

## ABHANDLUNGEN / ARTICLES

## Democratization and Accommodation of Political Representation in Cameroon: The Case Study of the *Sawa* and *Beti* People<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** *Viewing political representation in less structured, corrupt and poorly governed societies exclusively through the Burkean trustee lens, it is easy to miss why and how politics works in such polities. During the one party politics in Cameroon, and particularly in Douala and Yaoundé, the political order crafted and imposed a so called 'consensus' consisting for the symbolic political domination of the 'first comers'. The political liberalization which is the process of rights allocation to citizens which started during the early 1990s reopened and amplified the problem of representation, offering the exogenous communities the opportunity to challenge the political domination of the original inhabitants. In the dynamics of liberalization, in order to square the complexity, the government initiated a pro diversity policy consisting in a positive discrimination of the 'first comers' while selecting the representatives. Many scholars have addressed the most controversial aspect of this policy, that is, its incompatibility with the neo liberal color blind citizenship theory. This article assesses an evaluation of its implementation twenty years after.*

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### A. Introduction

Viewing political representation in less structured, less differentiated, corrupt, and poorly governed societies exclusively through the Burkean trustee lens, it is easy to miss why and

1 *Sawa* and *Beti* people are the original ethnic communities, inhabitants or 'first comers' of Douala and Yaoundé. In this article these formulations are used interchangeably.

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how politics works in such polities. At the turn of the 1990s with the movement toward democracy that swept the continent, the problem of representation of ethnic communities in Cameroon in their cultural areas has degenerated into what can cautiously be termed ethnic conflict and referred to as a long standing situation whereby different ethnic groups struggle to achieve certain political and economic goals at each other's expense<sup>2</sup>. In O'Neil's<sup>3</sup> own formulation ethnic conflict arises when members of a group emphasize their own unique qualities. For, this situation can easily lead to the conclusion that difference is tantamount to superiority, that one's group is somehow better than others. For instance, members of the *Bamileké* ethnic community usually refer pejoratively to the *Beti* people as *nkwa* and *chop-broke-pot*<sup>4</sup>. Meanwhile the former are perceived as hegemonic seekers. Although this situation might have been amplified by the elite, this kind of long-standing friction leads to the conclusion that the so-called ethnic conflict is mostly viewed as a bottom-up variant in O'Neil's classification<sup>5</sup>. For instance in 1986 in Douala, disputes and protests during the election of the president of the local branch of CPDM party led to a fragile consensus, consisting for the migrants as a whole, even though the *Bamileké* community was mainly concerned, to accept the symbolic political domination of the original population, that is to allow the members of the *Sawa* ethnic community to hold top positions in local politics<sup>6</sup>.

During the one party system from 1966 to 1990, the authoritarian regime used to co-opt sons of the soil's candidates who are individuals taken from major ethnic groups in their respective and cultural constituencies to compete during the choiceless legislative elections. Therefore, the parliament was depicted as a kind of forum within which representatives of major and respective ethnic communities used to come together to discuss, articulate, and aggregate the interest of the populace as a whole. The political liberalization process of the 1990s and the newly created political parties offered members of other ethnic groups living in the major cities of Douala and Yaoundé the opportunity to challenge the symbolic political domination or ethnic oriented massive representation of *Sawa* and *Beti* people. Ekambi Dibongue<sup>7</sup> reports that in Douala for example, the *Bamileké* ethnic community held a meeting at Kadji Defoso's place, a rich *Bamileké* businessman in that direction. In response to this new and 'destabilizing' trend, the government initiated a 'pro diversity' representation policy destined to guaranteeing a minimal representation of the 'first comers' in the heterogeneous constituencies, and consisting for political parties while constituting their lists of candidates

2 Patrick H. O'Neil, *Essentials of Comparative Politics*, 2nd edition, New York & London 2006, p. 54.

3 O'Neil, note 2, p. 54.

4 *Chop-broke pot* means that they are irrational, thoughtless, and expensive in their life style.

5 O'Neil, note 2, p. 55.

6 See Guillaume Ekambi Dibongue, *Autochtones et allogènes à Douala: Quête hégémonique exogène et résistance endogène*, Janus – Revue Camerounaise de droit et de Science Politique 1 (2005), p. 92.

7 *Ibid.*

*‘to take into consideration the various sociological components of the constituency concerned’<sup>8</sup>.*

In fact, political representation is a very challenging issue in Cameroon. As Englund<sup>9</sup> remarked a couple of years before, there are various intermediate solidarities that complicate the liberal insistence on a dichotomy between individuals and society, citizens and state. Such a statement is very insightful in the Cameroon context: more than 250 ethnic groups, approximately 300 tongues, the bilingual nature of the state, more than 280 legalized political parties, and so many religious belongings as well as gender and youth issues. Generally, this issue is more challenging in Douala and Yaoundé from historical and economic points of view. Douala on the one side is the main economic city and had for a very long time been the main converging city point of Cameroon national migrants. Yaoundé, which is the capital city, on the other side had generally been perceived as an intellectual and political city. It started captivating national migrants by the 1980 s when the structural adjustment programs entrenched government capacities and led to a kind of concentration of the few available funding in Yaoundé. That is to say, because of economic problems, job opportunity availability or just for a quest of life quality, most of the 250 ethnic groups – if not all – have branches in these major regional towns therefore overwhelmingly dominating the so called “first comers” from the demographic and economical points of view as well. In other words, if Cameroon is generally referred to as a microcosmic Africa, Douala and Yaoundé share its characteristics. Moreover, urban groups as Herbst<sup>10</sup> points out have historically been politically more active than the hinterlands. This article seeks to explain how and why liberalization impacted parliamentary representation in the most heterogeneous urban areas of Cameroon. In other words, why has the government’s policy generated varying outcomes in similar environments? Many scholars posit that liberalization turns everything upside down. Meanwhile much writing on the Cameroonian way of accommodating neoliberal representative democracy and *interculturalism*<sup>11</sup> had been very critical, taking it to be contrary to democracy. Very far from questioning the opportunity of the government’s policy, I rather evaluate its implementation. In this light, we observe some urban variations in the outcomes generated by its implementation. Put another way, taken together, the cases presented in the following lines show a puzzling disjuncture about what the ‘pro diversity policy’ is in theory and what can be observed on the ground: original inhabitants’ representatives perpetuate their domination in Yaoundé while ethnic tra-

8 See both section 5.4 of the December 16<sup>th</sup> 1991 law to lay down conditions governing the election of members of parliament and section 3.2 of the August 14<sup>th</sup> 1992 law fixing conditions for election of municipal councilors.

9 Harri Englund, Introduction: Recognizing Identities, Imagining Alternatives, in: Harri Englund / Francis B. Nyamnjoh (eds.), *Rights and the Politics of Recognition in Africa*, London & New York 2004, p. 3.

10 Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa. Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*, Princeton 2000.

11 This term refers to heterogeneity, minimal multiculturalism or multiculturalism from the margins.

jectories to parliament or ethnic passages to power in Norris'<sup>12</sup> words in Douala are more and more diverse. I submit that these variations are attributable to as many factors as the government's policy ambiguity that has led to many manipulations, the electoral strategy or ethnic community's demographic weight, and the ethnic community close or distant relation to the 'artificially' dominant ruling party.

