relationship between individuals/groups and the postcolonial state.

Be that as it may, citizenship 'has become a matter for concern and inquiry as increasing numbers of young people experience blocked opportunities, reduced access to the necessary resources, and social exclusion in their endeavour to negotiate the complex pathways to full participation in adult society' (Williamson 1997:209). It is against this background that there is consensus among researchers on youth, that al-

though citizenship rights are gradually acquired during youth, access to these rights, including the right to full participation in society, is still determined by social structures of inequality such as class, gender, race, disability and so on (Jones and Wallace 1992:18). This contention is revealing, not only of the experiences of youths in developed countries, but also of those in developing countries, particularly in Africa. Thus, it is important to investigate and account for the ways in which youths attempt to negotiate scarce resources and opportunities in the context of these difficulties. However my paper will focus specifically on the ways youth represent and justify various forms of negotiations or 'struggles' in their transition to adulthood. Hence, the specific question to be addressed is: what are young people's understanding and experiences of citizenship in Cameroon and how do these shape the choices they make in their transition to adulthood?

Ethnographic Context

It should be borne in mind that my research deals with a specific category of young people in Cameroon, mainly students and young graduates in urban centres thus my findings do not necessarily reflect the reality of the broader youth population in the country.

This paper draws on my ethnographic research conducted in two cities in Cameroon between December 2001 and March 2002. Data were collected by means of case studies (tape-recorded interviews), some limited participant observation and a survey in the cities of Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon and Buea, the capital of the South West Province. These two cities were chosen because of the accessibility and diversity of students in state universities and other professional schools. These were also popular destinations for many young people from other provinces of the country who came in search of jobs, travel opportunities and to write competitive exams for recruitment into the public service or government-run professional schools. Thus, the cities offered an exciting variety in terms of the variables that were relevant to my study, such as gender, ethnicity, level of education, linguistic orientation (Anglophone, Francophone), and regional origins.

I conducted a total of 20 intensive interviews with willing participants and also administered questionnaires to individuals who were members of specific youth groups that I identified as vital to the scope of my study. 50 questionnaires were distributed in Yaounde and 50 in Buea. The sampling method was not random but purposive because this was based on individual membership to identified groups. My emphasis was on the

diversity of respondents especially in terms of group membership and gender. I should also point out that most of the informants were high school and university students, including a selection of unemployed youths as well as young people employed in the public and private sectors. Given the nature of the study, I do not claim any degree of representativeness, although I have a strong conviction that many Cameroonian youths would identify with the different individuals or groups that make up my sampling population.

Although the issue of citizenship was researched as part of a broader study on youth activism in Cameroon, I think it is important to highlight some of the key variables I was interested in. I wanted to identify and understand the kinds of social networks that young people created and their purposes, their economic activities, sources of support, particularly financial and material, their degree of dependency, independence or interdependence on kin-based groups, ethnic, social and religious associations. I also thought it was important to determine the degree of youths' involvement in decision-making processes, particularly those that concerned them (such as in policy-making), their voting history (that is, if they had voted in any government-organised election), and their perception of their rights and duties as young citizens in Cameroon. Last but not the least, I also asked informants to indicate how they would define their identities (such as Anglophone, Francophone, Northwesterner, Bamileke etc). My case studies drew from individuals' repertoire of 'struggles' in negotiating their transition to adulthood and consequently, as citizens. For instance, I asked informants to describe their ambitions, the opportunities they had encountered, created or failed to maximise, the challenges they faced, and the ways they had or intended to tackle these problems. These data were collected and analysed by means of discourse analysis and classification. This resulted in the construction of three loosely defined categories, each identified by the parallel experiences or aspirations of its members. But before I delve into this, I will provide a brief insight into the economic, social and political situation in Cameroon. This is intended to provide a contextual background against which most of the discussions will be articulated later in the paper.

Youth and the State in Cameroon

At the end of the 1980s, Cameroon witnessed a reversal of its economic prosperity that had depended much on oil revenue (Jua 1993). The decline of the economy strengthened resort to kinship and ethno-regional or clan politics as elites fought over an ever-diminishing pool of state re-

sources. Corruption also worsened as bureaucratic elites and politicians from President Biya's ethnic group publicly contended that it was their turn to monopolise the 'dining table' to the exclusion of other ethnic groups.[2] With declining conditions of material subsistence, the legitimacy of the authoritarian state was greatly eroded and a growing sense of dissent began to dominate the public imagination. Collective anger also increased and members of civil society began to call for the liberalisation of political space. By the early 1990s students at Cameroon's only university, (University of Yaoundé) joined in this process and organized several strikes to call for liberal reforms. Although these calls met resistance with the Biya regime, John Fru Ndi went ahead and launched his party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF) on 26 May 1990 in Bamenda. This event provided leeway for greater political dissent compelling the government to liberalise political competition and the press in December 1990 (cf. Mbaku 2002; Takougang 2003). Political liberalisation thus created space for the articulation of perceived or actual injustices by groups and communities who had found authoritarian rule unsafe to express their indignation against the Biya regime. Political reforms were soon followed by civil disobedience organised by a host of opposition parties, civic organisations and student movements in the form of 'Ghost Towns' or what was commonly referred to as villes mortes. President Paul Biya reluctantly consented to the pressures and opted to host the Tripartite Conference, a defective mimicry of the Sovereign National Conference held in most Francophone countries. Though the talks yielded little dividends, it paved the way for legislative and presidential elections in March and October 1992 respectively.

Youths played a conspicuous role in the fight for democracy in Cameroon. During the launching of the SDF party in Bamenda, six youths were shot to death by soldiers sent to suppress the activities of the newly launched party. Between 1990 and 1991, students of the University of Yaounde were organised into two ferociously opposed camps; the *Parlement* and *Auto-defense*.[3] The former incorporated students who advocated political liberalisation and the latter, were in the main, students notably of Beti origin, claiming to support the president, Paul Biya (a member of their ethnic group) and to resist popular attempts to undermine the Biya regime. It is alleged that brutal confrontations between the Parlement and Auto-defense led to the 'disappearance' of Parlement members. Dozens of these members were rumoured to have been murdered by government-hired thugs including the military and that their corpses had been buried in mass graves near the River Sanaga. A commission was set

up to investigate the allegations but the chair of the commission, Prof. Augustine Kontchou, (then the minister of information and government spokesperson) concluded that no *Parlement* member had died. This earned him the cynical name 'Zero-mort'.

