

Colonial and Neocolonial Effects on Francophone African Culture An Exploratory Course for All Levels of French in High School

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Curriculum Unit Contents

- Overview
- Rationale and Background
- Goals
- Objectives
- Curriculum Design
- Strategies and Methodology and School Board standards
- Sample classroom Activities
- Appendix
- Annotated Bibliography

Overview

There are many challenges to the teaching and learning of African culture today. Even in Africa proper, where the culture originated and was practiced and nurtured for centuries, many aspects of the culture are being learned through vicarious and secondary sources, even as local governments and traditional institutions scamper to reconstitute and recover what may never be the true original and genuine culture that existed before colonialism and thereafter.

In most cases, the approach to teaching and learning African culture has been sanitized of all possible accidents of history, including but not limited to colonialism and its impact. In the same practice that has provided scholars and students of African studies the generosity to cloak the entire African continent with the same garment, students of culture not only err in this generalization, but also in the dissemination of information without reference to the past, and the effects of major historical features.

Having left Cameroon (a former French colony) as teenager, I have been teaching French language, culture and literature at Taylor Allderdice high for the last 23 years. This means that from time to time—while presenting cultural aspects—I have to talk about Cameroon and other African and Caribbean francophone countries. The experience has not necessarily been negative, but it has certainly raised awareness and concerns about the presentation of cultural values and norms in any specific forms to students. To begin with, most of the material that students taking French read about Francophone African countries simply try to establish aspects of the culture which are French in nature—whether it be schools, market, sports, church,

parties, etc. Secondly there may be sources that mention African resistance to colonialism, but there are hardly any of those sources that have come out to delineate the impact of French culture on the traditional African culture. Even in situations where the educated Haitian is portrayed as being a master of the French language, and Senghor being more French than the French, the obvious question does not cross the layman's mind as to what happened to the individual's cultural identity as well as to their heritage. In fact a curious mind may certainly come up with questions such as: Before the French came, how was the African educated? What were the educational institutions? Was each country as we know today a country? How were these countries governed? What language did everyone speak? What types of sports were played? How were stories told from one generation to the other? These questions are barely the tip of the iceberg of questions that could be posed.

Within the context of high school teaching and learning, therefore, there is a lot of room for errors, especially when there are instructors whose knowledge of culture are completely based on secondary sources such as books, or even filmed and video-taped activities which present the present state without explaining what existed before and what has transpired over the years. From experience, myself, I know that a lot has changed over the last thirty years that I have been here as a student first, and now as a professional. When I was growing up in Cameroon, my father was the king of the nation of Bambalang, to whom my people paid a lot of respect. That time the French influence had already dissolved his title—as that of all other traditional rulers—from king to chief. In fact, this was a rather demeaning title, given that any high school graduate who went through a few weeks of technical professional training could become a “chef de poste.” It is in this view that the traditional “kingdom” of every ruler became less and less respected as the French word “chef”. In fact, as most educated Africans who value their culture would observe today, the French “chef” is more suited to the culinary field and the kitchen than a tribal ruler's title which is supposed to be equivalent to that of the European kings, then and now. Today, the chef has very little respect—so little that some of these formerly god-enthroned rulers with prerogative rights are finding themselves not only physically assaulted by gendarmes but even locked up in cells for demeanors! Chef or chief makes a mockery of the highly revering and awe-rendering titles used to address kings in pristine African societies and in individual traditional localities in colonial days and today. Such titles depict the king's greatness in all domains: in the animal kingdom, he is the king (lion, tiger); in general cosmology, he is all the essential elements (the sun, the light); in my nation, he is the king of kings—the one who surpasses all other kings; the extent of his physical and spiritual powers are beyond comparison, as he can bring out the sun and the rain; he can give to, and take from, anybody with no repercussion, etc.

My curriculum unit is intended to pull out situations such as mentioned above and many more that are indicative of the changes in cultural values, the clash of cultures, and the uprooting of the “pure” cultural values of Africa before the arrival of the French, as well as the continuous changes that are

going on even after the independence of African countries. The rationale behind this is simple. For many students who read about Africa, many assumptions about culture need to be clarified. Most of the cultural values presented in French readers for high schools have gaps that need to be filled in order to explain the past and the continuing present.

Certainly, this cannot be approached completely from a social studies perspective—although culture itself is treated within that context. I teach most levels of French, and while I can make a simplified form of the curriculum to present to lower levels, it would be very interesting to approach it through literature as well in the higher class. Literature will not only establish African resistance to French infusion of their cultural values, but also establish what was African at first and how it changed and is still changing. That is why I have chosen quite a few literary texts besides the reading in history, geography, philosophy and religion.

I am planning on a four to six week curriculum in I can present when teaching “French Colonialism and its effects.

Background

This is the basic story of the largest continent in the world, Africa. Africa is not only recognized as the largest continent in the world, but it is also revered as Mother Africa because of the established fact—through discoveries and scientific verification—that it harbored and nurtured the first human inhabitants of the earth. Though termed the Dark Continent at one time, Africa contained so much riches in various forms that it enticed ravaging hands of greedy Europeans and other invaders at various times in different ways. Theophile Obenga’s book Cheikh Anta Diop, Volney et les Sphinx is a classic that discusses the various contributions of Diop to the study, and especially the scientific documentation of the contribution Africa has contributed to human civilization. Very methodic and scientific, Diop has proven many theories including the link of all African languages to that of Egypt; in fact, Volney who visited Egypt in 1783, reminded humanity of the word “Herodote—the father of history. In visiting the Sphinx and the pyramids, and other aspects of ancient Egypt, he reminded students and scholars that Negroes were responsible for all of Ancient Egyptian civilization. In the same text, Diop is at the center of all the scientific tests relating to dating human remains to determine the origin and age of humans.

Before European visits, their penetration and violation of African sanctity, disruption of cultural fabric and the natural contours that made peoples and their lands, Africa was a continent of independent kingdoms, fiefdoms and empires, each independent of the other, though some ruling structures had pyramidal kingship setups.

