

SPEAKING OUT TO THE HEGEMONIC POWER STRUCTURE: RE-READING RELATIONS IN THE SONGS OF *SIMON LONGKANA AGNO* (*LONGUE LONGUE*)

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the history of music among the Sawa-Yabassi people and charts the relationship between the colonized and the colonizers. The paper further investigates the residual effects of colonialism on Cameroon and Africa as a whole. Other postcolonial concepts discernable in the songs of Simon Longkana Agno (Longué Longué) include: empire writes back and the use of local languages vis-à-vis western languages as a means of defining the self by abrogating and appropriating the colonial language. In view of the above, the paper contends that the modern African bard unlike his traditional counterpart is more and more able to transcend ethnic boundaries in handling crisis. Thus, his role as social regulator is increasingly felt across ethnic to national and international boundaries, as he handles timeless issues that cut across traditions and borders. In the course of the analysis, it was evident that as time changes, the African bard is not left behind. We found out that instead of concentrating more on ethnic issues, the bard transcends ethnic to national and international themes. He draws his audience's attention to the fact that a write back to the empire is not enough to resolve Africa's problem. Thus, the germ at home is as virulent (and sometimes more) as the enemy out there. Consequently, Longué Longué believes that a counter revolution at both ends is necessary. In order to escape from the colonialist conceptual paradigm, he manipulates language in a way that truly portrays the postcolonial space in Africa.

Keywords: Hegemonic Power Structure, Longkana Agno, Cameroonian Music

INTRODUCTION

The distinctive quality of African music lies not only in its rhythmic structure but also in its thematic thrust. Victor Kofi after a critical view on existing literature on African Music in *Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions* notes that the general trend, especially among racist critics (including Butlan) has always been to give credence to rhythm over content as far as African music is concerned. The eleven-century Christian physician and theologian, Ibn Butlan, adds that "If a black man were to fall from the sky to the earth, he would fall in a rhythm" (Agawu, 55). In a similar vein, Hunwick intimates: the stereotype of the African as an incorrigible dancer and instinctive rhythmist is summed up in an Arabic saying: "If a black man were to fall from heaven he would surely fall down to a beat" (Agawu, 56). Further reading and other implications of Butlan's idea proves the complex, "superior" yet incomprehensible nature of such rhythm in Africa. The appraisal of Cameroonian music in particular and African music in general to date, especially among

Eurocentric critics is not very much different, since this music, according to many is not universal, as it addresses issues peculiar to defined ethnic groups.

Though many a critic has laid emphasis on the uniqueness of African music in addressing daily issues, some still claim that the African bard's role has always been limited to national or ethnic issues, thereby making his art peripheral. Simon Longkana, an offshoot of the traditional Yabassi culture, who later migrated in to the urban centre (Douala – Cameroon) to embrace broad-based or sophisticated culture has ripped open this enclosed reading of African music, by not only breaking away from his traditional Yabassi Assiko verse but by re-reading and *re-singing* national and transnational relations through the Makossa lens as a means of transforming his art and existing hegemonies which serve as deterrent to progress. Graham Furniss and Liz Gunner in a similar vein in *Power, Marginality and African Oral Literature* opine that

... People producing oral literature are not just commentators (limited to their immediate environment) but are also involved in relations of power themselves, in terms of supporting or subverting those in power. The forms with which they work are themselves invested with power; that is to say, the words, the texts, have the ability to provoke, to move, to direct, to prevent to overturn and to recast social reality. (3, emphasis mine)

From all indications, memory, time and history have played a great role in transforming African music in particular and African art as a whole. The colonial encounter orchestrated rapid and far-reaching change, a change that has however led to spectacular reconfiguring of earlier stability. The new order ushered in many shift: from traditional set-ups to urban dwellings; from a one string into multiple strings guitar; from traditional to popular music; from the traditional shrine into the Christian shrine; from morality into immorality, to mention a few. Despite this metamorphosis, most of the aspects of the people's tradition have remained intact, while others have intensified their authenticity. Among those that have authenticated their existence is the power of the bard to regulate society in its entirety. The bard as such makes a critique of the self and that of the society.