Unfortunately, the enthusiasm and momentum for change evidenced by the reintroduction of political parties was short-lived. This excitement soon petered out 'shortly after the presidential elections of October 1992, when the public was made to understand that democracy is not necessarily having as president the person the majority wants'[4] (Nyamnjoh 1999:114). The situation has remained more or less the same even after subsequent local, parliamentary and presidential elections in 1996 and 1997 respectively. In fact some commentators have described Cameroon's current status as located between 'survival' and 'reversal to authoritarianism' (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997:235). This seems to be the case when considered in the light of recent developments in the country, particularly the June 2002 local council and parliamentary elections in which the ruling CPDM won over 80 percent of the seats in parliament following pre-election manipulation and sophisticated rigging mechanisms (cf. Nyamnjoh 2002; Takougang 2003; also see Cardinal Christian Tumi's 'Open Letter to the Minister of Communication' in which he warns that the Cameroon government might provoke civil war due to its legendary 'partiality' and reluctance to embrace full democracy).[5]

Granting the above qualification, Cameroon's democracy could be described as pseudo, a package of recycled monolithic misrule, or rather a sort of *t-shirt* slogan democracy where the power elite set the agenda for the masses, 'use them to serve their ends and at the end of the day, abandon them to the misery and ignorance to which they are accustomed' (Nyamnjoh 1999:115). Thus, liberalisation in Cameroon has not led to the consolidation of democracy. Takougang also maintains that Cameroon's path to democracy has been tortuous, not only because of the regime's capacity to manipulate and control the rate at which democratic reforms are introduced, but also because members of the opposition have been preoccupied more with the politics of the belly than pursuing a political agenda that will benefit the interests of the masses (cf. Takougang 2003:427). However, this is not to insinuate that Cameroon is incapable of sustaining a liberal and democratic society given the extensive grassroots organisations that struggle for democracy.

Despite this note of optimism, the current socio-economic situation does not offer much hope for many young people. The unemployment rate is estimated at 30 percent and 48 percent of the population lives

below the poverty line.[6] And with the current structures of corruption and mismanagement, there is little hope that much will change in the near future. Youths are hardest hit by this predicament, precisely because it implies that their transition to adulthood will not only be indefinitely 'extended' but they might only claim their citizenship rights by proxy (cf. Jones and Wallace 1992). Needless to overemphasise that youths differ in their perception of the problems at stake and tend to act based on these perspectives, which ostensibly change with time. Thus, I will begin by showing the different ways in which youths have responded to the 'crisis' and another section will follow which attempts to account for the 'differential responses'. I will conclude by arguing that popular understandings of citizenship have undergone a redefinition among youths in Cameroon and that this should be taken into account in discussions about citizenship in Africa.

I will describe the categories of persons or groups that I studied and provide an account of the meanings they gave to their experiences as young people in contemporary Cameroon. For purposes of analysis, my ethnography is divided into three broad categories. These classes are neither frozen in time nor space. I contend that individuals exercised high degrees of resourcefulness and mobility from one 'strategy' to the other, although their 'actions' could not be isolated from the specific social contexts they found themselves in. I should also suggest that my use of distinct categories does not exclude the possibility of individuals straddling two or more categories as dictated by the specific contexts. What I endeavour to get across is that each category consists of individuals or groups who shared similar experiences and views on the issues under study.

In broad perspective, they are as follows: i) individuals or members of groups who aspired to or saw themselves as elites-in-the-making, that is, as protégés of the ruling regime. These individuals described their transition to adulthood as an easy process, facilitated further by virtue of their strategic connection to state institutions and high-ranking officials; ii) individuals or members of groups who were scrupulous in their attempt to draw a line between themselves and the state but would make use of any possibilities (either from the state or elsewhere) to negotiate their transition into adulthood and for recognition as citizens; iii) individuals whose struggles for transition into adulthood were framed within secessionist discourses or the yearning to seek alternative citizenship such as migrating to so-called 'greener pastures'.

Elites-in-waiting or merchants of illusion?

One of the most conspicuous groups I identified was President Biya's Youths or PRESBY as it is popularly known. As implied by its name, it purports to support the president of Cameroon, Mr. Paul Biya who has ruled the country since 1982. Presby[7] was not the only group that claimed to support the president, but it was by far, the most prominent in the country. Indeed there were countless groups spread across the country, each trying to outperform the other in their tribute and support for the president in particular, and men or women in powerful government positions in general. These groups were creative in their conception and use of fashionable and elegant names with the intention not only to attract membership, but also patrons, especially those in government positions. Some of the groups included Youths for the Support of those in Power (YOSUPO) and another with the fascinating name of Movement for Youths of the Presidential Majority (MYPM). Apparently, president Biya's wife had also become the target of several youth organisations, the most popular of them known as Jeunesses Actives pour Chantal Biya (JACHABI).[8] These movements proliferated by the day and it was not possible for me to establish their exact number, members and objectives. But I had a feeling there was something deeply sinister about the emergence of countless youth organisations particularly during the past five years. Some of these new groups were created by former Presby members disappointed with the leadership of Presby. An attempt by some youths to create a counter-organisation to Presby with the objective of supporting prominent opposition leaders was discouraged. Nevertheless, many of the youth organisations were modelled on the objectives of Presby. Their strategic mission was to harness a group of disaffected and marginalized youths for tributary purposes. This kind of mobilization is characteristic of patrimonial states where patron-client networks are deeply entrenched, thus constituting the mainstream order of everyday politics. Their practices range from what Mbembe (1992) has termed 'illicit cohabitation' to collaboration and in some cases outright rebellion against the system. Cruise O'Brien (1996) observes that groups of this nature tend to harbour predators as well as heroes and victims. And it seems to me that Presby represents an archetype of such groups, and therefore needs critical examination.

