

THE BEGINNING OF URBANIZATION IN DOUALA (1884-1914)

Bissomo OTTOU

PhD Assistant, University of Douala (Cameroon)

E-mail: otto.bissomo@yahoo.fr

Abstract: *For several centuries, the Portuguese, Dutch, Spanish, French and English traded in slaves and tropical products on the Wouri estuary. The main providers of these slaves were the residents of the Douala who at the same time were the obligatory intermediaries. Before being a city, Douala is therefore above all a site and port situation (Mainet (1981: 1). The exchanges which developed thereafter turned to the advantage of Europeans thanks to their technical superiority. Cameroon-Town by the British on Douala lands since 1840 which became Kamerunstadt after the capture of this territory by the Germans in 1884, reflects the problem of European mercantile, cultural and political domination in Africa in the 19th century, which also recurs in all scientific debates today. The strong immigration observed in the city of Douala during the period between the wars is due to the economic boom that it has experienced since the German occupation and which continued after the change of colonizer. As a result, Douala on the eve of the reunification of the two Cameroonians in 1961 is a city with two faces: an indigenous construction on the one hand and a euro enterprise. Pean on the other hand. The purpose of this article is to analyze this process of construction of the city of Douala from constructivist and diffusionist theories, this study intends to demonstrate that Douala is above all a site and a port situation occupied by the natives, then a construction colonial and finally a land of immigration thanks to its economic functions.*

Key words: *Colonization; Immigration; Culture; Politics; Protectorate; Tribes.*

The first Europeans to settle permanently on the Wouri estuary are the British. They were there from 1840 until 1860. But their main concern was commercial. After many unsuccessful letters to the Queen of England to place the territory under the English protectorate, the Douala leaders turned to other powers present there, in this case Germany, which signed the German-Douala treaty on July 12, 1884 thus placing the Kamerun under German protectorate. At the beginning of the protectorate, the future city included only the Douala and Bassa districts. There were also a few sites for the Protestant church where the temples and the dwellings of church officials could be found. Douala experienced its rapid development from 1884, when Germany obtained sovereignty over their domains from Kings Bell and Akwa. Capital of Cameroon from 1885 to 1909, Douala owes its fortune to its port. Due to its port function during German colonization and even after the change of colonizer, immigration experienced a strong propensity with the arrival of foreigners from South Cameroon, West Cameroon, North Cameroon and even from other Africans countries until the unification of Cameroon in 1972.

1. The anteriority of German colonization

It is marked by the arrival of the first Europeans, in this case the Portuguese, and the first native immigration. According to René Gouellain, it is partly thanks to Mount Cameroon which rises to more than 40,000 meters, to the west of Douala, about 30 kilometers from the city, that the region was often cited in travel reports from the 15th century. In antiquity, only the "chariot of the gods" was known from the area. And it was not until the 18th century that this region of Douala was explored and known (Gouellain: 445).

1.1. The first Europeans

The first accounts mention the inhabitants in this region since the 17th century. According to these writings, the first inhabitants are of Bassa origin. A 19th century text underlines that the Duala and their chiefs are expressly named to materialize the moment when a deep and lasting division occurred around 1810 in the said tribe. It therefore appears that the occupation of this region of the Gulf of Guinea dates from the beginning of the 14th century, a little late compared to others such as West Africa. Since the 15th century, the Portuguese were the first to arrive on the Cameroonian coast in 1472. They went up the estuary of the Wouri River, which is full of shrimp. They named this river: Rio dos camaroes, which means the shrimp river which was at the origin of the name Cameroon (Cf. pedagogie.lycéessavioudouala.org 1 consulted on April 09, 2020) Moreover, it was only after the partition of the continent that this region acquired political, commercial and geographic importance in the eyes of Europeans. This is how we will see in turn land at the Wouri estuary and the hinterland: the British, the Germans and the French who entered into competition (Ibid). The Duala showed interest in the region and occupied it in the 18th century. Thus, it is possible to imagine and even reconstitute the Duala occupation, the European occupation. Because the land of Douala, its site and space are controlled by the Wouri estuary, this stronghold that would become Kamerun, a colony of the German and then French empire. The banks of the mouth of the Wouri represented for each of the opposing powers a geographical, economic and political location which suited their opportunities and their strategies to penetrate the hinterland.