This article is divided into three sections. The first one is largely descriptive and provides an historical overview of ethnic distribution of parliamentary seats in Yaoundé and Douala from 1992 to 2007. Here we are interested in questions like why is the post liberalization legislative representation more ethnic oriented in Yaoundé than Douala? The second section identifies some ambiguities of the legal framework on political representation in post authoritarian Cameroon. The last section is more analytical, and attempts to explain why ethnic groups claim representation.

## B. An historical overview of ethnic legislative representation in Douala and Yaoundé

During the early 1990 s, Cameroon like many other Sub-Sahara Africa countries faced socio-political disturbances consequent to the intermeshing of domestic and international factors. In response, the government undertook some transformations of the political order that could be termed liberalization<sup>13</sup>. The institutional rearrangements of the legal framework of the political game which began with a '*grand/large débat*'<sup>14</sup> as recommended by the October 30<sup>th</sup> – November 17<sup>th</sup> 1990 Tripartite Conference is part of that process. The traditional authorities, particularly those of Douala and Yaoundé whose original inhabitants were being numerically, economically, and – that goes without saying – politically dominated by the migrants<sup>15</sup> ex-

12 Pippa Norris (ed.), Passages to power. Legislative recruitment in advanced democracies, Cambridge 1997.

13 For details, see Michael Bratton / Nicolas van de Walle, Democratic experiments in Africa. Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective, Cambridge 2001.

14 There was considerable disagreement about how the debate was to be conducted. Was it going to be '*grand*' (meaning that a forum of experts would have been convened) as promised by the President of the republic or was it going to be '*large*' and consisting of consulting as many experienced and inexperienced social groups and categories as possible? Finally, the later solution was imposed by the government. And the President of the Republic gave instruction to the Prime Minister to grant audiences to as diverse social groups and social categories as women, ethnic elite, traditional rulers, representatives of the youth, some political parties' leaders almost coming from all parts of the country and catalogue their requirements for the forthcoming constitution.

15 For example, the demographic structures of the urban population of Douala are indicative of its permanent diversity. Since 1929, the fluxes of migrants that had come here seemingly looking for job opportunities or for other reasons had confined the original populations (i.e the Douala) in a dominated position in their locality (see Jonathan Derrick, Elitisme colonial au Cameroun: le cas des Douala dans les années trente, in: Martin Z. Njeuma, Histoire du Cameroun. XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle – début XX<sup>e</sup>, Paris 1989, p. 187). Between 1955 and 1956, out of 125000 inhabitants, 20.4 % were Douala, 7 % Basa, 11 % Bakoko, 26.2 % Bamiléké, 10.8 % Ewondo, 6.6 % Bantou, 3 % Bakundu and 5.8 % of strangers (these figures are taken from Victoire T. Levine, Le Cameroun. Du mandat à l'indépendance, Paris 1984, p. 84). The rate of immigrants has progressively increased that in 1980 they were

pressed special concern for the protection of whom they called ‘minorities and autochthons’ and referred to as ‘first comers’ or original people of their localities. To secure these categories’ representation in parliament, the government initiated the above mentioned constitutional and legal dispensations which are indicative of their wishes. From the institutional angle, the traditional authorities pushed the government’s agenda, therefore influencing the institutions-building from the bottom. This outcome is a bit consistent with that of Boone<sup>16</sup> who found that institutional differences are determined endogenously.

The issue of parliamentary representation in the major cities of Cameroon varies along a historical line from a non-competitive, homogenous, and almost exclusive ethnic communities’ representation during the one party period to the challenging situation whereby competing ethnic groups fight for representation that mostly characterizes the post political liberalization period. Also worth remembering is that the state’s role evolves along the same line shifting from a kind of top-down policy to a bottom-up or power sharing. The new trends can be interpreted as evidence to Boone’s<sup>17</sup> revising theory of state building. In fact, during the 1990s when the pro diversity policy was being elaborated, the political regime which had just rejected the opposition’s proposal to convening a sovereign national conference might have been looking for other social allies. Therefore, aggregating the traditional authorities of these cities’ demands was politically rational and vital for the government which was expecting support from social categories.

However, with the newly liberalized environment, people of the migrant’s ethnic groups are rightfully concerned about how welcoming the heterogeneous constituencies are to them and about the opportunity that liberalization offered them to challenge the ethnic oriented practice that governed parliamentary representation. Thus, they claim for liberal political equality as expressed in the ‘one man, one vote’ formula. The problem with this approach is that the overwhelming weight of the ‘visiting communities’ in an environment where elections are, in one way or another, significantly structured by primordial affinities give no rise to uncertainty which characterizes democratic elections. The local ethnic groups, notably the Sawa of Douala took the ‘one man one vote’ proposal as a strategy of political domination elaborated by the major ethnic communities’ elites. With this back to citizenship expression, one might have expected the legislative representation to be more congruent or to reflect as much as possible the plural and diverse environment of the urban areas of Douala and Yaoundé. Each election is a good occasion to evaluate the newly adopted policy. Information collection covered all parliamentarians of Douala and Yaoundé from 1992 to 2007. It consisted of approaching resource persons in the purpose of determining the ethnic belonging of the parliamentarians of Douala and Yaoundé within the period. Worth telling perhaps is that

80 % of the population of the locality (*Guy Mainet*, Douala, croissances et servitudes, Paris 1986, p. 11).

16 *Catherine Boone*, *Political Topographies of the African State. Territorial Authority and Institutional Choice*, Cambridge 2012, p. 2.

17 *Ibid.*

because of human behaviour, this information could not be 100 percent concluded. Data collected in this respect are compiled in the following tables, and confirm the multi-ethnic expectation in the case of Douala, as one can see how diversified its representatives are. Meanwhile in Yaoundé ethnic legislative representation diversification is yet to come. That is to say the more liberal the social system used to be the more plural ethnic trajectories to parliament are.

*1. Paradoxical perpetuation of massive ethnic oriented legislative representation in post authoritarian Yaoundé*

During the one party system, it was not conceivable that a person from elsewhere could be nominated out of his natural or cultural environment. In other words, *Beti* candidates could just be nominated to represent the *Beti* people of Yaoundé and its surrounding ethnically congruent populations. Characteristic representation by then was a kind of up-down policy that no social group could challenge. The unique party was taking so much care of this ethnic oriented political representation that Yaoundé which is one of the cases studied in this paper waited until the 1988 apparently open monolithic<sup>18</sup> legislative elections to have its first ever migrant originated Member of Parliament<sup>19</sup>. Since Cameroon's turn toward pluralism, migrant communities in Yaoundé who have been hanging on the dream of breaking down the 'first comers' logic, captured the opportunity and had been assessing to shape a bottom – up representation.