Presby emerged from a defunct group known as Auto-defense[9], created in the early 90s by a former rector of the University of Yaounde, Prof. Jean Messi. Messi's Auto-defense was an ethnic militia, created to protect Beti interests on campus and to counter the activities of pro-democracy student movements such as the Parlement[10]. Its membership con-

sisted of students, thugs and para-military persons who tracked down, intimidated and brutalised pro-democracy activists. By the mid 1990s, when tensions over political liberalisation had dwindled, and Auto-defense had become less popular or useful, its members transformed it from an ethnic militia to an open movement with the intention of attracting more membership and attention from the Biya government. Its transformation was slow and it took several years before it became popular as a youth movement with national pretensions. Its objective was no longer to counter the struggle for democracy among youth, but to promote the political ideals of Mr. Biya as outlined in his book, *Communal Liberalism* (1985). Membership was also opened to all interested persons and quite interestingly some members were over 40 years but aligned themselves with the category of youth. Today, Presby is the foremost mass youth organisation and claims to represent the interests of all young Cameroonian citizens.

According to statistics that could not be verified, its national membership (as of 2001) was 120,000 including 7900 office-holders.[11] During my research in 2002, I established that the group had not yet held any elections to legitimize its national leadership. It is in this light that its president, Philomen Ntyam Ntyam, is accused of being a self-imposed leader, although little can be done about it. Thanks to his leadership of Presby, he was appointed by President Paul Biya as a member of the Central Committee of the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM). Apparently this status seems to have granted him some kind of 'official' immunity as the case is with most members of the Central Committee of the CPDM. This is to say, they can elude government enquiry into any allegations of undemocratic or corrupt activity. For instance, some members of Presby in Yaounde alleged that Mr. Ntyam Ntyam had misused Presby funds during his frequent trips to Europe (Germany in particular) where he claimed to have established international branches of the association, but until today, no enquiry has been carried out and it is unlikely anything would be done in this regard.

Thus, by the end of the decade, Presby had successfully established itself as a national organisation, with branches in almost all the provinces and divisions in the country. Although it claimed to be apolitical (that is to say, it did not profess allegiance to any political party), in reality the organisation was affiliated with the ruling party. In the recent past, there were serious disputes between leaders of Presby and the youth wing of the ruling party, the YCPDM in Kumba, a city in the South West Province, and according to newspaper reports, most government elites tended to favour Presby.[12] It is not certain if these disputes have been resolved,

but this particular episode made it clear that Presby was not 'apolitical' as it claimed in its flyers. It still does not have a national Constitution and interestingly, there was no head office during the period of my research and I was unsuccessful despite several attempts to get hold of the national president at his home in Olezoa, Yaounde. Members of the organisation were expected sooner or later, to procure CPDM membership cards and paraphernalia. The organisation's general objective was to support President Biya and lobby government funds and positions for its members. Influential members of government were also reported to have recruited Presby officials to campaign for the CPDM and in some cases, were entrusted with the inauspicious tasks of destabilising the activities of opposition parties and to vandalise opponents of the government.[13] The organisation also enjoyed extensive support and patronage from CPDM elites nation-wide. A government elite in the South West Province for example, was alleged to have bought about 1,000 Presby membership cards for distribution among youths who had difficulties completing their registration formalities.

It was against this background that I gained a deeper understanding of the ideas and perspectives of Presby members regarding citizenship. In general, most of them suggested that they were already members (or aspirants depending on their level of 'integration' in the association) of a privileged class of citizens. In popular terms, they saw themselves as the 'true' leaders of tomorrow, owing to their grooming through various networks of patronage. Some of them gave the impression that transition into adulthood for them was simply a smooth process. Most of those I interviewed asserted a narrative which emphasised the economic and social benefits they had gained from the state. Individuals who held such opinions were in the main, students of the *Ecole National d'Administration et de Magistrature* (ENAM) – one of the most prestigious schools in the country where civil administrators were trained. In general, students in state-run professional schools gave the impression that they would encounter no problem in getting employment in the civil service upon completion of their programmes.

Presby members suggested that they enjoyed certain rights and benefits from the state, and that they also observed their duties to the state and its institutions. With reference to the latter point, Presby members claimed that they were in many respects, the 'best' citizens owing to their passionate support for Mr. Biya, who was the 'incarnation' of the state in Cameroon. In return, they expected jobs, and other sinecure associated with the patrimonial state. Those who were new to the organisation ex-

pressed profound enthusiasm and expected that with time, they would eventually gain access to jobs or entry into prestigious public schools.

I should emphasise that I am not interested in whether individual members believed in the objectives or ideals of the association, but rather, I conceive of their participation as performative acts. In this regard quite a number of them expressed their association with Presby in instrumental terms, but were careful not to convey this view in public. Many were encouraged to join the association after having heard that it was easier to get a job in the civil service by joining the organisation. Examples of such incentives are many but in reality, elusive. During a trip to the Bui Division in the North West Province in September 2001, Penandjo Roger, national coordinator of the Presby mission, was reported to have promised 'government favours' to youths of the division who joined the organisation. He pointed to the recent appointments of two Bui elites; one as Minister of Transport and the other as Director of Security at the presidency in Yaounde, as indicators of President Biya's favour to those who showed allegiance to him and the ruling party. During this trip, Penandjo also presented 30 scholarship application 'forms' (not awards) for study in Bangladesh to Presby members who had a minimum qualification of the Advanced Level Certificate. He then concluded his speech by asserting 'that it's only when you join Presby that you can have these opportunities.'[14] Another example was President Biya's Youth Day speech of 10 February 2002 in which he suggested to have facilitated the 'full integration' of 1,700 previously part-time primary school teachers into the public service. He also hinted that more of such initiatives will be negotiated in the future. In a country where the government is still the principal employer, one can understand the intense euphoria such statements tend to provoke among a largely unemployed youth population.