From this premise, this paper examines the history of music among the Sawa-Yabassi people and charts the relationship between the colonized and the colonizers. The paper further investigates the residual effects of colonialism on Cameroon and Africa as a whole. After all, "the ultimate goal of Postcolonialism is combating the residual effects of colonialism on cultures" ([Www.Postcolonialweb.Com/Postcolonialism](http://www.Postcolonialweb.Com/Postcolonialism)). Commenting on a similar view in his examination of John Nkemngong Nkengasong's novel *Across the Mongolo*, Oscar C Labang in *Riot in Mind: A Critical Study of J.N. Nkengasong* see these residual effects of colonialism as "the negative hangovers of colonialism on the African countries" (43). However, he notes that Nkengasong's novels, as is the case with Longué Longué songs, transcends the literature on negative hangovers as it prophesies the future for the colonised and *provincialises* former spheres of influence. Other postcolonial concepts discernable in Longué Longué songs include: empire writes back and the use of local languages vis-à-vis western languages as a means of re-defining the self by abrogating and appropriating the colonial language. In view of the above, the paper contends that the modern African bard unlike his traditional counterpart is more and more able to transcend ethnic boundaries in handling crisis. Thus, his role as social regulator is increasingly felt across ethnic to national and international boundaries, as he handles timeless issues that cut across traditions and borders.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Cameroon is home to numerous distinct ethnic groups with each trying to create an identity for itself. As earlier indicated, the advent of colonization ushered into the scene, particularly in the most-developed cities of Yaounde and Douala, a new brand of popular music, which to an extent, silenced the French-styled *chanson* and other imported forms from the Caribbean, Britain and America. The accordions and the *Ambasse bay* cropped up around the late 1930s with eminent figures like Lobe Lobe, Ebanda Manfred and Nelly Eyoum, seeking for an identity formation and historical awareness. The intention was also to satisfy the upcoming generation, whose corrupted mentality could no more fully accommodate the virgin traditional rhythm, and of course, was more ready to dance under the moonlight in urban cities replete with artificial *lamps on trees*. Other zealous performers like Jean Bikoko and Dikoume Bernard introduced a local variant on palm wine music called Assiko. The first major hit that set the stage for the Makossa brand of music was Ekambi Brilliant's "*N'Gon Abo*", around the early sixties, which was highly venerated for its content and rhythm by the city dwellers. The Makossa genre became more popular that many Cameroonians espoused it as a better medium to thrash out not only ethnic but national and international issues affecting humanity. Issues like singing back to the colonizer and the neo-colonialist came to stage. Emmanuel Yenshu Vubo in "The Development of Identity and Ethnicity in Cameroon" avers that recent upsurge in identity politics among the Sawa was organized on essentially different lines against marginalization within their homeland (591). Citing Austen and Derrick, Vubo notes:

...ethnicity and historical consciousness developed during the 1930s at the time when they had lost their predominant positions as middle men and had become an ethnic minority in their city. It was at this moment that historical consciousness developed from a collection of past events into a corpus of knowledge forming part of what Touraine calls a cultural model. (591)

Later in the 1960s, Makossa developed and became the most popular genre in Cameroon, especially in urban cities. Outside of Africa, Dibango's Jazz and Makossa were only temporarily popular, but the genre has produced several pan-African superstars through the 70s, 80s and 90s. Following Dibango, a wave of musicians electrified Makossa in an attempt at making it more accessible outside of Cameroon. Jean-Victor Nkolo and Ewen Graeme in "Music of a Small Continent" points out that the most recent form of Cameroonian popular music is a fusion Congolese Sokous and Makossa, a scene which has produced Petit Pays, Marcel Bwanga, Kotto Bass, Papillon and Jean Pierre Essome, to name a few. Other popular genres include *Tchamassi* and *Mangambeu*. It is in this stream of electrical consciousness that Simon Longkana opts for Makossa as a medium of re-reading the world flaunt before him, instead of abiding by his traditional *Assiko* rhythm, with its limited audience. Thus, as Nkolo and Graeme rightly put:

The urbanization of Cameroon had a major influence on the country's music. Migration to the cities was a major cause for the popularization of some traditional forms of music. During the 50s, bars sprang up across the cities to accommodate the influx of new inhabitants and soon became a symbol of Cameroon identity in the face of colonialism. (440)

Thus, emergence of the colonial enterprise - the city - gave birth to hybrids, cultural orphans or paved the way for a swift modernization of traditional form of music and local orchestras.