**Table 1: Ethnic and Party's Identification after the 1992 Legislative Election in Yaoundé**

Individuals' Identification	Party's Identification	Ethnic Identification
Amougou Nomah Nicolas	CPDM	Beti
Mballa Bounoung Gabriel	CPDM	Beti
Tana Ahanda	CPDM	Beti
Fossi Valentin	CPDM	Bamiléké
Bomba Nkolo Cécile	CPDM	Beti
Fouda Madeleine	CPDM	Beti

- 18 This sentence should not sound nonsensical. It is just a description of a situation whereby the unique party merely opened the door to competition by investing several candidates or lists of candidates per constituency. There was a kind of fake competition among candidates, even though all the nominees were members of the same unique party.
- 19 During these elections, two individuals from the grass field region were co-opted. Notably Patouossa Njiantout Daouda (a Bamoun man) and Fandjo Samuel Duclair (a Bamiléké man), for details on this aspect, see *Yacouba Moluh*, Les élections législatives de 1988. L'émergence d'une nouvelle élite représentative? Le cas du Mfoundi, Mémoire de maîtrise en science politique, Université de Yaoundé, FDSE, 1989.

Individuals' Identification	Party's Identification	Ethnic Identification
Noah Jean Chrysogone	CPDM	Beti

Source: Supreme Court official results

**Table 2: Ethnic and Party's Identification after the 1997 Legislative Election in Yaoundé**

Individuals' Identification	Party's Identification	Ethnic Identification
Amougou Noma Nicolas	CPDM	Beti
Bassa Botiba Eugénie	CPDM	Bafia <sup>20</sup>
Andze Andze Emile	CPDM	Beti
Etoundi Ngoa Laurent	CPDM	Beti
Ekoumou Evouna Raymond Camille	CPDM	Beti
Mrs Kenmogne Ngono Yvette Claudine	CPDM	Beti
Noah Jean Chrysogone	CPDM	Beti

Source: Supreme Court official results

**Table 3: Ethnic and Party's Identification after the 2002 Legislative Election in Yaoundé**

Individuals' Identification	Party's Identification	Ethnic Belonging
Amougou Noma Nicolas	CPDM	Beti
Andze Andze Emile	CPDM	Beti
Essomba Tsoungui Elie-Victor	CPDM	Beti
Kouna Nga Léonie Bibiane	CPDM	Beti
Essomba Mengue Delphine	CPDM	Beti
Alake Atemgouassi Joseph	CPDM	Nguti
Ondigui Thadeus	CPDM	Beti

Source: Supreme Court official results

**Table 4: Ethnic and Party's Identification after the 2007 Legislative Election in Yaoundé**

Individuals' Identification	Party's Identification	Ethnic Belonging
Andze Andze Emile	CPDM	Beti
Mballa Ambassa Laurent	CPDM	Beti

20 Bafia is a neighboring ethnic group to Beti. From an administrative perspective both are part of the Centre Region.

Individuals' Identification	Party's Identification	Ethnic Belonging
Emah Etoundi Vincent de Paul	CPDM	Beti
Djomgoué Paul Eric	CPDM	Bamiléké
Bassa Botiba Florence Eugenie	CPDM	Bafia*
Eyebe Lucas	CPDM	Beti
Ongola Omgba Jean Simon	CPDM	Beti

Source : Supreme Court official results

Since 1988, Yaoundé district elects seven Members of Parliament. So far 4 post liberalization legislative elections have held and ethnic diversification in this district has not come true. Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 hint at this, as one can easily realize how the *Beti* people dominate parliamentary representation in Yaoundé. This pattern is evident in Tables 1, 2, 3. As Table 1 shows, those of the parliamentarians identified as *Beti* after the 1992 elections were six out of seven which is approximately 85.7 percent. After the 1997, 2002, and 2007 legislative minimally competitive elections, as depicted by prominent theorists of electoral authoritarian governments<sup>21</sup>, representatives of this ethnic community were respectively 85.7 percent, 85.7 percent, and 71.4 percent. A more detailed look at these trends can be seen in Tables 2, 3, and 4. As Table 4 shows the second non originated *Beti* deputy is from a neighbouring ethnic group, and both are parts of the centre region of Cameroon. As one can see, all the post authoritarian parliamentarians in Yaoundé are members of the same CPDM party. In Kubicek's<sup>22</sup> formulation, one can invoke the cliché that the glass is simultaneously half full and half empty. But in this district, the post liberalization elections raise more troubling questions about the future democracy. In fact they are evidence of the limits of electoral democracy. The fecklessness of the opposition parties may have contributed to this state of affairs. However, the ethnic oriented stagnation that characterizes post liberalization parliamentary representation in Yaoundé can be related to 3 main interconnected factors: the demographic weight of the local 'first comers', the electoral system, and the election manipulation habit.

On the first point, of course, the local *Beti* people constitute one of the major ethnic groups in Cameroon. But the statement should not be taken to mean that the *Beti* are the most important ethnic group in town. It simply suggests that as compared to the Sawa's fear of small number in their city in Appadurai's<sup>23</sup> words, the *Beti* are visibly much more important in Yaoundé. It is common knowledge that this issue is very valuable when it comes to ethnic politics. For the political leaders expect support from the ethnic basis which must be as important as to reasonably echo the ethnic claim or protest. Also worth remembering is that members of this ethnic group are disseminated the entire town trough. This point constitutes the link to next

21 Rita Kiki Edozie, *Reconstructing the Third Wave of Democracy. Comparative African Democratic Politics*, Lanham 2009, p. 135.

22 Paul Kubicek, *The Limits of Electoral Democracy in Ukraine*, *Democratization* 8 (2001), p. 136.

23 Arjun Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers. An Essay on the Geography of Anger*, Durham, NC 2006.



factor; that is the electoral system. Since the original inhabitants can be found everywhere in town even though they may be more concentrated in some areas than other (Koldongo, Mvogada, Effoulam, Nsam, Ahala, Messame Ndongo etc), their dissemination from the strategic perspective led to multi-member district option. For, their dissemination is likely the key argument that the ruling party uses to legitimize its electoral manipulation.

Therefore, the choice and the perpetuation of the proportional representation that is compatible with multi-member district in Yaoundé were purportedly made. From the symbolic politics perspective, Yaoundé is the capital city whose original inhabitants are the *Ewondo*, one of the several branches of the *Beti* ethnic group which, although this point is ethnographically a bit controversial, also encompasses the *Bulu*<sup>24</sup>; the party's national chairman and president of the Republic ethnic branch. The *Beti* ethnic group is closed to power. For its members generally consider the CPDM party as their property: they attend party's rallies, vote massively for its candidates, and their leaders who perceive their areas as their territory also enjoy high rate of party retribution<sup>25</sup>. The propensity to manipulate the electoral process is very regular, familiar and high here. This is what is referred to in national political jargon as "*pays organisateur*"<sup>26</sup>. From the assumption that more ethnic candidates can mobilize more ethnic supports or voters, the multi-members district in an illiberal environment offers the CPDM local but artificially dominant party the opportunity to invest as many *Beti* candidates as possible. Knowing that the ethnic leaders will take advantage of their government positions to win the election 'by all means', notably by manipulating the whole process<sup>27</sup>. In some of these areas, voters are asked to perform as to go far beyond a hundred percent vote for party's candidates. This has tended to diminish competition between opposition parties and CPDM candidates and instead to promote infighting among competing CPDM candidates. Such a competition is more intensive when obtaining the party's support in this district is tantamount to being elected, to improving his/her living standard, and to acceding to big men and rent position. In fact, an ordinary Member of Parliament earns 1662 dollars salaries and manages an unaccountable budget of 16000 dollars to fund micro projects in his/her constituency. He is also eligible to vehicle loan. In addition, once the deputy becomes a member of the bureau, the salary considerably improves (2800 dollars for a parliamentary secretary and 4800 dollars for a vice president) and the vehicle to term is almost a gift to be taken along with. These aspects make the ethnic divides more pronounced in Yaoundé. The ethnic oriented persistence

24 According to some scholars, the Bulu are not part of the Beti ethnic group. See for example *Philippe Laburthe-Tolra*, *Minlaaba. Histoire et société traditionnelle bétu du Sud Cameroun*, Paris 1977.