1.2. The first immigration to Douala

The first occupants are the Bassa, a Bantu population whose family and religious social organization has many points in common with the coastal inhabitants today. It is to be noted that it is in the interior that the Bassa mainly settled, unlike the Duala, their neighbors with whom they have family ties, and who prefer to settle on the coasts (Gouellain. 1973). One could notice that this region presents a great ethnic diversity corresponding to the large Bassa groups, which would have been driven out following wars of internal dissension and especially famines. The warriors referred to came from the savannah to the north including the horsemen. It would also appear that before the arrival of the Duala, the Bassa occupied the forests and the coasts. After having driven out the pygmies and the Beti-Fangs in the East, other Bantu, these moved towards the Littoral.

1.3. The ethnic and lineage configuration on both banks of the Wouri. Two tribes dominate on both banks of the Wouri.

According to all Duala and Bassa traditions, the penultimate stage of the migration that led the Duala to the coast is in Pitti. One of the brothers from Ewale (Douala), took charge of the Bon'Bon'Ewale: which designates the ancestor Bojongo, the one who settled on the first plateau best located, at the entrance of the Wouri estuary (Gouellain: 450). The descendants of Bojongo were therefore those who discovered the location of the city of Douala and the Basa of the coast with whom they forged real affinities through economic exchanges and matrimonial alliances. The relations between the descendants of Ewale and the family of Ngase, having deteriorated, Duala, Bojongo, Kolé, all eponymous ancestors of the coastal tribes from the first household (mwebe) of this extended family (eboko) of Mbedi, their father, undertook the last stage of their migration to the mouth of the Wouri. The left bank was occupied by the Bojongo. The Duala then, they settled on the right bank.

Soon after, the Duala tribe fragmented and dispersed into two clans, each with two lineages. Four major lineages (Tumba la mboa) which resulted from it, each occupied a plateau:

- The first plateau of the left bank was occupied by the Bell clan (lineage);
- The second plateau to the Akwa clan;
- The last to the Deido clan;
- And on the right bank settled the Bonabéri.

All of the first duala villages were first called Cameroon-town and then Kamerun, a word derived from the Portuguese camaraos ("prawns") which appeared in abundance in the mouth of the Wouri (Gouellain: 545).

However, the plateaus were not entirely occupied, the bassa of the coast, formed an impassable barrier inside. The Duala over time did not hesitate to push them back according to their territorial needs, towards the edges where with the Bantu migrants, they established in the forest a majority of farmers and fishermen very skilled in the management of business (Gouellain: 452).

2. Precolonial relations

Precolonial relations are primarily mercantile, cultural before being political.

2.1. British occupation

The British presence was felt for a long time on the Wouri estuary from 1840 to 1860, they traded, evangelized the populations and went on to sign numerous treaties with the Duala chiefs. In 1840, they ratified the treaty abolishing slavery. Administratively, six British governors succeed one another on the Cameroonian coast. Their main concern on the Cameroonian coast is commercial. The duala rulers failing to get along and entered into quarrels and tribal rivalries, will therefore show their sympathy in favor of the British tutelage in the hope of finding with their tutelage quick solutions in the disputes between duala traders and Europeans or vice versa, as well as to the inter-tribal rivalries between them. The British had intervened in local politics. It was Consul Beecroft who presided over the election of Akwa's new chief in 1852 and who created the famous Court of Equity which was a commercial court regulating all possible cases of conflict between English ships and the Duala people.

On the religious level, Saker has been in Douala since 1845 with his companions Joseph Merrick and Fuller. They open schools, build temples and found the mission. Bethel next to the current Centennial Temple. The first baptisms were administered in Douala on November 8, 1848 in the waters of the Wouri (Mveng; 1983: 85). Saker, who quickly learned the Duala language, translated the Bible into this language, the New Testament in 1862 and the old one in February 1872. He also built other missions in Deido and Bonabéri. Then the pastor taught the Duala the utility of labor, trained masons, bricklayers, carpenters and pastors (Mveng, 1983: 85). Now the Duala were holders of Jengu, Isango, dedicated to the cult of the genius of the waters. Religious associations of Losongo Bantu origin (Isango in the singular), each attached to the worship of a divinity and specialized in the practice of an activity determined by the possession of their own magical and religious means, although ethically and geographically dispersed. The Duala also believed in the existence of a supreme God: nyambe.