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Simon Longkana Agno (Longué Longué) is one of the seminal Cameroonian musicians since his major hit “Ayo Africa” in 2001 which stirred the entire continent. He hails from Yabassi – Nkam Division- in the Littoral region, Cameroon. After a perilous youth where he lost his mother, he was obliged to live with his uncle in Camp Yabassi (in the heart of the Douala City), where he eventually ended up in the streets of Bessenge neighbourhood in Douala. Simon Longkana Agno, was determined to reach a goal for himself rather than roaming the streets of Douala. He built a guitar and drum kit from recycled material and started singing in bars in popular areas of Douala and Yaounde. During this period he played with Sergeo Polo and Belka Tobis. His artistic ingenuity attracted the attention of many and Prince Eyango, one of the foremost musicians in Cameroon produced his first Album “Ayo Africa”, which remains to date a canonical piece. This lyric addresses hot issues like exploitation and economic domination by the West. The lyric earned him the title, “The Liberator”. His later productions addressed political, social and economic issues affecting individuals, Cameroon and the world at large.

Agno was given an excellence award for the Guinness Cameroon musician of the year in 1993, 1995, and 1998. His music was equally judged best in the Nkotti's club series in 1997. Moreover, he won the Cameroon Brewery industry, Mutzig prize, in 2000. These exhilarating and loquacious productions carried him round the world, where he reaped much benefit, though his enemies, in and out of Cameroon, were not asleep.

The Cameroonian singer, Simon Longkana Agno on Friday 21 September, 2010, was condemned to 10 years imprisonment for raping an underage girl in 2004 at the criminal court of Gironde (France). This lawsuit was filed in by Chantal Ebene Mbassi in 2005. He served a prison term in France, and is presently in Cameroon performing in different occasions as a means of reaching out to his audience.

Re-reading External Colonial Relationship

Studies on colonialism and its aftermath continue to witness a resurgence of scholarly interest as they spread across many disciplines. Gyan Prakash in the introduction of *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements* notes that these scholarships in different domains have introduced one clearly into the logic of colonial relation and power. Taking a trip down memory lane, Prakash notes:

The history of scholarship on colonialism abounds with examples of the questioning of the idea of history as History, the interrogation of the concept of race and tribe. Scholars have frequently noted and highlighted the contradictions and the impasses in the exercise of colonial power.... (5)

Just like the scholars referred to by Prakash, Simon Longkana Agno (Longué Longué) in his songs does not only interrogate the concept of race and the exercise of colonial power, but proceeds to address one of the most fundamental postcolonial issues of peace, harmony and progress in pre-colonial Africa that was erased by western capitalists and imperialists. This African bard longs for the olden day wherein differences between individuals and communities were settled with ankles. For him, the genesis of the disaster kick-started when western imperialist started eliminating or tormenting the pillars of the society. These cherished values and people were replaced by “cursed politics” and beagles to borrow from Longué Longué's “Ayo Africa” and Gerald Durrel's *The Bafut Beagles* respectively. In “Ayo Africa”, he invokes nationalists and Pan-Africanists like Nelson Mandela, Felix Ronald Moumie, Kunta Kinte, Douala Manga Bell, Charles Atangana, Shaka Zulu, Thomas Sankara,

Samora Machel and Ruben Um Nyobe, who, according to him, are the corner stones of Africa's progress, but who (except for a few) had the misfortune of seeing their dream washed down by imperial forces and their watch dogs. Though physically dead, Longué Longué believes that like any other African ancestor, the aforementioned martyrs still have a great role to play as far as the living is concerned. Like J. S. Mbiti in *African Religion and Philosophy* Longué Longué views these ancestors as the living dead. In "Ayo Africa" Longué Longué in the same spirit like Mbiti invokes them as follows:

Ah kunta kinté oh missiya ma bana mbongo
Ah Nelson Mandela oh senga nimbé ma bana mbongo
Félix Moumié oh senga missiya ma bana mbongo
Douala Manga Bell oh oh weh eh!
Bana Charles Atangana, senga missaya ma bana mbongo

Kunta Kinté, listen to the cries of your children
Nelson Mandela, listen to the cries of your children
Félix Moumié, listen to the screamings of your children
Douala Manga Bell oh oh weh eh
I say, Charles Atangana, listen to the shouts of your children
I am your saviour, I will die for your sake.