25 Many of them occupy prestigious and valuable posts like ministerial offices, general managers of state corporations, and other rent positions in the administration.

26 This French parable signifies closeness to state's power and to its resources. See *Charles Ateba Eyene*, *Les paradoxes du "pays organisateur"*. Elites productrices ou prédatrices: le cas de la province du Sud-Cameroun à l'ère Biya (1982-2007), 2008.

27 *Yacouba Moluh*, *De l'évaluation de la qualité électorale: quelques réflexions sur la notion d'élections libres, régulières et équitables à la lumière des scrutins post-autoritaires au Cameroun*, *Cahiers Administratifs et Politiques du Ponant*, No. 19, 2011, p. 238.

of members of Parliament offer some pause to those who would claim that the liberalization has put an end to ethnic divides.

## *II. Ethnic diversification perpetuation in Douala*

Douala, whose social system is much more liberal, on the contrary has an ethnic diversifying tradition to which competitiveness has not put an end. As evidence to this statement, during the monolithic period Mr. Kanga, a man from the *Bamiléké* ethnic community, main holders of the economic power<sup>28</sup>, and very challenging from the demographic perspective, had been made Member of Parliament since 1965. The above mentioned case of Mr. Kanga may suggest the intensity of the pressure that his ethnic community had been exercising on the local political system all through. After the April 1988 one party multi candidates elections, five ethnic groups represented Douala district: the *Sawa* (44.4 percent), the *Bamiléké* (22.2 percent), the *Bassa* (11.1 percent), the *Beti* (11.1 percent), and the *Haoussa* (11.1 percent). Tables 5, 6, 7, and 8 provide useful and appropriate data on ethnic diversification as concern parliamentary representation in Douala.

**Table 5: Ethnic and Party's Representation after the 1992 Legislative Elections in Douala**

Individuals Identification	Party's Identification	Ethnic Belonging
Tobbo Eyoun Thomas	CPDM	Sawa
Nzongang Albert	CPDM	Bamiléké
Foning Françoise	CPDM	Bamiléké
Dipoko Samuel Py Dipoko	NUDP	Sawa
Bintcha Richard	NUDP	Bamiléké
Mandengue Ntone Ambroise	UPC	Sawa
Mabbe Pierre/	UPC	Bassa
Zogning François	UPC	Bamiléké
Soppo Paul	UPC	Sawa

Source: Supreme Court official results

**Table 6: Ethnic and Party's Representation after the 1997 Legislative Election in Douala**

Individuals' Identification	Party's Identification	Ethnic Belonging
Tobbo Eyoun Thomas	CPDM	Sawa
Dooh Priso Emmanuel	CPDM	Sawa

28 See *Peter Geschiere / Piet Konings* (eds.), *Itinéraires d'accumulation au Cameroun*, Paris, Karthala et Leiden 1993.

Individuals' Identification	Party's Identification	Ethnic Belonging
Foning Françoise	CPDM	Bamileké
Amomba Nga	CPDM	Beti
Nkodo Bala Max	CPDM	Beti
Moukouri Manga Bell	SDF	Sawa
Eyombwang Brunot	SDF	Sawa
Kadji Jean Patrice	SDF	Bamileké
Longtchi Abenicot	SDF	Bamileké

Source: Supreme Court official results

**Table 7: Ethnic and Party's Representation after the 2002 Legislative Election in Douala**

Individuals Identification	Party's Identification	Ethnic Belonging
Etonde Ekotto Edouard	CPDM	Sawa
Din Bell Armande	CPDM	Sawa
Ntone Henri	CPDM	Sawa
Foning Françoise	CPDM	Bamileké
Njocke Abel Calvin	CPDM	Sawa
Missi Jean Raymond	CPDM	Bassa
Ngahane Isaac	CPDM	Bamileké
Belong Maurice	CPDM	Bassa
Kono Owona Joseph	CPDM	Beti

Source: Supreme Court official results

**Table 8: Ethnic and Party's Representation after the 2007 Legislative Elections in Douala**

Individuals' Identification	Party's Identification	Ethnic Belonging
Dooh Collins Albert	CPDM	Sawa
Kechanga Célestin	CPDM	Bamileké
Owono Kono Joseph Hyacinthe	CPDM	Beti
Ekindi Jean Jacques	MP	Sawa
Moukouri Moulema Robert	SDF	Sawa
Njocke Abel Calvin	CPDM	Sawa
Nintcheu Jean Michel	SDF	Bamileké

Individuals' Identification	Party's Identification	Ethnic Belonging
Edimo Ndoumbe Oscar	SDF	Sawa
Nkembeng Edward	SDF	Bamiléké

Source: Supreme Court official results

Elections alone do not transform one political system into democracy. In our study indeed, at least they can provide useful lenses through which one can evaluate the impact of liberalization on the politics of recognition. One manner in which to judge ethnic diversification associated with parliamentary representation in Douala is to start backwards at the 1992 legislative elections. The founding democracy parliamentary elections of March 1992 held when Douala was still considered as one unique district electing 9 Members of Parliament. Voting for the Parliament then took place under a multi member proportional representation system. By the end of the process three political parties (UPC, NUDP, and CPDM) won parliamentary seats and offered a chance to three ethnic groups (*Sawa*: 44.4 percent, *Bamiléké*: 44.4 percent, and *Bassa*: 11.1 percent) to seating in as representatives of the whole population. This is what appears in Table 5. In 1997, the CPDM ruling party had drawn lessons from the past experience. In fact, this party realized that although opposition parties and movements were very popular in Douala, it was still having some islands of supporters here and there. In addition the local 'first comers' are geographically concentrated in Douala 1 which is also the electoral district of Douala centre. In the purpose of rationalizing the opportunity, the party's executive branch decided to split the city into four distinct districts: Wouri Centre and Manoka, East-Wouri, West-Wouri, and South-Wouri. Since this redistricting, legislative elections in Douala as a whole had been taking place under a mixed approach made of majority, proportional, single member, and multi-member system. The redistricting substantially improved the CPDM representation sliding it from two to five party representatives, and out-distancing the SDF opposition party which won four seats. From the politics of recognition angle, three major identities came out of the four newly created districts: *Sawa* (44.4 percent), *Bamiléké* (33.3 percent), and *Beti* (22.2 percent) as shown in Table 6. During the 2002 legislative elections, major opposition parties and movements' unsatisfied claim for more electoral transparency led to their boycott. Therefore, the CPDM won the process in the four districts of Douala and by the end of the day; nine personalities coming out from four ethnic communities were given mandate to aggregate the interests of the city in the National Assembly: *Sawa* (44.4 percent), *Bamiléké* (22.2 percent), *Beti* (11.1 percent), and *Bassa* (22.2 percent). These orientations are evident in Table 7. Finally in 2007, opposition parties were back to electoral competition. Thus as many parties as the CPDM, SDF, and MP could split most of the vote and win the election. When it comes to ethnic representation, the *Sawa* (55.5 percent), the *Bamiléké* (33.3 percent) and the *Beti* (11.1 percent) succeeded in winning seats. Table 8 illustrates this political parties and ethnic groups' diversity. Although this trend still needs to be confirmed through further observations, the high rate of *Sawa* ethnic group's representation may suggest that within the legal framework, parties' diversity representation associate with multi members