2.2. The French, Dutch and Spanish presence

The Dutch come to Africa to trade and their goal is to dislodge the Portuguese and the Spanish and settle in their place. Between 1650 and 1675, they struggled

against English and French influence. After having dislodged the Portuguese in 1641. On the island of San-Thomé when business declined on the coast, they were the only ones after the English and the French who took most of their possessions. On June 26, 1845, they bombarded the city of Douala to force the Akwa and Bell chiefs to deliver merchandise to them. Their last traces on the Cameroonian coast date back to the beginning of the 19th century (Mveng). In the years 1860-1870, the French and the Germans began to take an interest in Cameroon. But the agreement of December 24, 1885 signed between the two powers, the border of the territory is fixed as far as the Campo River.

The other traders and explorers who arrived at the Wouri estuary after the Portuguese were Dutch and Spanish; they come to buy the slaves and to evangelize the populations. They are the ones who turn Portuguese camerones into camerones. According to Engelbert Mveng, the Portuguese established their colonial empire on the African coast between 1472 and 1578. To develop the trade and the slave trade, the latter settled in San - Thomé and founded powerful points of support called forts. Not far from the Cameroonian coast, then Fernando-Poo in 1472. The beginning of German colonization: the rise of the protectorate it should be mentioned that at the end of the 19th century, Kamerun still referred to Douala. At that time Germany was not totally interested in the colonial enterprise.

Rather, it seeks to extend its hegemony in Europe. They are businessmen and more exactly the Woermann and Yantzen und Thormalen houses of Hamburg, who arrived and settled on the banks of the Wouri since 1868, who seek to obtain the annexation of the territory to establish their authority and better develop their trade. The German Chancellor Bismarck, who was initially reluctant towards colonization, changed his mind shortly before the Berlin conference was held from November 15, 1884 to February 26, 1885, because he wanted to present himself at this conference as a leader of government interested in the colonial question. This is how he sent his former consul to Tunis, Nachtigal aboard a die Moiwe warship, with instructions to sail the coasts of West Africa and to sign with the local chiefs treaties placing them under German protectorate (Owona, 1973: 3). Having failed in their attempts with the English, the Duala rulers turned to Germany. Edouard Schmitt, representative of the Woerman firm, had worked to persuade the Duala kings of the interest in accepting his proposals.

Thus on January 30, 1883, King Akwa and his suite signed an important trade agreement with Edouard Schmidt. Two months later, the businessman also witnessed the signing of the reconciliation agreement between the Akwa and Bell clans on March 29, 1883. The ground having been well prepared with the Duala kings, Edouard Woermann (younger brother of Adolf Woermann) arrived in Douala in July 1884 and it was he who without any difficulty signed the treaties of July 11 and 12, 1884. But the treaty that placed the Kamerun under German protectorate is that of July 12, 1884 under the name of the German-Duala treaty (Gouellain, 1973:60).

2.3. Political domination

Nachtigal arrives the same day (July 12) takes possession of the territory in the name of the Reich and July 14, 1884 and hoists the German flag. He narrowly precedes British consul Hewelt, who has finally obtained permission from his country to negotiate with the Duala chiefs. But the later arrived too late and found that the territory had already been annexed by the Germans.

- The Kamerun schutzgebiet is placed under the authority of the governor representing the Chancellor of the Reich and divided into administrative units called posts and stations for the smaller ones and residences (in the north) for the larger ones.

From 1885 to 1901, Douala was first chosen to host the residence and offices of the governor. Then from 1901 to 1902, Buea was chosen by Governor Von Puttkamer for its cool climate. It could not be without pitfalls because this time, the Germans came up against the resistance of the indigenous Duala who did not see favorably their expulsion on their own lands (cf. <https://www.camerounweb.com> p1 accessed April 19, 2020). In 1868, the Hamburg shipowner Woermann established a shipping line for the interior of the Gulf of Guinea, thus promoting the creation of overseas business outlets by German traders. In 1885 Julius Preiherr Von Soden was appointed as the first governor of the Kamerun colony, the German technical term being *Shutzgebiet Kamerun*.

2.4. Cultural domination

In 1911, while Cameroon's official language was German, the situation of German as a language of instruction in schools was not uniform. The Catholic Mission of the Pallotines offered teaching in German, while the Protestant Mission in Basel preferred to teach in the Duala language in opposition to the instructions of the colonial administration. This prompted the latter's intervention, which had to force the Basel missionaries to no longer content themselves with dispensing all other subjects were henceforth given in German.