This carrion call, especially as he emphasizes on the cries of the living, suggests the negative impact of imperialism on Africans. The fallen heroes invoked remind one of their relentless efforts in combating the imperial order. However, the artist passionately asks for pardon, on behalf of the present generation for not being as determined as their ancestors in combating the ills of colonialism. For him, only a strong intervention from the ancestral world can push the frontier in favour of the colonized. He makes the audience to understand that the people are "crying" and "screaming" because the West has taken away all their riches in exchange for cruel politics. As if that is not enough, Africa works and Europe reaps. He underlines that Cameroon continues to work for France, Zaire for Belgium, Equatorial Guinea for Spain, Nigeria for England and Longué Longué for all whites:

Africa di work, Europa di tchop oo
Africa di work, Europa di tchop oo
Cameroun di work French di tchop oo
Asse Zaïre e di work Belgique di tchop oo
Guinée Equato di work Espagne di tchop oo
Nigeria di work Angleterre di tchop oo
Longué Longué di work oh bakala di tchop oo

Africa works and Europe reaps
Africa works and Europe reaps
Cameroon works and France reaps

I say, Zaïre works and Belgium reaps

Equatorial Guinea works and Spain

Nigeria works and Britain Reaps

Longué Longué is working oh! And Whites are reaping

This plight helps show the elasticity of the imperial order and the win-loss relation between the colonized and the colonizer. The fact that western powers continue to interfere in African domestic affairs show their ulterior motive of keeping the entire continent in perpetual bondage. This interference, as Longué Longué claims, stems from their persistent bonding with the Neo-colonialists. They flatter them with promises of maintaining them in power or suggesting flashy yet sterile economic policies (which have failed in the West) which keep them hoping of an economic boom. Such policies, as Longué Longué points out, have led to the myriad of loans obtained from the Breton Wood institutions and the unwise privatization of some state Corporations like CAMAIR (Air way Corporation), SNEC (Water Corporation), SONEL (electricity corporation), etc. He adds that “today they (Europeans) are in complicity with African leaders” to rob the continent. This kind of behaviour makes one confirm the fact that Africans are not yet independent. He notes that the intention of the West has been to put Africa in conflict: brother conflicting against brother as a means of facilitating exploitation and dominion. It is on a similar platform that Aimé Césaire in *Discourse on Colonialism* comments that American domination is too dangerous: “American domination – the only domination from which one never recovers. I mean from which one never recovers unscarred” (23). This domination as Longué Longué points out in “Privatisation” has pushed the West to claim ownership even over everything in Africa, including prostitutes.

Longué Longué also exposes western religion, particularly Christianity, as a deadly weapon of division and exploitation. This is in contrast with his indigenous religion, which to him is a uniting force. In “Privatisation” he quips that there was peace in Africa at the time of his forefathers until the colonizers came, and war and division began:

Les Blancs, pour s'installer en Afrique

Ils ont présenté la bible, ils ont créé des religions

Ils ont divisé nos parents, ils ont créé des religions

Ils ont divisé nos aïeux

Et quand nos aïeux se sont divisés oh marna

La guerre a commencé

Et quand les congolais se sont divisés oh ma oh

La guerre a commencé

Ils ont monté les Hutu contre les Tutsi

Je dis bien les Blancs pour s'installer en Africa

Ils ont présenté la Bible.

Ils ont créé des religions

Ils ont divisé nos parents

Et quand nos parents se sont divisés oh mama

La guerre a commencé Et quand les Tchadiens se sont divisés

La guerre a commencé

La guerre au Nord la guerre au Sud

For the whites to settle in Africa

They presented the Bible and created many religions

They separated our parents, they created religions

They separated our ancestors

And when our ancestors were separated oh!