proportional system and the local people candidates placed in electable positions which advantaged the 'first comers' in Douala may also lead to the diversification of ethnic trajectories to Parliament in Yaoundé. For, it is common knowledge that candidates' position in the list is a very valuable factor when it comes to multi members' proportional representation system associate with contested elections.

### C. Some ambiguities of the legal framework

The traditional authorities of Douala and Yaoundé had pushed the government's agenda by imposing their views on parliamentary representation. With these legal and constitutional dispensations, the liberalization process seems to have recorded the heavy domination of major ethnic communities and the risk of implosion they can engender. Unfortunately, policy makers took them into consideration with a little bit of precipitation which made the provisions imprecise. Although critics of the microcosmic ideal generally argue that this model can be achieved only by imposing powerful constraints upon electoral choice and individual freedom<sup>29</sup>, its implementation in Cameroon seems to present peculiar difficulties. This legal framework would have been an instrument to square the complexity of Cameroon social system. Unfortunately, it sounds confusing and unworkable. For instance, to what extent must a list of candidates be inclusive enough for it not to be rejected by the administrative authority in charge of their validation? In other words, how can the government of the people be realized in Douala and Yaoundé making use of the legal framework? If the legal requirement to consider the sociological components of the constituency concerned while constituting the list of candidates aims at tempering the potentially negative aspects of a mechanic application of the majority rule<sup>30</sup>, that is adapting democratic principles to national environment, it still needs some clarifications. As well as direct democracy is hardly conceivable today because of the heavy weight of the population of different nation-states, the Cameroon's solution to the challenging issue of fair distribution of seats in elective chambers among social and ethnic groups seems paradoxically difficult to implement in the most heterogeneous areas of Yaoundé and Douala<sup>31</sup> for it lacks definition and no ethnic statistics is available.

On the first point, constitutional and legal provisions neither state what an autochthon is or ought to be nor to what extent can a list be characteristic of the inhabitants of the constituency to meet the need of representativeness. On the second, one of the main obstacles to the implementation of the Cameroon's accommodation of ethnic communities upon which

29 For some round up ideas on critics of the resemblance model, see *Andrew Heywood*, *Politics*, New York 2002, p. 228.

30 *Alain D. Olinga*, L'exigence de la prise en compte des composantes sociologiques de la circonscription en droit électoral camerounais, *Juridis Périodique*, No. 28, 1996, p. 67.

31 These towns, because of their respective natures of political and economic capital are areas where can be found members of all the communities that constitute the population of Cameroon. Therefore, how can all those sociological components be considered in Yaoundé (7 parliamentary seats) or in Douala which has a total of 9 parliamentary seats?

scholars would have drawn attention is the unavailability of ethnic statistics. Data on ethnic groups seems very sensitive and has not been available since 1967<sup>32</sup>. Neither the census of 1976 nor the subsequent of 1987 and 2007 could provide such information. The political order is reluctant to communicate on the issue. This is likely because leaders of major ethnic groups may take advantage of such information to claim for justice and proportionality in representation and in the distribution of other public goods. As a consequence of this attitude the more general and evasive category of 'most populous' region has been changing from one area to another and from one census to another. For example, after the 1987 population census, the Far North was leading the other regions in terms of demographic weight. Without any statistical explanation, this region lost its top position at the benefit of the Centre in 2007. What sounds manipulative and troublesome is that no particularly devastating disease, no natural disaster or civil war that might have generated countless loss of life or obliged the population to run away had occurred in the region within that period. The question now is how can a microcosmic model of representation be implemented in such an environment?

The January 21<sup>st</sup> 1996 municipal elections offered an opportunity to test the applicability of the above legal framework. As one could easily foresee, imprecision lead to misinterpretations of a different nature upon which the attention of the Administrative Bench of the Supreme Court has sometimes been called<sup>33</sup>. Other related aspects came from Douala where after the election of non-locally born mayors in most of the urban councils, the *Sawa* who constitute the populace came out massively denouncing violation of the newly promulgated constitution as concern the issues of protecting the minorities and autochthons<sup>34</sup>. The difficulty can be summarized as follows: are the mayors who constitute the executive branch of the municipal councils concerned with considerations on sociological components? Put another way, did the legislator through its dispensation mean that the requirement to consider the various sociological components of the constituency concerned should also be enforced to the election of the executive of the municipal councils? Moreover, do local ethnic communities

32 Jean-Louis Dongmo, *Le dynamisme bamiléké* (Cameroun), Yaoundé 1981, Vol. 2, p. 25.

33 Jugement N° 59/CS-CA du 18 juillet 1996, Epale Roger Delore, arguant de sa simple qualité d'électeur, sollicitait de la Chambre administrative de la Cour Suprême, l'annulation des résultats des élections remportées par la liste SDF dans la commune rurale de Bare-Mungo, au motif que cette liste composée de 25 conseillers municipaux, comportait « 24 allogènes et un seul autochtone ».

Dans le jugement N° 60/CS-CA, le Sieur Ngueyong Moussa, tête de liste RDPC dans la commune rurale de Melong invoquait la non-conformité de la liste rivale aux composantes sociologiques pour demander l'annulation desdites élections.

Moreover, the Divisional Officer of Mbam and Inoubou rejected the SDF list of candidates at Makénéé arguing that the autochthon Nyokon people were under represented.