Long before European contacts, these peoples had political and cultural orders, carried out diplomatic missions, traded with each other, and owned values and norms that defined behavioral boundaries and decorum. Like European and other peoples, they were humans with ownership tendencies, ethnic preservation drives, vision of independence from, or subjugation of, others. They fought and won or lost wars; took booties or lost possessions. While history has some as migrants, either invading other lands or escaping from invaders, some kingdoms and empires were stable and spread tentacles of influence all over.

Theophile Obenga's *Afrique centrale précoloniale* is a historical document that describes the fundamental structures of certain major empires in central Africa before colonialism. As one of the goals of the curriculum unit is to emphasize and may be to reveal to many students that Francophone African countries and most other African countries as seen on map today were arbitrarily made up by Europeans grabbing pieces of African land, Obenga's book is crucial because it validates and lists some of the empires, such as Bornu, Kanem, Nubie, Duadai, Adamawa, Kuba, Makoko, Kongo, etc. In addition, Obenga talks about different social, political, religious, and economic structures of each of those societies before colonialism. He enlightens readers on the fact that each of the aspects of African society was comparatively highly developed and efficient at the arrival of colonialists. For example, he discusses the kingdom set-ups, the legal procedures in certain societies, the medical remedies available in some of the societies, the commercial, political, agricultural advances in African kingdoms and societies. Though some of the aspects of each society may have not been perfect, they showed a comparatively high level of development.

Slavery and slave trading was an aspect of the African society, probably because slavery was a universal practice involving not the use of black people only, but whoever was at the socially defined "slave rank"—where prisoners of war were not available for this position. Slaves mostly served in foreign lands, and were war captives or their generation thereof. The Triangle of Slave Trade that transported human goods from Africa to America, then consumable goods to Europe, and finally back to Africa with goods and war materials began a higher level of European contact and interaction with Africans, though not for the greater benefit of the latter. This was an international practice that drained Africa of most precious possessions of each African kingdom, fiefdom, empire, etc. Today, historians, sociologists, political writers and analysts all believe that Africa lost as many as a hundred million people in the process of slave trading alone. This number dwarfs the six million casualties during the Jewish Holocaust. With this estimated number of lost lives, one can only imagine how many people in total were uprooted from the various African nations and what cultural, sociological and political values disappeared with them.

The abolition of slavery and the Slave Trade in Europe and the Americas prompted Europeans to look for alternative ways to exploit Africa. In that semi-pristine state (the ravaging hands of the Slave Trade having taken its toll), Africa was exuding with raw materials for which Europeans were hungry. Gold, ivory, precious metals of various types, rubber, etc., became the allurement that started the European scramble for Africa. The British, the French, the Germans, mainly, and the Belgians, Italians and Portuguese to a lesser extent, went out on a venture to acquire as much African land, and subjugate as many of its peoples as they could. Through state emissaries, missionaries and envoys, sometimes using threat, sometimes using tricks, and sometimes offering promises of protection, each European country established relations and signed treaties with various African kings and emperors they were trading with. The French and the British, old rivals in Europe, found yet another reason for competition. Established in the Gold Coast (Ghana), Sierra Leone, the Gambia, and Nigeria, Britain found her progress muffled by the spreading French Sudan, just as her crown possessions in Southern Africa were contoured by Portuguese and Belgian claims. The French Sudan encompassed at that time most of the Francophone African countries today (excepting The Congo—which was Belgian, and Cameroon, Rwanda and Burundi, all of which were German possessions until after the First World War, when they became Trust Territories of the League of nations, administered by France). The Congress of Berlin resolved this head-to-head confrontation and arbitrarily carved out African “countries” as most are now—without regard to original ethnic and national boundaries.

Because of the Congress of Berlin, we have African countries today which were created without the input of Africans—countries which in some cases include many initially whole independent or autonomous nations or kingdoms, and in some cases nations with mostly parts of initially independent African nations and kingdoms. Cameroon, from which I am going to draw most of the curriculum unit material, is a classic example of what happened when Europeans arbitrarily drew boundaries to create new African countries. Today, most African specialists call Cameroon “Africa in Miniature”. The reason is simple. About 250 different ethnic groups are found in Cameroon, represent virtually 90% of African peoples. The linguistic make-up of the peoples varies according to expert ideas. With about only 15 million inhabitants, Cameroon boasts of as many languages as there are ethnic groups according to some experts, or well above 50 distinct languages with the rest being related dialects according to some. The fact is that these 250 different ethnic groups were mostly autonomous kingdoms before the Partition of Africa at the Congress of Berlin. During the Partition of Africa, some of these formerly autonomous nations were split into two or three parts to make up the newly European-created countries. Cameroonian and Nigerian boundary cuts through about six formerly autonomous nations, different halves of which make up Nigeria and Cameroon. While this is a classic example which is highlighted not only by the case of a formerly one independent unit being parts of two different, created countries, but even more by the imposed official

languages of French for Cameroon and English for Nigeria, it certainly was not less disruptive and traumatic when boundaries broke through former autonomous nations to create adjacent former French colonies like Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic and Gabon. In each case, specific ethnic groups stretch across the boundaries of two or all of the mentioned countries.

Since I will use mostly Cameroon as a model throughout the unit (while of course bringing in examples using other countries when possible), it is important to make specific statements about Cameroon and the colonization process especially. One thing I will always remember from elementary school history is how the German emissary General Nachtigal out-manuevered the English and signed a treaty with a major coastal king just a day before the English emissary was to return from England and take the same action for the British crown. The irony in this situation is that Germans now acquired land and people with which they had fewer dealings than the British. In fact, it was the British that had established trading posts, and had penetrated in-land to establish churches and schools. What a coup the Germans had staged! But, as history went, the German Kamerun as defined and delineated by the actions taken at the Congress of Berlin would become West and East Camerouns after the Germans lost WW1.