War started

And when the Congolese were separated oh ma oh!

War started

They turned the Hutu against the Tutsi

I say, for the whites to settle in Africa

They presented the Bible

They created many religions

They separated our parents, they created religions

They separated our parents

And when our parents were separated oh mama!

War started and when the Chadians were separated

War started

War in the North, War in the South

The colonizers, according to him, came in the name of missionaries, whereas they were mercenaries, spying Africa's riches. Before installing themselves in Africa, like elsewhere in the world, they, as the artist notes (in "Privatisation"), brought the bible, which became a divisive tool among our ancestors. Families were torn apart, and so many marriages broken in the name of a monogamous God. Arbitrary "national lines" were created, and division, exploitation and war set in as earlier indicated. War broke out in Congo; Hutus fought against Tutsis in Rwanda and Burundi. All over the continent, from Libya in the north, across the Central Africa Republic, Cameroon and Congo in the centre, Nigeria and Ivory Coast in the west, Somalia, Burundi and Kenya in the east, people are fighting inter-ethnic or religious wars. These wars are persisting to date in Ivory Coast, Libya and Nigeria, all in the name of God. According to Longué Longué, this confusion helps only to fragment the relation between the West and Africa, and emphasizes the fact that the so-called civilizing mission in Africa was/is all hypocrisy. Until Africans understand who this hypocrite is, they will remain where they are till the end of the world. This can only be reversed if Africans, on their part, adjust or change their huge appetite for western things in favour of African ones. Ngugi wa Thiongo'o and Ngugi wa Mirii, on a similar note, in *I will Marry When I Want* expose this religious hypocrisy of the West through western acolytes like the Kĩois' as they blind the Kĩgũũndas and their likes with religious passages as means of exploiting and dominating them. From all indications, religious hypocrites, more often than not, advance lateen lies as a

means of manoeuvring the African and other colonized nations in the world. Aimé Césaire citing a case in point notes:

And who is roused to indignation when a certain Rev. Barde assures us that if the goods of this world remained divided up indefinitely as they would be without colonization, they would answer neither the purpose of God nor the just demands of the human collectively. Since, as his fellow Christian, the Rev. Muller declares: ‘humanity must not, cannot allow the incompetence, negligence and laziness of the uncivilized peoples to leave idle indefinitely the wealth which God has confided to them, charging them to make it serve the good of all’. (4)

Césaire asserts that no one colonizes innocently, that no one colonizes with impunity either. And so, any civilization, and its constituent parts like religion, which justifies colonization is “a sick civilization, a civilization that is morally diseased” (4). Longué Longué is certainly re-echoing Césaire’s stance in his songs when he insists that the white man’s bible rather divides than unites Africans. This spiritual machination only helps the West to accomplish its mission of domination and exploitation, which were the original motifs of colonization. The introduction of such politics in Africa gave birth to a political scenario, which Longué Longué, the bard, believes has placed Africa at the margin of the world.

Over ages, the West has been trying in vain to justify imperialism and defend itself as the “subject”, “centre” and “master” of the world thereby bundling up victims of the colonial scourge under appellations like “primitive” “other”, “margin” and “servant”. The role of the postcolonial writer including oral poets like Longué Longué, is to write back to the West in order to reveal the civilizing strength of Africans, Afro Caribbeans and Indians as opposed to the inhuman and barbarity of western powers. In “Ayo Africa” Longué Longué opines that “Africa sows while Europe reaps”; since Cameroon works for France, Equatorial Guinea for Spain, Zaire for Belgium, Nigeria for England, etc. While the whites maintain peace and joy in their countries they fan wars and all forms of violence in Africa. They implant dictators in Africa, and when they feel like ousting them from office, especially when they no longer serve their interests, what Africa benefits are corpses. In “privatization”, he laments the economic crises and diseases that the West continues to inject into Africa in its cynical partnership with her leaders and the so-called aid that has ruined Africa. The whites have always taken away African raw materials, and have turned Africa into an experimental ground. He cries in “Ayo Africa” out to the world that

Ils nous ont envoyé la crise économique, on a su gérer
Ils nous ont versé les maladies on s'est préservé oh
Aujourd'hui ils font des complicités avec nos dirigeants africains
Afin de privatiser nos sociétés
Nous envoyer à la mort
Si vous privatisez toutes nos sociétés
Qu'allons-nous l'aire eh ?
Qu'allons-nous faire ?