34 For some suggestive analysis, see Yacouba Moluh, *Cosmopolitisme et démocratie urbaine: essai d'analyse des comportements politiques post-municipales du 21 janvier 1996*, Law and Politics in Africa, Asia, and Latin America 34 (2001), p. 544; one can also read Jean Njoya, *Démocratisation, divergences ethniques et politisation de la pluralité au Cameroun*, Revue Canadienne des Etudes Africaines 36 (2002), p. 239 as well as Tatah Mentan, *Constitutionalism, Press and factional politics: coverage of Sawa minority agitations in Cameroon*, in: Stanislas Melone et al. (eds.), *La Réforme constitutionnelle du 18 janvier 1996. Aspects politiques et juridiques*, Yaoundé 1996.

need to hold all mayor positions in town to feel fairly represented? These questions are particularly important because they highlight some misleading interpretations of the law. These 'first comers' attitude seems to suggest that in their understanding; their symbolic political domination must be perpetuated, and more seriously must be general and absolute. In other words 'who governs matter' and no top political position should be out of their control. This understanding of the legal framework may not be suitable for a situation whereby liberalization has not ended nation building which is essentially an inclusive process. In fact, do ethnic parliamentarians represent their ethnic group? Two main factors lead to a negative answer: 1) all electoral constituencies are melting pots; and 2) if the answer to the question were positive, it would have suggested that the legal framework is contrary to the January 18<sup>th</sup> 1996 which forbids any imperative mandate<sup>35</sup>. Additionally, the questioning also accurately brings us back to the general issue of representativeness: which theory of representation should be adopted? For instance, if a constituency like Douala or Yaoundé that seemingly house almost all the national ethnic communities of Cameroon, should each of them have one of their members or even more in a list for it to be acceptable<sup>36</sup>?

Other bias in the understanding of the legal framework for fair representation in Cameroon came from Yaoundé whose population is as diverse as that of Douala. One cannot easily understand that the CPDM ruling party that had been winning legislative elections in this town since 1992 had all through overwhelmingly invested candidates from one ethnic community. Members of the *Beti* local community were 6 out of 7 candidates in 1992, 1997, 2002 and 5 out of 7 during the 2007 legislative elections. Meanwhile in Douala, the candidates of the local ethnic group nominated by the same party during that period were very few. This may suggest either that the ruling party does not respect the law that it has dominantly contributed to the elaboration or that it discriminates among constituencies. Such a discriminate situation may generate frustration. Of the limits catalogued above, neither the constitution nor the laws provide solutions to them.

#### D. Explaining ethnic communities' claim for representation

Every society is structured by certain cleavages. Some are referred to as vertical and are determined by social and economic criteria such as social class, the revenue, the level of education, the social milieu (urban or rural area), and the type of job. Others which are instead culturally oriented may have as salience identifying features the religion, the ethnicity, the community, and the language. Managing the horizontal cleavages is easier, for as Dogan<sup>37</sup> persuasively notes where there is a will, there is a way to find solution to any kind of economic, social and financial problem. On the contrary, it is more difficult to craft a compromising

35 See Section 15(3) of the constitution.

36 One should remember that for the moment, Douala is being attributed 9 posts and Yaoundé 7 posts at the national assembly.

37 *Mattei Dogan*, *Classe, religion, parti: triple déclin dans les clivages électoraux en Europe*, *Revue Internationale de Politique Comparée* 3 (1996), p. 516.

solution to a cultural problem. Parliamentary representation in Yaoundé can be situated along this frame. Since every social group wants representation and every government claims to represent, the question then is how can representativeness particularly in heterogeneous and less structured societies be realized within a process of nation-building and liberalization? Put another way, if the idea of a unique people detaining the sovereign power is still a matter of controversy in developed and consolidated democracies, how true can it be in an environment where national unity is yet to come? In short, why do ethnic groups claim representation? In Czudnowski's<sup>38</sup> words, "does who governs matter?" Any assessment to answer this core question should take into consideration the model of social integration that is operational in the society concerned. When we observe some western global cities like London, Montreal etc, we realize that although ethnic communities may frame the space or the territorial occupation, the social system is still so well structured and differentiated that 'who governs' may sometimes not matter. In other words, ethnic groups and individuals are assimilated, and diluted in the resident social system. Therefore, the Burkean national representation or trustee theory which is based on the assumption that the people are a real and unique entity seems to provide a negative answer to the question. In fact, the trustee theory is perceived as one of the outcomes of the 1789 French revolution conducted by Sieyès.

However, the empirical observation later on highlighted the division of the society into what Karl Marx and his proponents termed social classes, into social groups, interests groups, ethnic groups, varying in their organization<sup>39</sup>. As we earlier remarked with some evidence, the presence of these intermediary identities that impede a clear and liberal conception of a citizen-state relationship is very visible in Cameroon as a whole and specifically in Douala and Yaoundé. In these global cities from the margins, there seems to operate a mixed model of social integration consisting for the ethnic communities on the one side to frame the space that is creating ethnic oriented quarters. In that vein we have such quarters as Akwa, Bonapriso, Bonanjo, Deido etc. whose residents are mostly but not exclusively first comers, and Bependa, New Bell, Village, etc. which are dominantly occupied by groups and individuals from migrant communities in Douala. And in Yaoundé we can also observe that Nkomkana, Biyem-Assi, Carrière, Ekounou, Briquetterie etc. are welcome to migrants. Meanwhile, Mvog Ada, Effoulam, Nsam, Kodengui, Essos, Messamedongo, etc. can cautiously be referred to as reserves for first comers. On the other side the mixed model of social integration consists for individuals to live inside or outside the ethnic oriented quarters, but coming together through weekly or monthly meetings to cultivate and entertain mechanic solidarity. That is to say, there are several underpinning factors which should be considered if one were to be prudent in taking political representation as envisaged by neo liberals for granted.

Moreover, another important feature of the African societies is that ethnic groups associate with a particular territory that they consider to be their territory, and that is referred to as geo-

38 Moshe M. Czudnowski, *Does Who Governs Matter?*, DeKalb 1982.

39 Francois D'Arcy (ed.), *La représentation*, Paris 1985, p. 44.



ethnicity. As Cobbach<sup>40</sup> long time ago observed, “In Africa, this ethnic identity is above all other things a territorial identity. Nothing defines the ethnic group better than its ‘standing place’. Thus, the term geoethnicity had been coined to describe the African ethnic phenomenon. Geoethnicity as opposed to non-territorial ethnic identification involves the historic identification of an ethnic group with a given territory, an attachment to a particular place, a sense of place as a symbol of being and identity”. Cobbach’s research is consistent with that of Bayart and Geschiere<sup>41</sup> whose efforts to associate territory and ethnic group suggest an identifying criterion that can be summarized as follows: ‘I was there before’. In the same vein, Nlep<sup>42</sup> contends that to trace back the original ethnic community of a territory, we must go as far back to 1884 Berlin Conference. Also worth remembering is the link that this approach establishes between a territory and public goods. In fact geoethnicity implies that provisions of public goods in a particular area primarily but not exclusively benefits members of a distinct ethnic community. Representation in public institutions is likely to be catalogued among the public goods.

In addition, taken from a different theoretical angle, most African societies for example are depicted as neo-patrimonialistic<sup>43</sup>; electoral authoritarianism that is, in Kiki Edozie’s<sup>44</sup> own words a government in which the political regime maneuvers to sustain and consolidate authoritarian practices and values; structured by mechanic solidarity<sup>45</sup>; facing poor leadership, and poor governance problems. General interest here is mostly peripheral or euphemistic. Leaders generally hasten to develop their own region or area and to favor members of their own ethnic community. Apart from the main national developing projects that may sometimes involve international partners, tarring a road somewhere just because it needs to be is at times hardly conceivable. Most infrastructures here have a historicity which is generally related to individuals, thus very challenging to common sense. In such polities, freedom of choice that appears to underlie liberal multipartyism does not guarantee legitimate forms of representation<sup>46</sup>. In support of this theoretical trend, Kimenyi<sup>47</sup> brings out some characteristic insights

40 Cobbach quoted by *Mwangi S. Kimenyi*, Ethnicity, Governance and the Provision of Public Goods, paper prepared for presentation at the African Economic Research Consortium’s Biannual Conference, Nov-Dec, Nairobi, Kenya 2003.