A summary of the Specifics that characterized African societies before colonialism

The most basic nature of a society or nation is the political set-up or governing institution. It is obvious that African nations before colonialism had very strong and sometimes more sophisticated systems than are in modern democracies today. Obenga has mentioned the existence of kingdoms and empires mostly in pre-colonial Central Africa. Davidson is source for similar institutions especially in pre-colonial West Africa. In Cameroon, the Germans signed the protectorate treaty (colonization treaty) with one king initially. But they had to encounter hundreds of others as they inched inland. In my village—the nation of Bambalang or Mbawyakum – numbering about 50,000 people today, there was absolute monarchy characterized by the claim of prerogative powers. To help the king pass certain judgments and orders that may be controversial, or needed a high level of attention, the king's statements would go through a secret and sacred ruling society which scheduled, ordained and sanctioned all the ritual activities in the nation.

In some African societies and nations, the main priest was actually considered to be the king of the land. He led the people through all their daily, seasonal and yearly activities— political, social, religious, etc. In Achebe's Arrow of God, the Eze Ulu is not a king, but the whole village see him as the chief priest whose ritual leadership is pivotal for the harmonic existence of the people and the prosperity of the land.

Since the cultural and social aspects of a people overlap in many ways, and some authors actually classify as social aspects that other deem to be cultural, I am not going to try to painstakingly categorize the aspects in this section as being purely cultural or social. The fact, though, is that the African society was socially and culturally developed with sophisticated systems, well-defined division of labor, though it may look sexist today. Educational processes involving childhood, initiations, apprenticeship and adulthood were tacitly understood and followed; court systems, though not based on roman laws were logical, humanistic and fair; marriage, birth and death were all an aspect that everyone in the society would be part of; the society was religious because Africans lived and still do in societies immersed in religious practices and morality.

Abdou Moumouni's L'education en Afrique reports on, and analyses the education and the educational system of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial Africa. While not being biased toward a specific cultural education, he points out to a lot of effective and efficient educational practices that existed in the traditional African society before Europeans arrived. The most interesting revelation is that Africans not only educated their children as well as, but sometimes better than, Europeans. For examples, Africans actually followed a pattern which showed their cognitive ability about childhood developmental stages when Europeans did not even have that yet; moreover, Africans have always had the concept that successful childhood education is best realized when the child is looked upon as the child of the whole community instead of the parents' only. It is from this concept that Black Americans all over the US before the Reconstruction practiced, and Blacks in given parts of the US today practice, the community childcare concept. Lately, this concept has gained importance—though not necessarily practiced—in social and legal forums. A few years ago, while still the first lady of the US, now Senator Hillary Clinton wrote the book "It takes a Nation to Raise a Child" based on this African concept. The second, and a rather interesting point is that the educational process of an African child has always strictly followed the scientifically established child developmental stages. This in itself suggests that in essence, Africans understood and made effective use of these developmental stages before western psychologists.

Who teachers are and their approach to instructing the young and the adolescent remains an interesting aspect of the African society. From above, we gather that, as the concern of everyone who is older, the African child receives instruction from every one, and is expected to appreciate the situation. Moumouni notes that while everyone in a setting is responsible for the child's education, the individual teacher is the mother until a boy or girl reaches 6 or 7 years old, when the mother continues with the girl, and the father takes over the education of the boy. In the next stages, they are less and less the responsibilities of the parents, as they move into the stages of apprenticeship and adolescent initiations leading them to responsible young men or women.

There are many other social or cultural aspects that are important for discussion, but since these are not going to be emphasized in the unit, I am only making mention of them. First and foremost concerns African religion, its practice and implication. Many authors argue that though the African society is not by law a religious entity, it is impossible to separate religion from the daily lives of Africans. In other words, Africans, right from youth, live lives of rituals and respect for the elders and ancestors, these latter being interceders between the citizens and the creator god.

The Oral Tradition was, and is till of great relevance in the African society. The most basic definition of the oral tradition implies the passing of historical, religious, literary, scientific and other information from individual to individual or peoples to peoples by word of mouth. While in various African societies the practice varied from the unconscious to the methodical training –depending on what type of information was involved, the oral tradition was the only way to preserve culture and knowledge and to pass it on to other generations. The basic setting story telling as I knew it when I was growing up was a daily ritual amongst children, sitting in groups in the day or evening. In the evening the parents, now back from work would become part of the group, and would actually be the ones telling the stories. The stories could range from basic fables through tales and legends to real historical happenings. Occasionally versions of same story appeared and showed either a failing memory of the teller or intentionally embellished versions to favor a certain outcome. While everybody in the society was, and is still entitled to know and be able to tell the story of the origin of the people of the specific ethnic group, the king, the principal priest, and the other traditional post holders were and are still required to be able to relate these historical claims at any given time, with a high degree of accuracy. In a recent internet communication in which members of my immediate and extended family living in the US were trying to come up with an accurate version of our land's history, a nephew who lives in Texas, and is the son of the ruling Fuong or king, cautioned that it was imperative to come up with the acceptable version, as it was a matter of great importance. He revealed that at a recent ceremonial gathering in the palace, the king had jokingly threatened a traditional elder whose memory seemed to have failed him and he had omitted certain details while narrating the history of the land to the growing generation. This instance underlines the fact that the oral tradition in African society has been used for centuries and continues to be used for the preservation and dissemination of historical, literary, ceremonial, religious, and the overall cultural contents of the community.

Oral tradition as I Experienced It

Growing up in my native home called Bambalang in Cameroon, I experienced many aspects of the oral tradition first hand before I was able to read about it later on. I personally was part of the oral tradition, as were most of my family

members, especially my father who was the ruler of the land, and had to keep and retrieve a lot of information in his memory.