They sent us economic crises and we survived it
They transmitted us diseases and we persevered ourselves
Today they are accomplices with our African leaders...
In order to privatize our state corporations
And send us to death
If you privatize all our state corporations
Where will we head to?
What are we going to do?

In this way, this artist successfully writes back to (sings back) the West by exposing all the ills they have meted out to the colonized. The series of rhetorical questions posed by the bard are all indications of the dilemma in which the colonized finds himself/or herself.

Re-reading Internal Colonization

Like most African bards, Longué Longué acknowledges that Africans themselves are architects of their own demise. The misuse of power among post-independence African leaders in all domains is seemingly endemic. In “Ayo Africa” the artist notes that

Aujourd'hui la politique a gâté l'Afrique oh!
Aujourd'hui la politique a semé la guerre
Regardez le pasteur il parle politique
Les Lions indomptables il y a la politique
L'Azingo du Gabon il y a la politique oh!
Tu ne connais pas français tu parles politique
Toi tu manges les kolas et toi tu parles politique kaïwalaye.

Today, politics has spoiled Africa oh
Today politics has implanted war
Look at the pastor, he is talking politics
In the indomitable lions, there is politics
In the Azingo of Gabon there is politics
You don't speak French and you talk politics
You eat kola nuts and you talk politics, it terrible

He goes further in “Examen de conscience” to expound on how politics has ruined Africa by revealing the corrupt practices and injustices. The guilty are freed while the innocent are jailed; embezzlers are applauded while petty thieves are imprisoned. The corrupted and corrupters go about in the name of combating corruption. Embezzlers pretend to be fighting against embezzlement while they themselves are busy wrecking the wealth of the nation. All these are done in the name of democracy – a concept they acquiesced into their nations without thinking of the specificities of their indigenous institutions or its compatibility (suitability) with their indigenous institutions. It is on this note that Longué Longué questions: who is to blame: The West or Africans? In a bid to answer this timeless question,

Longué Longué in a different melody, titled “50 ans au pouvoir”, brings into limelight the “sit tight syndrome” of contemporary African statesmen backed by frequent undemocratic constitutional amendments as part of the reason why Africans should be blame. After all, Aristotle in *The Poetics* says a tragedy is never imposed. Longué Longué puts:

50 ans au pouvoir
C'est la maladie de l'Afrique
Détourner les fonds publics
C'est ça la maladie de l'Afrique
Ils nous gèrent comme du bétail
C'est ça la maladie de l'Afrique
Ils nous dirigent comme des aveugles

Ils ne respectent pas le peuple oh oh ye ye
On ne veut plus ça oh oh ye ye ye
Laissez vos châteaux et mercos
Descendez dans le ghetto
Vous verrez que le pays va mal
Essayez vous verrez
Vous verrez la souffrance

50 years in power
Is the disease of Africa
Embezzling public funds
This is the disease of Africa
They rule us like beast
This is the disease of Africa
They lead us like blind people
They don't respect the people...
We don't want that anymore
Leave your castles and Mercedes's
And come down to the ghettos
You will see that the country is not moving well
Try and you will see
You will see suffering for yourself