41 *Jean-Francois Bayart / Peter Geschiere*, J’étais là avant toi: Problématiques politiques de l’autochtonie, *Critique Internationale* 10 (2001), pp. 126-28. See also *Jean-Francois Bayart / Peter Geschiere*, Autochtonie, démocratie et citoyenneté en Afrique, *Critique Internationale* 10 (2001), p. 177.

42 *Léopold Donfack Sokeng*, Un juriste au coeur de la cité. Hommage au professeur Roger Gabriel Nlep, *Janus – Revue Camerounaise de Droit et de Science Politique* 1 (2005), p. 21.

43 *Jean-François Médard*, The Underdeveloped State in Tropical Africa: Political Clientelism or Neo-Patrimonialism?, in: Christopher Clapham (ed.), *Private Patronage and Public Power. Political Clientelism in the Modern State*, London 1982.

44 *Kiki Edozie*, note 21, p. 131.

45 *Émile Durkheim*, *La division du travail social*, Paris 1893.

46 *Englund*, note 9, p. 22.

47 *Kimenyi*, note 40, p. 5.

into interrelations between ethnicity, governance and one of the functions of a state, notably the provision of public goods. On this scholar's evidence, it may be appropriate to say that the degree of ethnic fractionalization influences the quality of governance. In other words, government failure associated with collective provision is more serious in societies that are more heterogeneous than those that are homogeneous. As this scholar goes on to remark, "the failure to take heterogeneity into consideration in the design of institutions has contributed to governance failures in countries with high degrees of ethnic fractionalization. Thus, by ignoring the importance of ethnicity in institutional design, many ethnically fractionalized developing countries are not suited to harmonize ethnic claims"<sup>48</sup>. Other things equal, given the high degree of ethnic fractionalization in Africa, this may be one of the reasons for poor governance in the continent.

These considerations may probably explain why, reacting to the migrants' demand for complete liberalization of representation in Douala in the 1990s for example, some sons of the soil's leaders argued that representation of the 'visiting' communities must remain symbolic; no matter how demographically and economically important they may be. To them, the visiting communities do already have their representatives in parliament in their cultural territories or areas. This perception is consistent with Birch's<sup>49</sup> idea when he purportedly notes that political representation is synonymous to a symbolic acknowledgement of the political rights of a community. As assumed by geoethnicity theorists<sup>50</sup>, representation in Douala and Yaoundé should primordialially concern the *Sawa* and the *Beti*. In a related issue, as minority rights and multiculturalism<sup>51</sup> theorists emphasize the social inscription of political representation with women representing the women, black representing the black<sup>52</sup>; *Sawa* must represent the *Sawa* people and *Beti* must represent the *Beti* people. In that vein, claiming representation out of each other's respective cultural area is tantamount to hegemony seeking. In this respect, Cameroon's post liberalization approach to representation is a perpetuation of the resemblance model that prevailed during the monolithic period, and can cautiously be referred to as a way of sharing power among ethnic communities or providing them with provisory means of articulating and aggregating their interests in national politics. Ethnic interest group's theory can be true just to an extent. Ethnic leaders do not necessarily hasten to develop their region. Sometimes they hasten simply to enrich themselves. Otherwise the South region of Cameroon might have been very developed. This paradoxical situation which

48 Mwangi S. Kimenyi, Harmonizing Ethnic Claims in Africa: A Proposal for Ethnic –Based Federalism", Cato Journal 18 (1998), p. 43.

49 Anthony H. Birch, Representation, London and Barinstoke 1972, p. 21.

50 See for instance Cobbah, note 40.

51 See for example Will Kymlicka / Norman Wayne, Citizenship in Culturally Diverse Societies, Oxford 2000; Dean A. Harris, Multiculturalism From the Margins. Non-Dominant Voices on Difference and Diversity, Westport, Connecticut and London 1995; Anne Phillips, The Politics of Presence, Oxford 1995, just to name the few.

52 Kymlicka / Wayne, note 51, p. 101.

has been highlighted by Ateba Eyene<sup>53</sup> is likely evidence that different and competing rationalities do sometimes guide ethnic leaders' behaviours. By the same token, the Prime Minister Yang Philemon's ethnic locality and electoral district (Bui) had not housed any major developing programme since his arrival in office in September 2009 until his party's incumbent candidate lost the October 2011 presidential election in that district. He thought about his locality and his ethnic fellows just afterward by making the project of tarring the road that leads there a priority in the government agenda for 2013.

Coming back to our mainstream and focus, one may say that geoethnicity approach sounds nonsensical to 'visiting' group whose members perceive it as merely opening the door in Lipson words<sup>54</sup> in the processes of liberalization and nation building. Critics of the Cameroonian way of accommodating neoliberal-representative democracy and *interculturalism* which is appreciatively synonymous to *consociationalism*<sup>55</sup> mainly focused their attention on two major points which are likely to be its weaknesses. On the one side they called the national as well as international public opinion's attention upon its inadequacy to international standards of understanding and protecting minorities and autochthons. On the other, they took any community based distinction to be contrary to democracy. The most radical theoretical tendency that is the hard-liners in O'Donnell and Schmitter view<sup>56</sup>, basing their demonstration on the liberal theory of colour blind or neutral citizenship took it as the *constitutionalization of tribalism*<sup>57</sup> or as a policy of *bantoustan*<sup>58</sup>. While agreeing for the most parts with the opinion of these scholars, we shall indicate only very briefly what few points we think one might permanently have in mind before drawing a fast conclusion on the issue of representation in such an environment. No matter how persuasive they may appear, these scholars' arguments would seem to suggest that there is a unique way of fostering the link between the government and the governed. All of us would be very prudent to conclude likewise. For, there seems not to be any absolute and ontological determinism between the trustee approach to representation

53 Ateba Eyene, note 26, pp. 140-43.

54 Daniel N. Lipson, Embracing Diversity: The Institutionalization of Affirmative Action as Diversity Management at UC-Berkeley, UT-Austin, and UW-Madison, *Law & Social Inquiry* 32 (2007), p. 1010.

55 Arend Lijphart, The politics of accommodation. Pluralism and democracy in Netherlands, Berkeley / Los Angeles 1968; Arend Lijphart, Democracy in plural society. A comparative exploration, New Haven / London 1997.

56 Guillermo O'Donnell / Philippe C. Schmitter, Transitions from authoritarian rule. Tentative conclusions about uncertain democracies, Second Printing, Baltimore / London 1989, p. 16.