Daily (morning, day or night time) story telling was a normal daily activity for my many siblings and me. After our mothers left to go work on the farm, we would all gather in a chosen spot, almost always decided at the moment. On a rainy day, we would gather in one of our houses; on a nice day we would choose any place in the open air. No matter how many we were at a given moment—and we could number as many as fifty children (my family was large and is even larger today) each person would be expected to tell a story. Stories varied from basic situational anecdotes to fables with morality, to tales and to legends. Especially when my father went on a trip and the children had to keep watch over the palace, it was the opportunity to tell stories for days on end. On an average twenty different stories could be told by twenty different tellers each session. In the evening when parents were home, story telling could be outside in the courtyard or in one or several houses depending on how many participants gathered where. In my experience, older people always added more flavor, more meaning, and more action. They acted out words or sentences which they wanted to impress in children's memory. Riddles also took an important place in the oral tradition and the education of African youths. Story telling was usually followed by sessions of riddles and vice versa. The practice of solving riddles was and is still instrumental in educating African children in wittiness and quick thinking.

The oral tradition was educational in many ways. It was and is still a way that helps keep the mind alert. Basically if one heard or saw something once he or she was supposed to remember it without the help of a written note. For those who were trained to keep the record of activities and important personalities in the land, they had to refresh their memories through repeated recitation, and still there were no written records. Proverbs and riddles were and are still characteristic of many African nation speech patterns. Whether you read Achebe, Oyono or Diop, you are most likely not going to finish a page without coming across a proverb.

When I attended elementary school, story telling was also part of the curriculum. Though this was meant to encourage students to practice speaking the new language which they were learning, most of it was done in the vernacular of Bambalang, as was probably the case in most other rural elementary schools. Children born in the cities were already experiencing such changes as effected by the heterogeneity of the growing urban phenomenon: their stories were no longer limited to their particular clan of origin; they also had to start using English or French (pidgin English and some broken French if they could not speak the language properly) and they never were in position to witness the other heritage activities which were characterized by the power of the oral tradition.

Being the traditional ruler of my clan, my father, King Ghogomu, directed and carried out most of the traditional activities that was part of the oral tradition, and seasonal or yearly activities perpetuated the tradition. I probably took a lot of things for granted when I was young and witnessed my father execute his duties with a lot of ease. Today, there are times I can only sit and scratch my head while wondering how he managed it. First of all, he knew all his 50,000 subjects by name, except very young children; he knew who lived where and who farmed where. As the chief priest for all traditional ceremonies, he could recite hundreds of ceremonial chants, prayers, odes, etc., most of which were dozens of lines. He kept the count on moons and other seasonal indicators to make sure that the annual ceremony to honor dead kings and to prepare the tilling and planting process was timely. He did the same for many other rituals to precede important events, such as the First Fruits, etc.

As an individual, my father seemed to have a magnetic memory. At every given point in time there would be hundreds of people asking for various favors or material, and he would remember who was requesting what. He was very quick in doing mental arithmetic; he could speak in detail about each of the thirty and more dynasties that preceded him; from memory he could tell who was the first white man to set foot in our village, and precisely which month and which year; later on he was a member in the House of Chiefs, a member who knew the structure, rules and procedures all by heart—because he could not write or read. He was a walking computer speaking the language of my clan and Wescos. He was a product and master of the oral traditional.

Jan Vansina, in his Oral Tradition as History, provides a complete analysis of the oral tradition. As a process, generated message is memorized and performed; it can be a source of history not necessarily performed; it can be an epic narration. It always has a message which may have the plain meaning or the apparent meaning. The message expresses culture, tradition, history, etc. He concludes that while oral traditions have a part to play in the reconstruction of the past, the importance of this past varies according to place and time. At this point in time, the oral tradition compares to, and complements, the written. But, as is obvious, this was the only way of generating, preserving, communicating, and passing the message along to other generations in Africa. In African Oral Literature, Isidore Okwewho also points out the aspects that make for a successful realization of oral tradition. These include the oral artist, the oral performance, the message, and the social relevance of the message. This specification, though, seems to be dissecting today's professional oral tradition artist rather than the practice that was the only medium for the society.

Colonial and Post-Colonial Effects on the Aspects Discussed Above

In discussion of the pre-colonial African political, social, cultural and religious practices and tendencies, an occasional mention has been made of what the

situation is like today. Colonization changed some African ways of living, thinking, celebrating, learning, worshipping, etc. Some of these were violent changes; some came gradually as peoples decided how best to be part of a society that was becoming more and more European through the influence of cadres produced by the European educational system to serve the colonizers. In general, the French were systematic in their goal of assimilation. According to Moumouni, the French mainly needed “half-educated” Africans to serve their needs as translators, servants, drivers, etc, as they ruled the lands which they called French Overseas Territories, exploiting the peoples and even imposing forced labor and harsh taxes, all of which, ironically, had been some of the causes of the French Revolution. Cameroon, as a League of Nations Protectorate under France, did not escape all the practices experienced by African nations that were out-rightly colonized by France.

What happened to the colonized African—whether in Africa or in other parts of the world—is succinctly depicted in Fannon’s Peau noire, masques blancs, a presentation of black people trying very hard to be white. On the one hand they feel forced to act that way or be considered as ignorant, uncivilized and from the bush, and on the other hand they want to feel superior to those other blacks who have not had any education, and therefore are not privileged. In all, everything and concept that is originally African is considered inferior, and to act white or be white is to be French and be considered right. This is a state and stage of self-denial because it presents the view that what is African is not sophisticated enough for them. In fact, the educated African has been told in many ways that his culture and the entirety of the set-up and practices of his nation are inferior. Mbiti’s discourse on the philosophy and religion of Africans reveal that, in spite of the highly developed philosophical thoughts and logical religious practices of black Africans, European scholars never seemed to discover anything of worth in it, they never studied it, and they always linked all these activities to the barbaric and savage nature of Africans. Even later on when interest was kindled and Europeans wrote about African religion and philosophy, their theses, arguments and conclusions were always such that inferiority, savagery, ignorance, and fetish characterized and cloaked the African approach to, or practice of, these cultural activities.