Amid this call, these leaders see nothing but “stability” as they fashion things to satisfy their individual egos. For them, there is stability since they are able to remain in power for so many years without somebody ousting them. The poet in the same tone in “50 ans au pouvoir” exposes democratic malpractices like electoral fraud and frequent undemocratic constitutional amendments. These unpatriotic African leaders do these in complicity with their western cohorts. The resultant effect is that the masses pay the price as they wallow in misery. It is on this note that Michael Hechter in *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development 1536-1966* contends that such inhuman acts by those within continues to add pain to the sores of the periphery. Thus, for him, the objective of the internal colonialist is to “....dominate the periphery politically and to exploit it materially” (9.) Such irresponsible leadership by African leaders is also explored in John Nkengasong’s *Black Caps and Red Feathers*, wherein, the masses or the oppressed are sometimes obliged to serve as bridges to these malevolent dictators as strategies for survival. In the blurb of the aforementioned play by Nkengasong “The Post Newspaper” notes: “the call has been for the genuine African writer to lash out at the abuses perpetrated by modern African leaders who in cynical partnership and fattening compromise with the former colonial masters continue to oppress and murder nationalists and freedom fighters, leaving Africa bare of its glory and glamour”. Longué Longué in a similar note prophesizes that a time is coming when the accused shall become the accuser, when all embezzlers shall be tracked down, when corrupt judges shall be condemned and when Cameroonians shall prove not to be docile. In this light, Chinua Achebe in “Colonialist Criticism” calls on African to be vigilant in the following proverb: “a man who does not lick his lips can he blame the harmattan for drying them?” (61).

This emphasis on the ills of internal colonization in these songs, particularly as related to Cameroon Anglophones is worthy of note. In “privatization” Longué Longué evokes the marginalization of Anglophone Cameroonians by their Francophone counterparts, who see themselves as overlords. Citing John Ngu Foncha - one of the architect behind the union between Southern Cameroon (Anglophone Cameroon) and la Republique du Cameroon (Francophone Cameroon) - and Bamenda (one of the main cities of Southern Cameroon), he says in Pidgin that

Wouna don get wouna moins cher, moins cher,

Moins cher oh

Dem don tonam tonara souté souté

Dem puti John Ngu Fontcha for don oh eh marna mi oh

A say déni tonam tonam souté souté

Dem pushi Bamenda for back oh oh

John Ngu Fontcha oh eh

Dem lef yi tonam tonam souté souté

Dem trowé Longué Longué for don

Pikin for Bakana oh

Wouna no touch yi oh

You have had your servant cheap

Cheap

They have manipulated and manipulated them very much
They have put John Ngu Fontcha on the ground
I say they have manipulated and manipulated them very much
They have pushed Bamenda backward Oh! Oh!
John Ngu Fontcha oh! Eh!
They have manipulated him very much
They have thrown Longué Longué on the ground
Child of Bakana
You should not touch him

The image of throwing Foncha on the ground, and pushing Bamenda to the wall, which according to him is the microcosm of Southern Cameroon, are all indications of the degree of manipulation, colonization and marginalization of the Southern Cameroon, which Longué Longué, though a subject of La Republique du Cameroun, cannot fail to point out, owing to his position as a pan-African bard. Historically, La Republique du Cameroun reunified with British Southern Cameroon in 1961 as two separate states to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon, which today, after metamorphosing through colonial conspiracy has returned to La Republic du Cameroon. This new form of the state, and varied degree of marginalization have given birth to what critics style today as the Anglophone problem. This problem remains a subject of controversy in contemporary Cameroon, owing to the subject/object relationship in the union. This “Anglophone problem” has been a cause for concern to many Cameroon Anglophone writers like Bate Bisong, Bole Butake, Victor Epie Ngome and John Nkemngong Nkengasong, to mention a few. Butake’s *Family Saga*, Ngome’s *what God has Put Asunder* and Nkengasong’s *Black Caps and Red Feathers* as well as *Across the Mongolo* are cases in point. Nkengasong himself had confirmed the prevalence of the “Anglophone problem” in his works and in the afore-cited interview with CRTV as follows: “...I’ve often found that people from the Anglophone side of Cameroon have been placed in a situation where they are considered most often as second class citizens... [thus becoming victims of] humiliation, of marginalization, of subjugation” (www.jnnkengasong.tripod.com/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/interview2.pdf).

After viewing these different facets of domination (both internal and external) Longué Longué declares that he will stand as the people’s saviour. In effect, he is going to serve as a counter force to internal and external colonialism. Such counter power predicted, according to Tim Gee in *Counter Power: Making Change Happen* is “the ability of ‘B’ to remove the power of ‘A’”(17).