57 See Léopold Donfack Sokeng, Le droit des minorités et des peuples autochtones au Cameroun, Thèse de doctorat en droit, Université de Nantes, Faculté de droit et des sciences politiques, 2000. As concern this author, one should notice that he changed his position in a different paper. See from the same author, note 42, pp. 21-45.

58 Luc Sindjoun, Le système politique local de la ville de Yaoundé. Un modèle d'ethno-bureaucratie gouvernante, Thèse de doctorat de troisième cycle, Université de Yaoundé, FDSE, 1990, p. 214 and to some extent Luc Sindjoun, L'identité nationale et révision constitutionnelle du 18 janvier 1996: comment constitutionnalise-t-on le 'nous' au Cameroun dans l'Etat post-unitaire?, *Polis* 1 (1996), Numéro spécial (février).

and meeting the need to realize the government of the people. If who governs did not at time matter, women and other marginalized categories would not have been claiming representation even in consolidated democracies. As concern the reference to the international standards, we all know that social facts are dynamic and changing phenomenon. One may refer to those standards as ideal or asymptote guide lines that do not necessarily cover all national realities. Sometime, they are even ideologically liberal or western oriented.

Without really taking side in the debate but finding myself in agreement with much of the most influential descriptive representation proponents' arguments, one would just emphasize the likely difficulty related to its implementation in an era of liberalization. This is among other reasons why Peter Geschiere<sup>59</sup> referred to this paradoxical resurgence of identities as the flip side of globalization. The question now is what can be the scope of that policy within a context of liberalization and nation building? My argument is that government policy must be flexible enough to accommodate liberalization and nation building for technical and cultural reasons. From the technical perspective on the one hand, no matter how attractive descriptive or characteristic model of representation may be, its main and widely acknowledged weakness was, and perhaps still is its feasibility. Too much of a good thing can be bad. Descriptive representation seems to be more suitable for small scale and less diverse populations. For, its implementation in heterogeneous societies must cautiously be well framed to avoid overcrowded representation institutions. Microcosmic or descriptive representation which reflects the constituency in its details, may lead to some objective limits such as the number of candidates per list and finally to overcrowded assemblies, which are neither functional nor efficient. For this model to be effective, each constituency must be allotted at least as many seats as the number of social and ethnic groups coexisting within its boundaries. This is not possible because it would suggest for instance that, if Yaoundé or Douala housed 250 ethnic and social groups or categories, normally they also would have been attributed at least 250 parliamentary posts. Unfortunately, only 7 and 9 members of parliament respectively are allowed to seat in for the inhabitants of these towns in the National Assembly. That is to say, one of the most predictable consequences of the resemblance or characteristic representation is overcrowded assembly. To overcome this obstacle, only notable ethnic communities defined with regard to their demographic weight, to their economic power or to their historic and cultural relation with the constituency concerned may be considered.

In a related development, parliamentary representation is not a 'be all end all' of political representation. Sometimes administrative agents or appointed individuals do represent ethnic groups. Because they are members of the executive branch of power, they may be closer to decision making black box. In that vein they can either take favourable ethnic decisions or

59 Peter Geschiere, *The Perils of Belonging. Autochthony, Citizenship, and Exclusion in Africa and Europe*, Chicago and London 2009, p. 1.

influence such decisions. Consequently, people may feel closer to such a personality than to a parliamentarian<sup>60</sup>.

From the cultural angle on the other, as we have already mentioned culture is a dynamic phenomenon. Ethnic groups do undergo some transformations through history that can be referred to as syncretism. Thinking of them as pure entities may not be very appropriate. This statement may likely be the answer to Nlep<sup>61</sup> who submitted that for us to trace the ethnic boundaries; we should go as far back as to the Berlin 1884 conference. To proceed that way may seem to suggest that history ended at that time, and that interethnic relations are simply a conceptual category. All of us would be prudent enough to come to such a conclusion. In the same vein, most telling, perhaps, is what appears to be a lesson from history<sup>62</sup> and anthropology<sup>63</sup>. These disciplines teach us that in the traditional society of Africa and Europe as well, a king was likely to send his daughter to marriage to another king for the purpose of consolidating their relations. This kind of marital relation referred to as exogamy has been perpetuated through history. For example, from my experience, I know a young man from *Bamoun* ethnic group who got married to a girl whose mother was *Ewondo (Beti)* and the father was from *Sawa* ethnic group. There are countless cases of marriage of this nature. If ethnic groups are pure entities what will be the ethnic belonging of children born in such marital relations? This simply suggests that future generations of Cameroonians inevitably will be a melting-pot. These transformations are evidence that ethnic groups referred to as pure categories may hardly have empirical basis. Therefore, what can be the essence of ethnic nationalism? The widely shared belief or worry is that major ethnic groups have hegemonic habits which can be related to poor leadership and poor governance.

## E. Conclusion

Democratization has bred some drastic transformations of the social and political systems of Cameroon. The steps taken by the traditional rulers of Douala and Yaoundé to push the government agenda by introducing demand for specific representation of their 'first comers' can be assimilated to a resistance of the social order to a global move toward democracy. The government reaction to their demand has been criticized for being contrary to the universal standards in this domain. One may just wonder whether democracy entails a rigid rule of the

60 In Cameroon's politics by the way, parliamentarians' repeated complaint of being useless to their voters led to invention of what is called micro project funding consisting for the National assembly to provide parliamentarians with cash money destined to realize small scale projects in their respective constituencies. Some scholars find it contrary to the constitution because it seems to suggest that although parliamentarians are national representatives or general interests' aggregators, they are also accountable to their constituencies.

61 R. Gabriel Nlep, *op cit*.

62 See *Florent Lenègre*, *Légitimer l'intégration à l'occident chrétien: la politique matrimoniale des rois de Norvège au XIIIème siècle*, *Médiévales*, No. 50, 2006.

63 See *Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown / Daryll Forde* (eds.), *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, 11th edition, London, New York and Toronto 1975.

majority or it is adaptable to the environment where it is being implemented. If we consider Abraham Lincoln's definition of democracy as 'the government of the people, by the people, and for the people'; one can assume that democracy is flexible enough to accommodate divergent environments. Therefore, although it has lot of loopholes and raises a lot of ambiguity, the pro diversity policy initiated by the government of Cameroon is warts and all a way of structuring and guaranteeing representation of local ethnic communities notably in heterogeneous constituencies. To put it another way, it can provide a useful framework within which Cameroonians can begin to think about representation in politics.

What appears troublesome is the likely manipulation of electoral processes since the 1990s by the CPDM ruling system to perpetuate the *Beti*'s domination of parliamentary representation in Yaoundé. In this respect, the manner in which Elections Cameroon (ELECAM) handles the forthcoming elections in this district will be very telling. As Melone<sup>64</sup> put it, the demands of the traditional authorities had been taken into consideration by the legislator on December 16<sup>th</sup> 1991 and later on by the organ in charge of the revision of the constitution, and it is the responsibility of the academia to make it workable.

64 Démocratie et législation au Cameroun, Séminaire conjoint Francophonie-Commonwealth "Démocratie et sociétés plurielles", Yaoundé (Cameroun), 24-26 janvier 2000, p. 120.