These 'performative utterances' created the illusion that all Presby members would benefit from the organisation but the reality was that many members were disappointed with the unfulfilled promises of the organisation and the Biya regime in general. While some members considered the idea of quitting, others resorted to crime as an exit option. Some members went as far as using the organisation's name to extort money from elites and businessmen. The case of Charles Esseme was particularly infamous. Esseme was the Provincial Secretary of Presby for the South West Province and was reported to have extorted money from parastatals in the province such as the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), and the South West Development Authority (SOWEDA). He was also accused of having threatened some state employees with puni-

tive transfers in return for huge sums of money (cf. Jua 2003:30-1). These kinds of practices might become widespread since competition for fewer and fewer resources is getting tighter by the day. The proliferation of groups such as Presby and individuals like Esseme tend to reinforce the intricate networks that have contributed to the criminalization of the state in Africa (cf. Bayart et al 1999) as well as the instrumentalization of disorder (Chabal and Daloz 1999).

Self-made Citizens

The second category of persons I identified consisted of individuals who were not particularly interested in party politics. They were neither members of Presby nor any of the groups that advocated support to government elites or President Biya in particular. These individuals were in the main, members of cultural groups and other associations that could be labelled 'self-help' associations. In most cases, these individuals did not see themselves as excluded from the benefits or privileges of citizenship. Many of them, indeed claimed to have benefited from the state in various ways. According to one insightful informant, one did not necessarily need to be a member of the CPDM or its related organisations to enjoy the 'favours' of the state. One could be the nephew, niece, cousin, far kin or just a friend of an influential member of the ruling party, and would use these networks to negotiate state favours. In fact, some government elites, it was alleged, measured the degree of their success or 'inner status' within the party and state bureaucracy by the number of kins-people and friends they had helped as a result of their strategic location with the nexus of power. This claim ties in with the concept of 'ethnic barons' who tend to play the role of brokers between the central government and their ethnic groups or regions.

This second category includes two principal kinds of individuals. First, those who dismissed the relevance of direct relatedness to the ruling party and other dubious organisations as key routes through which they could benefit from state 'favours'. Second, those who made use of a combination of horizontal networks, including the state to achieve their own private ends. Individuals of this category tended to define themselves as citizens in so far as they had the freedom and means to carry out any activities that enhanced their goals, particularly that of becoming recognised as 'adults'. By this, they meant the need to find employment, marry, raise a family and become 'responsible' members of society. These constituted in the main what many informants referred to as the 'goals of life'. The goals of life included a vast, almost inexhaustible set of ideals

towards which many individuals aspired but as noted above, there were certain common principles. Perhaps I should note that most of my interviewees indicated that they had failed to attain their 'goals' such as negotiating entry into prestigious professional schools, or finding a job in the private sector. In the following paragraphs, I will examine the cases of two young informants whom I think represent the variety of persons in this category.

Carlson Ayuk (pseudonym) was a young man of 28, and lived in the overcrowded student neighbourhood of Bonamoussadi, Yaounde. He was a graduate of the Ecole Normale Supérieur (ENS) at Bambili (a professional School of the University of Yaounde I, which specializes in the training of secondary school teachers). He was also the oldest child in a family of seven and still depended on the meagre salary of his father, a head teacher in a remote border village of Takamanda in the South West Province. Two of his siblings were students at the Universities of Buea and Dschang respectively and also depended on their father for their major needs. Their mother was a trader and also did a bit of gardening.

Every year, the ENS like all the other professional schools, organises public examinations, known in Cameroon as 'concours'. The objective is to recruit about 80 candidates into each academic department. They are trained and deployed in the service of the government. In some of these professional schools such as the ENS, private persons can be admitted but will not be employed by the state after completion of their studies. Every year, tens of thousands write these competitive exams with the primary objective of securing a position in the government's list of the 'chosen few'. Unfortunately, many candidates do not succeed, but some are given the opportunity to enrol as private candidates (as opposed to the government's candidates). Carlson was one of those who succeeded to enrol as a private candidate in 1995. Like many others, he had nursed the ambition that upon entry into ENS, he would write the 1996 session of the competitive exams in order to rise a step forward, that is, gain entry into the government's list. But he wrote the exams and still failed. I should also point out that the selection process is fraught with terrifying fraud. Membership to the CPDM or the Presby and similar organisations becomes extremely useful at this juncture. Those who do not have party cards (or visible connections) as evidence of their commitment to Biya's version of 'advanced' democracy have to look for alternative means to attain the same objective, such as bribing their way through. In most cases, people combine both methods in view of the fact that competition is remarkably stiff.

Carlson graduated in 1998 as a private candidate after having exhausted every possible means to get his name into the government's 'list'. He was deeply disappointed because although he had graduated as the best student in his class, this did not count in the eyes of government authorities. He would have preferred to search for a job, but his father encouraged him to apply to the Higher National Teachers' Training School in Yaounde. Carlson told me he would have succeeded if he had fulfilled the request of a key member of the selection committee who demanded $1000 as bribe. He also claimed to have written a series of competitive exams but had not succeeded in any. When I interviewed Carlson, he had a part time job as an English teacher for a couple of French-speaking pupils but this could only pay for his transportation around the city. He was deeply anxious about his future and his prospects of becoming an adult in the eyes of his parents and his extended family.

Julienne is the subject of my second case. She was 23 and a drop out from the University of Yaounde. She claimed that she had been sexually harassed by one of her professors, and after unsuccessful attempts to seek justice, she decided to leave the university. But all was not lost for her. She wrote the entrance examination into the Institut National de Jeunesse et de Sport (INJS) and with 'supplementary' help from her uncle who was a prominent member of the CPDM in the South West Province, her place in the prestigious school was guaranteed. When she graduated, she was posted to teach physical education in one of the government secondary schools in Buea. Although Julienne was a beneficiary of 'state favour', she was however critical of the regime, partly because she had many friends whom she claimed, had better qualifications than she did, but were unemployed and very poor. She also claimed to know of many Presby members who had failed to get a job or to make it to government professional schools. Some of them, she told me, had also failed in their business ventures because of high taxes.