Colonial and post-colonial education is mostly described as the education of the “deracine”—the education of the uprooted, or the “mis-education” of the African. In the light of things, most uprooted Africans are those who imbibed European education and sometimes indoctrination without questioning. Instead, they always waited with impatience for the moment they would be like the European in many ways—live in sequestered quarters, speak like the French, eat in special restaurants, have servants or houseboys, go to concerts, be decorated with medals—however worthless these might be, etc. But some of the “enlightened” actually resented their being uprooted, and those who have had the gift of writing have very much done so, criticizing the European way of life, and the rude awakening it accorded the natural African. La Littérature africaine: le deracinement by Francis Fouet and Regine

Renaudeau is a compilation of examples of literature that criticizes, and derides the colonial ways, while showing reasonable Africans' contempt for, and sometimes anger at, the European institution. It includes fun-poking at very basic concepts like the white man's way of talking, through their alphabet, to very meaningless things like waiting hours to receive medals which are of no importance to the African recipient, up to the important heritage themes and institutions involving religion and philosophy.

The education of Africans by the French and other colonialists did not have as its first goal to benefit Africans at all. In fact, says Muomouni, quoting the French Gouverneur General of the West French African colonies, it was to meet the colonies' economic and political necessities—a means to facilitate the colonialists' exploitative methods. As such, it was all about educating an indigenous population destined to be the colonizer's auxiliaries in all the domains and to generate a chosen elite. And it was to educate the mass and make them closer to the colonizers and change their ways of living.

Recruitment of students was also carefully chosen so as to quickly destroy local cultural fabric. At first the French went straight to the kings and rulers and important people and took their sons away. The peasants or commoners' children were given opportunities only when space was created because of recalcitrant kings and rulers who refused to have their children educated in the French way. The fact that they pressured the kings to have their sons educated first can actually be looked at in two ways. Apologists for colonialists' claim that was a positive approach and that it showed the colonialists goodwill to the traditional rulers. Other scholars see it as a sly method the colonialists used to quickly destroy the traditional fabric of the society, its cultural and political set-up. If they could get to the king first, then the other members of the clan would be more easily forced into participating in the new trend.

The educational content could not have been any more destructive of the traditional values and culture. The specifications strictly demanded instruction in French only and no African names to be used. The instruction aimed at “convincing the young African of the congenital inferiority of blacks, of the barbarity of their ancestors and of the goodwill and generosity of their colonizers”! (Moumouni, p.56). No wonder the French wanted first to get the children of the kings educated in their way. For the future rulers of the land, including the heir to the throne—whoever that was—to acquire the ways of the colonialists instead of apprenticeship in their cultural norms and values would be a coup in favor of the strangers!

As a result, Moumouni notes, the colonial education provided the colonizers exactly what they wanted: cadres in subordinate positions executing duties to facilitate the running of the colonies. To the governor general, this was basically what they wanted, as he wrote, “Let's consider the instruction of native Africans as a precious thing that is given out only wittingly.”

(Moumouni, p. 59). In addition it produced a sequestered minority who respected whites but was arrogant to, and despised, blacks though he used them as the source of his living. In other words, the colonial education did not, as it was not intended to, bring the feeling and realization of success, equality and appreciation of culture. It encouraged and affected the opposite for most Africans.

Associated to education is the oral tradition which has been and is still the main medium for passing on history, literature and knowledge of all kinds from one generation to the other. The impact of colonization and related metropolitan activities on the oral tradition in most African societies has varied from region to region, but has mostly been negative until the late 1980's when scholars seemed to pick up more interest in the tradition than previously. This time also coincides with the cultural revival period in Cameroon, when the government actually funded cultural societies to try to revive fundamental cultural practices which had vanished or were vanishing. In Cameroon, especially, the process was encouraged through government-sponsored contests in which participants appeared on television and winners received monetary and other awards.

To put this in a personal experience context may be the best way to explain the fact that the oral tradition became neglected in some ways as a result of colonial cultural influence and neo-colonial mentality by which African leaders and educators emphasized the colonial culture while not merely overlooking the importance of theirs, but actually despising and hastening the deterioration of the disintegrating fabric of their own cultural heritage. One example which I will always use is an interview I had with a professor of African literature at the University of Yaounde, Cameroon, when I was doing research, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) on Francophone African literature in 1993. When we started discussing the oral tradition, the professor greatly bemoaned the fact that the students he taught knew nothing about the oral tradition, and that classes he had assigned to gather information about the subject and to also collect tales and fables passed on orally had come back empty-handed. He believed that the younger generation—even in the villages were getting so influenced by the French culture that they were neglecting those fundamental aspects that were the cornerstone of the culture of the generation before them. He believed that it was caused by a combination of things: failure at the elementary schools to educate children on, and encourage them to practice, their cultural heritage; the effect of radio and television, which had completely disrupted family and other traditional life patterns as existed before (instead of sitting in family groups or groups made of youngsters from different compounds to listen to stories or practice other aspects of the culture, the younger generation listened to the radio and watched TV, both of which perpetuated French values); sprawling cities into which young people flooded to look for jobs and mostly lost contact with their traditional cultural values and families; the failure of

central government to mandate the instruction of culture throughout the various levels of the educational system.

The second personal experience and explanation concerns the new generation of kings in Cameroon. I visited one of the kings close to my own clan in his house in a township. Though this was not too far from his palace within the clan, because the township was actually carved out of his people's land, his choice of where to be this morning betrayed his idling instinct away from his people. Moreover, when I requested to talk to someone who could recite the history of the land, and especially to show the link between his people and my people, he said that one individual who could probably help me in that respect would be hard to find that day. But he himself was not well-versed in the history and legends of the land, and would need the only expert to help him fill the gaps. Here was a king, unable to perform a very basic thing that is considered very important. He was a western-educated individual with a university bachelor's degree, and the only thing he kept worrying about the whole time I was there was whether he was getting his pay check that day. This was a check which the central government sends to every Cameroonian traditional ruler today to compensate them for their administrative role—mostly the collection of taxes from their people and forwarding the taxes to the government.