Finally, throughout the German colonial period there was a crucial problem: Pidgin English as a language of communication on the Cameroon coast. A phenomenon that exists to this day. In 1891, Governor Von Zimmerer introduced the German language for all subjects in the classroom in order to gain a little more administrative staff among the German speaking Kamerounais. This is because an order was promulgated by Governor Zeit in 1910 with for "no European language instruction except German and no local language admitted to school".

The colonizers arrived in the region of Duala, preceded by their technical superiority which made colonial occupation easy. The use of force was due to their technical superiority. There were therefore no longer sovereign mediators, of equals, but only obligated intermediaries. (Gouellain, 1973: 458). The German-Duala treaty of July 12, 1884, masterfully demonstrates the position of the colonizers in front of their partners. Colonization imposed its sovereignty on men and not explicitly on their lands, a legally undivided space. And we saw the difference between the Duala and European occupations. The first leaned on the ground and the second leaned on the men. The appearance of the agglomeration at the start of the protectorate.

At the beginning of the capture under the protectorate of Kamerun, the future city included only the Duala and Bassa districts. There were also a few locations for the German Protestant Church (EPA) where the temples and the homes of church officials could be found. The Duala villages were free, clean and largely well laid out. The Chiefs' dwellings were built with imported wood, were spacious and included several floors. The King Bell had a Palace (Gouellain: 460). All the banks were heavily occupied and divided into several districts, including segments of major lineages. It was the single-block settlement of the Bell, Akwa and Deido villages on the left bank that gave them all the importance and the character of a city. The majority of the European population resided there justice, army. The police had the bulk of the troops there.

3. Indigenous resistance to German colonization in Douala

Once back in Douala, the German administration wants to establish the administrative services of the government and develop the city. To do this, she must occupy more land in the center of the Joss board. The expropriation of the Duala is therefore the incident that ignites the powder. These relationships become more and more conflictual (Mveng, 1983: 155). Rudolph Duala Manga Bell comes into conflict with the German administration because of the expropriation of their land imposed on them by the colonizer. In fact, around 1910, the colonial administration wanted more space on the Joss plateau to set up and develop the administrative services and especially a European residential area, faced with this state of affairs, the indigenous duala, under the leadership of their leader Rudolph Duala Manga Bell, do not give in and protest several times against this measure in reference to the German-Duala treaty of 1884 which stipulates that: cultivated land and the sites on which its villages must remain the property of current owners and their descendants. (Ibid) it is therefore these expropriations that bring the former partners into conflict. Before the conflict was settled Rudolph Duala Manga Bell was deposed on August 4, 1913 by the German authorities. Very suspected of wanting to come into contact with other powers and incite the heads of the populations of the interior to revolt, he was accused of high treason, then arrested to be finally hanged on August 8, 1914 with his uncle Ngoso Din.

3.1. After the change of the colonizer

The occupation work was continued despite the change of the colonizer. From the first year of the war, Cameroon was taken over by Franco-British forces. From 1914 to 1916, a Franco-British condominium succeeded the German colonial government. After the partition of Cameroon by the new occupants, the eastern part, which includes Douala returned to France. But the German plans remained relevant. The mandate (1914-1946) Cameroon is put under the colonial regime of the native state which consists in leaving to the natives the care of settling the problems which concern only them through their traditional authorities. The capital of French Cameroon is transferred to Douala. During the Second World War, during the night of August 25, 1940, Captain Leclerc and his 22 men landed in the Douala marshes, which the detachment of Captain Louis Dio (French regular army from Cameroon) to the cause of Free French. The city and the colonial administration quickly fell into the hands of the Leclerc detachment and on October 8 General de Gaulle arrived in Douala to prepare for the capture of Gabon. The system established by Free France is akin to a military dictatorship.

3.2. Immigration to Douala after the First World War

In 1916, the city of Douala had a little over 15,000 inhabitants, including 13,100 Duala, and about 9,000 foreign Africans. The Duala were previously more numerous in town, there were 22,000 in 1907 and therefore decreased in numbers. In 1928, there were 13,000 for 12,000 Africans foreign to the city. This decrease was not due to a drop in the birth rate or a higher mortality but to departures due to the effects of the economic crisis which were already being felt in Cameroon and which prompted many to return home. (Gouellain., 1973: 446).