Marginal Citizens and the 'Exit Option'

The last category was made of individuals who claimed their rights as young citizens had not only been abused by the state, but completely eroded. Many youths insisted they felt betrayed by the Biya government and there was no prospect of them ever becoming 'proper' citizens in Cameroon. This was particularly true of my informants in Buea who suggested that as Anglophones, they would never be treated as equals with their Francophone counterparts in a Francophone-dominated country. Piet Konings (2003) has recorded similar feelings of disillusionment among

members of the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL) whose response to marginalisation is armed struggle against the government of Cameroon and the establishment of a separate Anglophone polity. So, how is the current generation of African youths reacting to their growing marginalisation (cf. Konings 2003:1)? There is no single answer to a question of this nature, but it should be emphasised that youths' responses have been multiple and diverse. Responses range from various forms of resistance to diverse modes of seeking access to the state (conformity). However, I am interested particularly in the option of 'migration' which has become extremely popular although unattainable among the bulk of youth in West Africa.

Travelling abroad for many youths in West Africa has become associated with emancipation, if not, a mode of self-affirmation (cf. Timera 2001). And although youths have different purposes and understanding to this activity, it has been subsumed under the concept of *falling bush*. Apparently, this pidgin phrase borrows from indigenous notions of tedious and dangerous expeditions into the *black bush* (cf. Argenti 1998). In popular parlance, the black bush refers to a 'forest' far away from human settlement. It is a jungle of abundance par excellence, attractive to the daring but inherently hazardous. It is also a no-man's territory, characterised by the wild, the unseen and mysterious entities. It is also a strategic setting for many heroic fables. In the coastal and grassfields areas of Cameroon, the black bush is the most suitable area to go in search of game, wild fruits, timber, medicines and so on. In ancient times the black bush was more or less the exclusive domain of herbalists and traditional doctors but today, women venture into these bushes and some even practice farming there. To *fall bush* is synonymous to the notion of going to the black bush but suffused with a new meaning. In a way, one could claim that it is a modern expression of the 'black bush' legacy dominated instead by the young, not the holders of arcane knowledge as it were. Precisely, Europe and North America have become the imagined new 'black bushes' where many youths would do anything possible to explore its mysteries of superabundance, notwithstanding the risks involved.[15] In fact, risk-taking has become a marker of youth mingled with heroism (France 2000).

Those who succeed to migrate are known as 'bush fallers'. I did not interview any bush fallers since most of them are still in the *bush*, and some might never return. However, it would be interesting to conduct a study among these so-called *bush fallers* in order to explore their notions of success, self-actualization and citizenship. One of the dramatic cases I

recorded during my research was about a young man named Tom (pseudonym). He was 30 when he left for Switzerland in June 2000. Prior to his departure, he worked as a security guard at Patron's Hotel in Bamenda. Tom was also a holder of a bachelor's degree in environmental science from the University of Buea. His story was recounted to me by his younger brother, a third year student at the University of Buea. In order to prepare for his journey, Tom received some money from their oldest sister who lived in Copenhagen. He immediately bribed for the instant production of a passport in Douala. Suspecting that formal application for a Swiss visa might not be fruitful, he instead bought his flight ticket and established some connections with two 'senior' custom officials. The idea was to go through the airport without being subjected to visa checks or any relevant bureaucratic procedures. He succeeded to bribe his way through with $500 and thanks to his connection with some 'seniors', a custom official was assigned to accompany him right into the plane. Upon arrival in Switzerland, he destroyed his passport, or so it was claimed and applied for refugee status.

Apparently, several Cameroonians are reported to have travelled to Europe through similar channels and 90 percent of them seek refugee status in Europe. Little is known of the predicament of these youths after their arrival and no study has been conducted on this. In exceptional cases, one might get a newspaper or online article of the atrocities committed by or against some of these youths. On Thursday, 25 September 2003 for example, a young man of 27 of Cameroonian nationality, resident in Britain, threatened to burn himself alive following allegations that his application for refugee status in the UK had been rejected and that he was going to be deported. He was reported to have entered a Bradford courtroom holding a petrol container and a lighter. His clothes were also reported to be soaked with petrol. This incident attracted a huge crowd including the local police of Bradford together with firefighters. The stand off lasted more than five hours after which he was eventually convinced to give up his threat of suicide by a local priest[16]. It is not yet clear what the young man's motive was, but this incident revealed the desperate extent to which some young people would go to avoid deportation to Cameroon, a sign of failure and forced return from the 'bush'. It is claimed that this incident has inspired a new legislation in Britain which refuses entry to Cameroonian citizens on transit without UK visas. Previously, Cameroonians on transit through Britain did not require a transit visa but it seems the British government has taken pre-emptive measures against those who allegedly abuse their system.[17]

It is apparent that the realities of the global age have dawned on Cameroonians. The increase in communication and the unlimited opportunities promised and facilitated by new communication technologies, have afforded great expectations of unimaginable proportions to many young Cameroonians. The introduction of the American Visa Lottery popularly known as the DV has also added renewed impetus to the fascination of 'falling bush'. Since 1994, the American government has promised to grant 50,000 Green Cards to citizens of countries with 'low rates of immigration to the US' on an annual basis. Although the competition does not discriminate on the basis of race or socio-economic status, it is apparent that most of its recent winners are young adults and African[18]. Thus, the DV programme has offered many Cameroonian youths a chance to gamble with their citizenship. In 2002, 775 Cameroonians were granted the opportunity to migrate to the US as permanent residents. This probably included people already living in the US or elsewhere in the world. But the number fell to 675 in 2003 and has reached an all time high as disclosed by the DV 2004 results whereby 1,531 Cameroonians won. In the survey I conducted in Buea and Yaounde, 75 percent of the respondents aspired to leave Cameroon for Europe and the US if granted the opportunity. Thus, one can see the kinds of expectations generated among youth by programmes such as the Diversity Visas and the attractions of the West broadcast on satellite television and the internet.