The way of the Whites, like the highways they forced people to build through villages to the cities, metaphorically and in reality led to evil. Cities bustled with everything that went contrary to heritage and tradition; free women and diseases, theft, murders, disrespect of the elderly and the traditionally empowered, divorce and family breakdown. The way of the whites came through education and forced indoctrination in Christian catechism. Education is probably one of the causes of the Dual economic, social and political states that have existed in Africa since colonization. On the one hand, most of the people who live in the rural areas have little or no education; they have an agrarian economic set up, and still have the traditional rulers, whose powers are now comparatively limited. On the other hand, most educated Africans work for the government, corporations, industries, and non-governmental organizations in the city; they experience mostly European type economic and commercial activities, and come in contact daily with the European style metropolitan administration. And, according to Chinua Achebe, things fell apart!

Colonial and post-colonial Africa from the early 1940's to the early 1990's seem to have gone a full circle. In the general sense, colonialists forced their political views and concepts as well as their notion about nation building on, a priori, independent African nations suddenly meshed under the provisions of the Congress of Berlin to make new countries. These colonial practices were reinforced after independence, not surprisingly with the blessings of the Africans who then led those newly independent African countries in the 1960's and later. While in some countries like Ghana and

Nigeria traditional leaders of clans and nations within have always been given their due respect, in most Francophone countries, these leaders had actually lost their power and only started getting it back in the 1990's depending on the political situation in specific states.

The colonial and post-colonial political conditions in Cameroon were especially interesting. The French political philosophy and practice of assimilation meant that they did not have to deal with the traditional kings in place, unlike the British practice of indirect rule. To the contrary, the French uprooted most of these leaders, or simply called them “chefs”, which did not make them any better than anybody who received a special professional certificate, or attained a certain rank in his or her profession. That, to most Africans—even those who had migrated from their ethnic homes to the cities—was different and strange, but the power base had shifted to the “nationally” empowered: the colonialists and their various instruments of ruling, administering, and the new law and institutions. Instead of the local king and his institutions of justice taking care of problems that arose, they, surprisingly, occasionally found themselves as the targets of the French gendarmes and the “sous-prefets” and “prefets” who represented the central administration. Serious infractions, and desecrations of the sacred tainted and destroyed established traditional institutions.

The French colonial assimilation shifted the center of power, and ironically redefined the citizenship eligibility within the extended community over which they claimed political power. The French called all their colonies and other overseas territories “La France d’outre mer”- France Overseas, but only very few nationals of the overseas territories were considered real French people. While French colonialists, just like the Portuguese, did not think of eventually letting their colonies go, their process of making metropolitan citizens out of the colonized subjects centered around the level of education of individuals and to some extent their wealth or degree of service to the metropolitan government in certain ways. All high level politicians of African heritage were also assimilated. In this case Senghor was an assimilated French subject by his intellectual achievement as well as his political achievements. When Ahmadou Ahidjo of Cameroon was being tried in Cameroon, in absentia (while he was in France) for treason in 1983, the then French president told him “Vous etes chez vous”—you are in your home. He was an assimilated French man, just like Senghor.

Whether colonized by the French or the English, the educated Africans who took the reins of power, and those who became administrators, technicians, technocrats, etc., not only continued with the European set up, but in some ways outdid the colonizer in setting boundaries between the “educated” and the illiterate; the high and the low class; “the civilized” and the “bushman”, and above all, “democracy” of their own definition, and the democracy as existed in the traditional African society. Lansine Kaba’s Lettre à un ami sur la politique et le bon usage du pouvoir is an open letter that

discusses the use of power under colonial rule and after independence in Guinee. His concern centers on the misuse of power, especially political and military power in Guinee before and after independence. He is concerned, above all, that post-independent African leaders have ignored the democratic values of pre-colonial Africa, and wonders how Guineans and other African countries can get out of the stagnation. In Davidson's Modern Africa, the author actually questions the authenticity of African independence given that most African leaders had to rely on their former colonizers for political and economic directions as well as financial, military and other support. He observes that at independence, the political, economic, the military and other control apparatus were partly a carry-over, or a continuation, while the cultural and educational aspects were a major carry-over of the colonial ideas.

As such, Africa at independence, which is the Africa being taught in schools today is one of many attributes; one that cannot be generalized; one with a dual economic, political, social and cultural characteristic. With the intrusion of Christianity, African religions, especially as practiced in the cities may be sprinkled with Christian and other doctrines. Conversely, Christian churches that strictly adhered to dogmas passed on from the metropolis have continued to evolve with the addition of African chants, dances, and even the injection of African religious believes and doctrines. To many an African student, most independent African countries, especially the former French colonies are neo-colonial in nature, in many ways like walking children still attached to the mother by the umbilical cord.

The Problems With The Instruction of African Culture In the Pittsburgh Public Schools

Problems in teaching African culture, politics, philosophy and religion abound as a result of the methodology, content material, and even ignorance on the part of the educators supposed to impart the knowledge unto the students. In social studies, Africa is usually treated in a hurried few weeks, with most aspects looked at as being homogeneous across ethnic and national boundaries. Time and other factors may be causes for this shallow approach. In the language classroom, the metropolis is mostly accentuated, and the former colonies never really are central. When the African country is treated, the instruction is mostly about the colonial linguistic impacts, and there is a lot of omission that could bring more meaning to students. Until recently when some African short stories and tales have been introduced in readings for French classes, the practice has been to teach the language, read the classics that include some poets of African origin, and occasionally read about situations. In my opinion, there is need for an approach to teaching Francophone African culture in the French classroom with emphasis on traditional aspects that have been transformed in time—mostly as a result of colonial tempering.

Goals of the Curriculum

The goal of the unit is to establish parameters for teaching certain aspects of Francophone African culture, such as literature and the oral tradition, history and the oral tradition, the transformation of the educational system, Francophone African languages and the need to speak French, the transformation of the political society into a dual system of traditional governance under the umbrella of the westernized republic style. These parameters which will be non-binding to other educators examining the same issues are simply suggestions that can be modeled or modified depending on individual approaches, content material, and grade level of students in the class being taught.