In 1936-1937, the Duala found themselves at 21,000 souls. The non-native population in 1933 lost 1/3 of its workforce. The texts of 1932 having instituted the recognition and the individual registration of a land property, had therefore removed from their lineage joint ownership, the dualas which in this context of economic crisis did not (Gouellain, 1969: 466) hardly oppose this individual recognition of land

ownership to foreigners. Thus, multiple sales and leases of land will continue until 1937, when the Akwa district was segregated without major incident. But they were recognized as owners of Bali and land south of New-Bell in 1948. After the Second World War, the district in question had about ten thousand inhabitants before the First World War rose to 61,000 inhabitants in 1956. Here developed the famous district of New-bell occupied both by the Duala and then by the strangers in an anarchy which was evident both from the point of view of urban layout and it was from 1950 that more abundant investments materialized in Douala and made it a port city of African importance. (Mainet, 1981: 2). The port's annual traffic crossed the 500,000 tonne mark and the city brought together 100,000 city dwellers. Between 1960 and 1976, the figures of the general population census of April 1976 reveal that the numbers have further tripled. The city now has 600,000 inhabitants. The average annual rate of increase is around 10%. In 1981, the city of Douala thus recorded 700,000 inhabitants. Almost a million inhabitants. According to Lacan Maurice 1976, in 1920, one in one hundred and twenty-five Cameroonians lived in Douala. In 1980, the situation is totally different, the number of Cameroonians living in Douala has multiplied by 10. The urban population in Cameroon is close to one third of the total population. One in three city dwellers lives in Douala. Comparison of the 1968 and 1976 censuses makes it possible to assess the external relations of the population. According to the minimum or maximum estimate adopted in 1976, the migratory influx is between 140,000 and 350,000 people.

Douala would therefore have attracted a quarter and a half of the rural exodus or internal migrations in Cameroon. (INSEE, 1976, 1967). For Dongmo (1980), the human basin of the Douala agglomeration shows on analysis that all departments of Cameroon have drained nationals to this city. Between 1968 and 1976, the weakest represented departments were in Anglophone Cameroon: Bui; 116 nationals, Dongamantung; 181, Ndiang; 196 nationals and in the most remote areas of the eastern and northern provinces. The most represented regions are found in the circle near the city of Douala, within a radius of 150 to 250 km. They come from the Bassa and Bamiléké countries, regions better served by roads and rail. We also note the influx of members who are nationals of South-Central Cameroon except the Mfoundi (seat of the political capital) and two areas of strong attraction (the Nyong and Kellé and the maritime Sanaga) in Bassa country. The political capital and the economic capital simultaneously receive people from all the departments: Douala wins in four provinces out of seven (Littoral, West and Anglophone Cameroon) and also encroaches on the Center-South and with the Nyong and Kellé and the 'Ocean (Dongmo, 1978:15). According to the same author, Douala in relative value wins in 16 departments, Yaoundé in 18 departments; and tie for six departments. In absolute terms, Douala has more nationals and twenty departments, Yaoundé in 18 departments and equality between the Ocean and Nyong and Kellé in 1976. Douala also benefits from the attachment of English-speaking Cameroon and the area of pidjin language is growing. But the weakly represented departments are located in Bui, Menchum, Momo, Boumba and Ngoko, Mayo-Danay and Logone and Chari in the Far North. There was also a school immigration from the urban workforce beyond 15 years, due to the establishment of high schools, technical colleges and other secondary education establishments in the city.

According to the general population census in 1976, the foreign population is made up of approximately 13,063 people, or 3.3% of the total population of Douala. Africans represent the majority group: 8103 or 62% of total foreigners, followed by Europeans or 35.2% and the rest of the world (2.8%) (INSEE 1964-1965). The origin of

foreigners is diverse: West Africa (48.2%). They come from Nigeria according to the numerical importance of Niger, Benin, Togo, Senegal, Mali etc in Central Africa, foreigners come from Congo, Gabon, RCA, Chad and ex-Zaire; Europe has 35% of the foreign population, the rest of the world 5.6%. Among Europeans, the dominant group is made up of the French, 1.1% of the Douala population in 1976. The number of French people has continued to increase in Douala in connection with a rather favorable economic situation. The overall non-African foreign population is over 10,000 people (Greeks, Lebanese, Indo-Pakistanis, North Americans, other Europeans, etc. (RGPH 1976). The "white" city replaces part of the Duala villages The Duala, who could not benefit from this situation, did not hesitate to claim their customary rights and to register their land, so that the Europeans could buy them at leisure (Mainet, 1976: 29). The French: the assimilation system schooling was in French exclusively. Thus it was forbidden to use local languages. At the same time, we wanted to erase all traces of the German language.

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