Table I: Table Showing Number of DVs Granted to Selected West African Countries (2002–2004)

Country/Year	2002	2003	2004
Cameroon	775	675	1,531
Nigeria	6,049	5,989	7,145
Ghana	6,531	6,333	7,040
Gabon	18	20	14
Chad	19	45	41
Senegal	379	199	269

With the advent of the internet and cell phones, youths in the major cities of Cameroon have demonstrated deep interest and capacity to make use of these technologies, as a mode of escaping the 'emptiness' of national

citizenship. But for the bulk of Cameroonian youths, access to the internet is extremely limited and still expensive[19] (see for instance Facer and Furlong's (2001) article for similar experiences of British youths at the margins of the information revolution). Today, young people in Cameroon are known to have negotiated marriages over the internet and the numbers seem be on the increase (also see Jua 2003 on internet dating in Cameroon). During a brief visit in January 2002 to Douala, the economic capital of Cameroon, I visited an internet cafe where the managers whom I had known for a couple of years, recounted to me their recent success in finding a Moroccan husband for a customer named Alima (pseudonym). Alima was reported to have travelled to Morocco a few days before my visit. Her perceived 'success' spurred more youths in Alima's neighbourhood to take a chance in the vast possibilities of 'arranged marriage' over the internet. And for this, the managers of the internet cafe were extremely happy for the sudden boom in their business. One of the excited customers whom I interviewed expressed her opinion about this new venture as follows:

> we have no future in this country. Everything revolves around corruption and for those of us who have no godfathers, or godmothers, our hope lies beyond the borders of this country. Since graduation from Yaounde, I've not been able to find a job or even get a husband. Young men in this country are not rich enough to think of marriage. Most of them are interested in cohabiting and deceiving young girls. I wouldn't fall for their tricks so I'm here to search for opportunities out there. (Interviewed in Douala, Jan. 15 2002)

The quest for such 'opportunities out there' has also inspired the emergence of fraudulent networks which claim to facilitate the acquisition of visas and travel documents at a fee. Some of these networks operate as NGOs with dubious mission statements. There are countless stories circulating in Cameroon of NGOs that extorted money from desperate youths in their attempt to procure travel documents. Most of these facilitators are adepts of *feymania* (cf. Malaquais 2001), and their practices are reminiscent of 419 scams that Nigerians and increasingly, Cameroonians are infamous for (also see Apter 1999 for more on Nigerian scams). Con men have become the new icons of ostentatious consumption and seem to parallel the status of well-known Congolese members of the *Société d'ambienceurs et des personnes elegantes*-SAPE (cf. Gondola 1999). Con men (also known as feymen) in Douala are particularly notorious in the spheres of passport production, the issuing of fake visas and the processing of bank statements. By engaging in such practices, the Comaroffs

have argued, these youths have successfully established 'a counter-nation with its own illegal economies of ways and means, its own spaces of production and recreation, its own parodic patriotism' (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:24).

It is apparent from the above narratives that some youths in Cameroon have created not only a counter-nation of criminality, but real and conceptual spaces within which they can act out their dreams and desire for full citizenship, denied them by the postcolonial pseudo-welfare state. So far, the most popular means are: gambling for the American Diversity Visa lottery and seeking refugee status in Europe. I suggest that these trends should be examined further to ascertain the ways in which new meanings of citizenship and fulfilment are reconstructed especially among migrant African youths in the West. Next, I will attempt to account for the differences exhibited by youth in their quest for full citizenship and self-actualisation.

Theorising Youth Transition in Cameroon

Evans and Furlong (1997) contend that sociological theories on youth transition have changed with the social and economic conditions of the era. Although their observations are based on studies of youth in Britain, I maintain that these views have implications for a general understanding of theories of youth, particularly in Africa. They argue that in the 1960s, the dominant metaphor for explaining youth transitions was that of filling society's niches (Evans and Furlong 1997:17). This framework was couched within functionalist and developmental perspectives of that era. By the 1980s, the dominant metaphor was that of trajectory, reflecting the structuralist influences of the period. The understanding behind life trajectory theory was that young peoples' transition was a function of social forces. In other words, it meant that 'transitions were largely outside the control of individual social actors' (1997:18). In the 1990s, navigation emerged as the dominant metaphor. Young actors were perceived metaphorically as 'navigating perilous waters' and 'negotiating their way' through a sea of 'manufactured uncertainty' (cf. Evans and Furlong 1997:18). Apparently, this has remained the dominant framework until today albeit, with minor modifications (see de Boeck and Honwana 2000, on the cubic model). I will attempt an assessment of the relevance of the metaphor of navigation in the paragraphs below.

Granting the above qualification, the question at stake is: why do individuals choose a specific trajectory over another? First, it should be pointed out that social actors differ in their motives and ambitions and that these

are in turn, structured by other factors such as kinship, educational level, and gender. Furthermore, I argue that young peoples' motives and capacities to 'navigate' are shaped but not necessarily determined by the differential endowment of social and material capital at their disposal. As observed in our cases above, there were individuals who enjoyed the patronage of the status quo, and while several Presby members were determined to see the continuity of this system, others like Julienne, could not contain their disillusionment despite her apparent gain from it. In case two above, Julienne is the ideal example of those still filling society's 'niches' while others like Carlson navigate to no avail. Carlson did not have the financial strength to bribe his way into prestigious professional schools. His level of dependence on his parents was extreme to the extent that he had to compete for scarce resources with his siblings. His is a case where brilliance and effort are ditched in preference for mediocrity despite popular outcry. Someone might suggest that if he were a member of Presby or a related organisation, he would have navigated beyond his actual capacity. But then, how many Presby members made it? Moreover there is an aspect of morality play. While some social actors owe their actions to their conscience and numerous forms of accountability, others have no space for such 'illusions' in their world of play. However, some scholars have argued that virtue and morality should be taken into account, if we are to gain a full view of the complexities of social action in everyday interaction (cf. Lambek 2000, 2002; Myhre 1998).