The examination of Francophone African literature, especially within the oral tradition context is of interest not only to this school district but all others. Students of French at the high school level may have the opportunity to read about Roland in old French and supposedly an off-shoot of the oral tradition in the French language. But the oral tradition, which has been the main medium of introduction and dissemination of African literature for many years before colonization and then through the colonization years and up to today, has had even less or no exposition at all in the review of Francophone African literary material at the high school level. The inclusion of a lesson on this material in this curriculum unit provides students in high school and beyond the opportunity to discover and even emulate the tradition that has preserved African culture and tradition through many years of adversity.

The oral tradition has been and remains an integral part or element of Francophone African literature and history as well. In a lot of ways, history is literature and literature is history. In history everything is supposed to have truly happened, though sometimes legendary aspects of history survive. Literature may be fiction and legendary, but sometimes literature is purely history. For Francophone Africa history has, as literature, been preserved and passed on by the use of the oral tradition. Though today there are all types of written material on African history and literature, much of what is written came many years after the fact. But, more importantly, most of the formerly autonomous kingdoms, fiefdoms and other independent entities that now make up each separate country in Africa do not have written records about their past, a situation which evokes the examination of the oral tradition as a means of preserving and passing on the history of peoples of Africa.

A very basic goal of the unit is to explain why many Francophone African countries used French as their official language during colonial times and still do today. The explanation, as has already been established, is the fact that each African country as was created at the Congress of Berlin where the fate on the Partition of Africa was sealed, was created by putting together many previously autonomous states, each speaking a different ethnic language. To facilitate their political rule, economic exploitation and religious indoctrination, the colonizers had to make their language official in these newly-acquired lands. To educate the people in their (the colonialists) own

way, they had to teach their languages in the schools that they created. After independence, it was only logical to keep the system because many of the formerly autonomous entities would not be happy if they were forced to use a different local language over theirs for official transactions. Taking the case of Cameroon with about 250 different languages and dialects, it would not have been acceptable to the other 249 different groups if one local language had been imposed on them. Instead, and politically and economically sensible, the foreigner's language was kept in place as it would cause no disruption in the system and no costs to change documents and other things into a different language. This is an interesting issue to discuss because high school students always want to know why Africans speak French.

The last goal of the unit is more interdisciplinary than linguistic. In Francophone African countries today, there is a visible dual system in many aspects of the society. While the French model of republican governance is supreme and permeates the whole political set-up, the traditional systems of kingdoms, fiefdoms, chiefdoms (which existed or are being revived) are operational alongside and are the means and instruments of rule and regulations in ethnic settings. While these original and ancient systems deal with all the ritual, religious and cultural aspects of the people, law and order as well as national political activities are controlled by the center. This may sound like a maze, a labyrinth to the average American student, but it will be interesting to examine it in the classroom, using some of the French words which are relevant to the situation.

Main Objective of the Curriculum Unit

With any given material, an instructor can always define the learning objectives according to what he/she or the school wants the students to be able to do after the completion of the lesson or at various stages in the lesson. It is logical and appropriate to link the goals of the unit to the objectives in the pedagogical plans. Some of the objectives that can be derived from, or linked to, the established goals of the curriculum are for the students to be able to:

- Draw and label the map of Africa before colonialism.
- Correctly identify and place selected empires, kingdoms, etc.
- Describe the generalized basic educational process before colonialism.
- Define and describe the general political structure in kingdoms.
- Highlight cultural practices involving religion and morality.
- Define The oral tradition and highlight its uses
- State and define the economic structure before colonialism.
- Clarify the linguistic situation before the imposition of European and Arabic languages.
- State the economic importance of Africa after the abolition of the Slave Trade and slavery in Europe and the Americas.
- Discuss the causes of the Scramble of Africa
- Show the cultural, political and linguistic effects of the Berlin Conference and the partition of Africa

- Draw and label the map of Africa, with special emphasis on the French acquisitions
- Draw and label the map of Africa with emphasis on French possessions after WWI
- Highlight methods used in the introduction of French culture, economic practices, and political establishment and processes
- Show how culture, political processes and economic were affected by colonization
- Show how colonialism undermined the oral tradition
- To make an analytical report on the state of the oral tradition after colonialism
- Discuss the impact French colonization on the languages
- Provide examples of French influence on pop culture including music and theater
- Show examples of resistance to French educational, cultural, and political set-ups, by French educated Africans

These are just a few possible objectives that may be modified by any instructed in a French class. Not at all exhaustive, this objectives list can even be lengthened or shortened depending on the class in which the unit is being taught and the length of time chosen for instruction.

Curriculum Design

This curriculum unit is designed to be used at Taylor Allderdice high School in the Pittsburgh Public Schools District. However, teachers of World Languages in other school districts may find it as useful as it is interesting. The contents of this curriculum provides for an interdisciplinary instruction and learning at various level of instruction, from middle school through high school. Therefore, teachers from across disciplines including social studies, sociology, history, and African American studies can adopt the unit and modify it accordingly.

Except in the district's middle schools international programs, in which there is a lot of emphasis on cultural celebrations—the irony of which is the celebration of French culture within the context of African studies— curricula for programs in high schools do not offer ample time for these celebrations. As such a teacher at the high school level can make only that much time for something completely cultural and not purely French in nature. This unit may therefore be modified to suit teachers and students needs according to education level and availability of time. I intend to implement this unit for the period of two weeks, either during the month of January (Black History Month) or a chosen block of time for the teaching of culture.

Curriculum unit Content

A historical approach establishes how Africa was like before colonialism; how the French got into Africa, and the impact they had before given independence,

albeit only symbolically in most respects, to neo-colonial African leaders. For this approach, mostly Obenga and Davidson will be used. Though I will not pursue philosophical concepts in the French classroom, the subject may be touched from time to time within the context of cultural values, including religion. The sources available include Samuel Olouch Imbo, John S. Mbiti, Paulin Hountounji, and the anthology edited by Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze. I will concentrate on literature, which in itself is an independent entity of the culture but at the same time can be treated as a historical, philosophical and educational documentation, critique, analysis, etc. of the events, activities, views, issues, etc. of the society. In this approach, literary texts and critiques on African literature including Francophone African literature will be pivotal. Texts will include Camara Laye, Ferdinand Oyono, David Ndachi Tagne, Franz Fanon, Lansine Kaba, James Currey, Jan Vansina, Omar Ndoeye, Imbo, Johnson et al., Fouet and Renaudeau, and Okpewho. These sources all provide literature with characters that express feelings about colonialism and its effect; opinions about the oral tradition, before and after colonialism; poetry lauding the traditional and natural, as opposed to the fabricated, etc.