Abrogation and Appropriation: Escaping Colonialist Conceptual Paradigm and Creation of a New Space

The use of Cameroonian local languages alongside with western languages is evident in Longué Longué’s songs. He shuttles between French, Pidgin and the Basa’a language in most of his songs. This code switching and abrogation are pathways through which Longué Longué escapes from the colonialist conceptual paradigm as a mean of defining himself within the context in which he finds himself. Bill Ashcroft et al. in *Post-Colonial Theory: The Key Concepts* profess that

... abrogation offers a counter to the theory that use of the colonialist's language inescapably imprisons the colonized within the colonizer's conceptual paradigm - the view that 'you can't dismantle the master's house with the master's tool'. Abrogation implies rather that the master's house is always adaptable and that the same tools offer a means of conceptual transformation and liberation. (4)

In "Ayo Africa," for example, he constantly switches code as means of defining the new space in which Africa finds itself after the colonial encounter. Some of his songs are sung in the Basa'a language, while their choruses are sung in French. In "Privatization" French, Basa'a and Pidgin English are mixed, not only as a sign of variety but as a form of resistance as seen in the following lines: Fembe nyo ye fembi soh eh mama oh eh (Basa'a)/A say dem tonam tonam soute soute/Dem pushi Bamenda for back oh! oh! (Pidgin-English). In the same song he fuses French into Pidgin English when he sings: "Wouna don get wouna/ moins cher, moins cher". (NB: The slash in this last line separates pidgin from French) – You people have had/ it cheap). Similarly, "Examen de conscience" is sung mostly in French except for one line in Pidgin English: "Bamenda I go talk oh" and "50 ans au pouvoir" is all in French. In some lines of "Ayo Africa" there is the use of a language form which can be considered as linguistic interference: "les wolowoss en afrique toujours les blancs". The word "wolowoss" is a Pidgin English recent coinage for "prostitutes" and the way he uses it suggests that he wants to be more euphemistic towards his white audience.

On the whole, Longué Longué's use of local tongues alongside foreign ones in his songs has as function to valorise the African cultures and show the power of such languages in enriching African music, hence authenticating his identity. One could even be tempted say that he is in the process of creating a "national language" for Cameroon in the words of Edward Kaman Brathwaite. Brathwaite in "Nation Language" defines nation language as "the language which is influenced very strongly by the African model, the African aspect of a new world Caribbean heritage" (311). In Longué Longué's case, he seems to be using a language which is influenced very strongly by the Cameroonian model, a model embedded in Cameroon's strong or rich linguistic diversity. This process of constant code switching, abrogation and appropriation are part of the anti-imperial struggle for Cameroon in particular and Africa as a whole by this modern African bard. Thus, pointing out the importance of language, Bill Ashcroft et al in the *Postcolonial Studies Reader* intimates that "language is a fundamental site of the struggle for post colonial discourse because the colonial process itself begins in Language. The control over language by the imperial centre... remains the most potent instrument of cultural control" (283.) Therefore, dismantling the hegemony in place cannot go without revisting or provincialising the language that was at the base of its construction. To this effect, Longué Longué sees the necessity of juxtaposing, abrogating and appropriating these colonial languages as a means of redefining the colonialist in the midst of colonial and postcolonial confusion.

CONCLUSION

This paper set out to investigate the history of music among the Sawa-Yabassi people and the relationship between the colonized and the colonizers both internally and externally. It further probed into the residual effects of colonialism and the role of the modern African bard in effecting change. The paper also looked at the issue of language abrogation and appropriation as means of inventing the self in the colonial web. In the course of the analysis, it was evident that as time changes, the modern African bard is not left behind. We found out that instead of concentrating more on ethnic issues as has been the case with most traditional bards, the modern bard transcends ethnic to national and international themes. He draws his

audience's attention to the fact that a write back to the empire is not enough to resolve Africa's problem. For him, the germ at home is as virulent (and sometimes more) as the enemy out there. Consequently, Longué Longué believes that a counter revolution at both ends is necessary as far as the liberation of Africa is concerned. He spearheads this revolution by declaring himself as the liberator, since a tragedy is never imposed. In order to escape from the colonialist conceptual paradigm, Longué Longué manipulates language in a way that truly portrays the postcolonial Cameroonian space. Thus, he abrogates and appropriates both English and French as means of creating a national language, which can best **re-define** him and his people.

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