Despite the apparent disillusionment among many young people, it should be underscored that a significant number of those interviewed still aspired to work in the civil service and for different reasons. But it could be asked what these individuals stood to profit from service to the state? Reasons range from the quest to earn a simple source of livelihood to the search for power and its gratifications. In this connection, Nyamnjoh's observation on corruption in Cameroon is worthy of mention. He contends that 'to many people in or seeking high office, Cameroon is little more than a farm tended by God but harvested by man.... Everyone is doing it at his own level, from top to bottom – the only difference being that those at the top have more to steal from...' (Nyamnjoh 1999:111–12). Hence, the continuous reference to state resources as the 'national cake' that has to be shared among different ethnic groups or regions. Youths who successfully bribed their way into the 'grandes ecoles' (government professional schools), were often heard expressing intentions of recovering their money a hundred fold upon accession into the civil service - because as it were, 'a goat eats where it is tethered.' Hence, despite the

fact that 'corruption bolts every door...wherever you may need a legitimate service[20]', the practice seems to be growing in leaps and bounds with little prospect of abating.[21] Youth associations such as Presby thrive precisely on this kind of patrimonial system. According to Bourdieu, individuals of this orientation become 'instruments which contribute to the reproduction of the social world by producing immediate adherence to the world, seen as self-evident and undisputed, of which they are the product and of which they reproduce the structures in a transformed form' (Bourdieu 1977:164).

The second reason that accounts for differential capacities for navigation, is that despite themselves, not all youths have access to the privileges of the patrimonial state even if they desired to. Many youths felt excluded from the endowments of citizenship in Cameroon. This sense of exclusion was particularly strong among Anglophone youths who in the words of Piet Konings felt more 'marginalised than their Francophone counterparts because of the allegedly second-class citizenship of Anglophones in the post-colonial Francophone-dominated state' (Konings 2003:2). This was confirmed by my survey in which 80 percent of Anglophone youths aspired for a return to a federal system that had prevailed in Cameroon in the 1960s. Their provisional choices involved among other things, the search for employment in the private sector, or migration to 'bush'. But as already highlighted, the option of migrating to the West is limited to a privileged few and some do this at profound costs. This corroborates the contention that 'modernity and globalization are bazaars to which many are attracted, but few are rewarded or given clear-cut choices' (Nyamnjoh 2000:11). This notwithstanding, continuous economic misery[22] has 'pushed many Cameroonians, the youth in particular, to actively seek association with whiteness as a way out of their individual and collective predicament' (Nyamnjoh and Page 2002:632). Hence, programmes such as the American DV lottery will continue to inspire or dampen the aspirations of the most dispossessed and under-privileged.

Nevertheless, many will continue to aspire by invoking emerging promises of 'prosperity gospel' and Pentecostalism as exit options from their misery (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 1999 for parallels in post-apartheid South Africa and Meyer 1999 for Pentecostalism in Ghana). Besides Pentecostalist expectations, some social actors have already established what Michael Walzer has termed 'associative democracy' (cf. Walzer 1991) arising from horizontal networking among members of civil society. In other regions of Cameroon, like the grassfields, people have balanced the struggle for citizenship with their status as subjects under powerful tradi-

tional rulers. In my survey for instance, 80 percent of the respondents indicated that they were members of ethnic-oriented youth associations. They also underscored the point that membership to these organisations was *very significant* because it provided them with a sense of identity, of belonging and mutual support, particularly in times of crisis. This rationalisation was prevalent among youths living away from their homes and parents.

Conclusion

I have argued in this paper that youth transition in Cameroon is structured although not necessarily determined by a plethora of factors. It is evident that young people in Cameroon have responded or 'navigated' differentially in the context of what Jua (2003) has termed, a 'crisis ridden economy'. Youth choices for transition have ranged from conformity with the system to overt forms of resistance such as the threat of armed struggle against the state by secessionist youths (cf. Konings 2003).

This notwithstanding, I also argued that young people's perception of citizenship and its craving for fulfilment have been influenced significantly by the introduction of new communication technologies and programmes such as the American DV. By means of cases studies, I have demonstrated the various trajectories embarked upon by youths from different socio-economic and political backgrounds. In case one, a youth is determined to get employment in the civil service but his attempts are continuously frustrated by the corruption of government officials. Another youth chooses to travel to Europe under very dubious circumstances, ostensibly aided by unscrupulous government functionaries. There are also individuals who aspire to membership in Presby as their 'exit option' but, as already highlighted, the promises of Presby and its leading officials have increasingly been negated as success is reserved for an extremely small number of people. Thus many youths still suffer social exclusion and exploitation and in some contexts, are treated as a 'source of surplus value' (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 2001:46) by other youth predators in collaboration with the state.

My paper therefore makes a case for the need to explore the contexts in which youths' aspirations for transition are structured by national conditions. It validates the argument that citizenship rights are only formal (Barbalet 1988:2) and that in most cases, they are elusive. Furthermore, it examines the ways in which the status quo is reproduced through the recruitment of young clients into state-sponsored movements such as Presby.

This paper also points to certain gaps in our knowledge about the on-going re-definitions of citizenship in the global age. What does citizenship mean to migrant African youths in diasporic communities in Europe and North America? Similarly, what does citizenship mean to the bulk of young people in Cameroon whose transition into adulthood is more or less, permanently extended? Some scholars are already talking of 'global citizenship', and it is doubtful to what extent this is tenable for a majority of young people who feel marginalised and dispossessed. It appears to me that more research on youth and citizenship is needed to understand on-going shifts in the meaning of citizenship. The concept of global citizenship seems to mask the vast inequalities that characterise the lives of many young people across the world. Perhaps, an alternative research agenda would be to investigate the ways in which young people subvert or undermine citizenship in preference of new forms of identities.

Notes

1. I wish to thank the Africa Programme of the SSRC for providing the necessary funds for this research. I am also indebted to many colleagues who read an earlier draft of this paper and made useful comments. In particular, I wish to express gratitude to Ron Kassimir, Alcinda Honwana, Francis Nyamnjoh, Nantang Jua, Lilian Ndangam and Owen Sichone for their insightful comments.
2. This particular claim has been reiterated quite forcefully throughout President Biya's leadership. The CIA also notes this when it states that in Cameroon 'political power remains firmly in the hands of an ethnic oligarchy' (cf. http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cm.html). Also see *Le Messager* No. 004, of Thursday 11 September 2003 in which the following facts are stated as illustrations of Beti hegemony in Cameroon. Out of 32 key ministers, 14 of them are from Biya's ethnic group. Of the six state-appointed university presidents (rectors), 3 are from the above-named ethnic group. Of the 58 divisional prefects in Cameroon, 24 are from the same ethnic group, out of 24 generals, 15 share the same ethnic origin and of 21 ambassadors, 18 come from the same group, etc. Also see http://www.wagne.net/messager/messager/2003/10/1572/cameroun.htm, the online edition of Le Messager of 15 October 2003 for similar allegations.
3. *Auto-defense* or Committee for Self-Defence was an exclusively Beti militia charged with the task of safeguarding Beti interests at the University of Yaounde in particular and Yaounde in general. I have opted to maintain the French name of *Auto-defense* instead of the translated equivalent. *Parlement* on the other hand, as implied by its name consisted of students who demanded democratic reform. Membership of the organisation was made up principally of students from the Bamileke ethnic group and the English-speaking provinces.

They constituted what is popularly known in Cameroon as the AngloBami alliance. Also see Konings (2003) for details.

4 In the presidential elections of 1992, the incumbent, Paul Biya won 39.976 of the votes while the opposition candidates put together scored a total of 60.024, 'showing that even according to official statistics, the majority of the electorate wanted a change of president' (Nyamnjoh 1999:103).

5 Cf. Online edition of *Le Messager*, 19 September 2003. Http://www.wagne.net/messager accessed on 24 September 2003. Cardinal Tumi, who is also the Archbishop of Douala, maintained that:

> 'Partout en Afrique, la cause de la guerre civile que personne ne souhaite de gaité de coeur, est toujours politique. La même cause produit chaque fois les mêmes effets. Une guerre civile est aussi possible au Cameroun parce que les injustices ont atteint le seuil de la tolérance.'

6. The World Fact Book: http://www.politinfo/infodesk/print/cm.html accessed on 27 September 2003.

7. Ironically, *pres*by in the English language stands for 'old age' or elder. One would therefore expect an elder or an old person to conduct himself/herself with dignity – drawing from his/her experiences in life (wisdom). One could therefore contrast the actions of Presby members with the meaning and implications of presby.

8. JACHABI was launched at the Hilton Hotel in Yaounde under the auspices of Mrs Chantal Biya, wife of Cameroon's president.

9. I have already highlighted the role of Auto-defense as a student militia which operated on the campus of the University of Yaounde during the early 1990s.

10. The *Parlement* or Parliament of Students was a well-organised group of students at the university of Yaounde advocating democratic transformation in the country. According to Konings (2003) many Anglophone members of the defunct Parlement eventually came together and formed the Southern Cameroons' Youth League (SCYL) in May 1995.

11. *The Herald*, No. 1125, Wednesday 24-25 October 2001. Pg. 4

12. See for instance Charles Taku's article: 'PRESBY and the Seeds of Genocide' in *The Post* No. 0249 of Friday, February 23, 2001 pg. 8. In this article, Charles Taku expresses his fear for the growing popularity of Presby, particularly as an instrument of political violence. He wonders aloud why the Presidential couple sidelines the "YCPDM in preference for this group [PRESBY] that legally does not belong to any of the political structures of the CPDM...?'

13. This is reminiscent of the organisation in the early 1990s when it operated as Auto-defense. Presby members were reported to have brutalised participants at an SDF rally that took place in Yaounde, prior to the Franco-African Summit that was held in Yaounde in January 2001. See *The Post*, January 19, 2001 pg. 3 for details. This incident was noticed particularly because Presby's acts of impunity were carried out in the presence of government security forces who stood by and watched without any intervention. It was also reporte d

that the governor of the South West Province had instructed Presby members to combat (through any means possible) the activities of the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), a political movement advocating the secession of the two English-speaking provinces from Cameroon.

14. See *The Herald* No. 1103 of Monday September 2001, pg.3.
15. See for instance the recent news story on BBC News Online which reported the horrific death of 70 Africans (men, women and children) trying to enter Europe illegally from Libya. The migrants died of hunger and thirst after their boat broke down and drifted at sea for at least 10 days before it was spotted by an Italian ship. See http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/3205974.stm for details.
16. Cf. http://www.groups.yahoo.com/group/camnetwork/message/55238 accessed on 27 September 2003.
17. See http://www.groups.yahoo.com/group/camnetwork/message/55647 Accessed on 16 October 2003.
18. See Appendix I, which shows the number of DVs granted to Africans for the 2004 lottery.
19. Perhaps, it is important to point out that the American government has recently changed the format for submission of DV applications. At the moment, only electronic submissions are permitted, a move that would have serious repercussions on many youths in developing countries who do not have access to the internet.
20. Quoted from Cameroon Bishop's Conference on Justice and Peace held in Mbalmayo, January 1997.
21. It should also be pointed out that Transparency International ranked Cameroon twice in sequence as the most corrupt country in the world (1998 and 1999). In 2003, Cameroon was ranked 124 out of 133 countries, indicating that although some progress has been made, corruption is still endemic in the country. (Cf. http://www.transparency.org/pressreleases_archive/2003/2003.10..07.cpi.en.html, accessed on 19 October 2003.
22. Cardinal Tumi argues that in Cameroon, people suffer from misery due to the greed of the elite few. He makes a strong distinction between poverty and misery, arguing that the latter is the product of human action. 'Au Cameroun, nous luttons, mais non pas contre la pauvreté, mais contre la misère' (cf. open Letter to Minister of Communication).

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