Methodology

Pedagogical approach will not need to be very different from what is usual in the French classroom in a high school when treating a historical, cultural or literary lesson. Teacher will have to do a lot of explanation before each new activity—whether reading, discussion or analysis. The fact is that most of the material will be new to most of the students, and will need being introduced. Teacher may also start each new lesson by verifying the knowledge level of students. This can be done by always having a pre-evaluation or test for the class. After this teacher will then decide how best to proceed with the teaching, how fast or slowly to go; what material to include and overlook, etc.

Still on the general approach, I believe that some of the researched methodology which I suggested in the 2003 Reading and Teaching Poetry curriculum unit will be useful here. In the proposed instructional method, Richard Beach suggested the use of what he called “strategic teaching in literature” in the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development’s *Strategic Teaching and Learning: Cognitive Instruction in the Content Areas*. I compared this approach to CMU Professor Kennedy’s “reaction” method in which students would be asked to read apiece and then their feelings or reaction would be sounded. Beach’s ideas included the use of “guided response activities in which students respond to literary text according to a series of sequential activities. Compared to the process of self-discovery, or reaction to situations, these activities involve various response strategies such as connecting, describing/exploring, interpreting, and judging. To Beach, these concepts are different from answering traditional textbook or worksheet questions in that “students are continually relating their inferences to an emerging hypothesis or set of ideas.” His observation is that these inference strategies are organized according to certain heuristic patterns which facilitate

students' appreciation of literature –because they are incidentally learning a set of heuristics for exploring and extending their response to a literary work. According to Beach, the inference processes most productive in individual responses to poetry and other literary reading include engagement or empathy for the situation or character; description based on individual perception; connection to responder's life experiences, and interpretation driven by the feelings and reactions of the reader. Beach's approach to instruction and learning is applicable across disciplines; consequently, it will serve well as methodology in this unit.

The basic approach to literary reading in French is the "explication de texte". In general reading, the student is always asked to find the narrator "narrateur", his "ton" or poignancy, the "structure" of the piece, the "moralite" or the wisdom it imparts, and "le fond" or the argument put forth. In poetry, a sixth and seventh aspects are necessary: "rime" (rhyme) and "rythme" (rhythm). In addition, "ironie" is an analytical aspect which covers all sorts of reading. Students are provided a list with these terms and their definitions accompanied by examples before assigned readings are given out. A full session should be used to go over these terms so that students are well acquainted with them.

For each class session, after the students have mastered the relevant terms to be used for analysis, teacher can begin each day with an interactive process in which he explains, questions students and answer student questions. For each student, it is important that whatever reading has been assigned be read. In addition, to facilitate direction of instruction and to draw students' attention to what is important in assigned reading, they will have specific questions to answer daily. These questions will be provided to students with the assigned reading at the same time.

Standards

In order to have an exhaustive instructional perspective, it is important to include the standards that are mandated by the Pittsburgh Public School District for the teaching of world languages. The proficiency standards in foreign languages or world languages, as they are preferably called now, range from the novice –low to the advanced high. Actually students are being tested for the distinguished level, though that is not yet made part of the standard. Though the rubric stresses mostly oral proficiency, the fact that the grammar and vocabulary are included is proof that written as well as other skills are equally important. In fact, to respond correctly orally at any level, a student will need writing, listening pronunciation, and reading skills. Consequently, these standards reflect an inclusive prescription of language skills requirements or prerequisites.

The world languages standards as specified by the Pittsburgh Board of Education are intended to prescribe and improve achievement levels in reading,

writing and speaking the target language of the student. At the advanced level, students are expected to communicate with any audience in the target language at any given time; they should have enough vocabulary to narrate, describe, discuss, summarize, compare and contrast, while at the same time using paragraph-like discourse 60% of the time in all frequently used tenses. Given that most students in higher French classes at Taylor Allderdice High School usually attain these standards, reading assigned material in French will not be impossible, if at all difficult. They will also be able to discuss in French to some extent. In classrooms with students belonging to the lower level of the standards ladder, more readings and discussions can be done in English.

Syllabus and Sample Lesson Plans

To discuss and analyze Africa from pre-colonial era to modern times is a magnanimous task that—even at college level—will take a lot of devotion and two semester’s worth of diligent work. Therefore, in writing this unit which can be implemented at both middle and high school levels, I do not intend to, and do not pretend to be able to, be providing all the information and gaps which I have suggested that current courses on Africa and Francophone Africa are lacking. Instead, I believe that the selection of specific important or interesting cultural and other issues that will give students a sampling of the cultural changes over time in Francophone Africa can make a difference in the instructional processes now in place. This, in addition, will hopefully serve as an introduction to the research, writing and implementation of a full curriculum on the subject.

The syllabus will include these topics of which the instructor can change the presentation order depending on preference, availability of resources, and other criteria. This syllabus actually tries to present issues in a historical chronology manner, which is the logical way to highlight changes due to historical consequences. This reasoning, however, loses rigidity when certain issues and aspects of culture can be examined at one point in time or another.

- The first major segment of the syllabus will deal with pre-colonial Africa, a period when there were independent kingdoms, empires, autonomous nations with other types of omnipotent divine leaders. This time was characterized by pristine cultural values, traditional education and apprenticeship, the oral tradition at all levels.
- The colonial period experienced the shock of the intrusion whites, who came not as partners but subjugators. More importantly, though not clear to individual nations, was the bundling together many whole and sometimes arbitrarily split African nations to form their newly created overseas countries. Then there was the shift of power center: though many kings and other leaders still controlled their nations, they now had to listen to the central government headed by the white

intruder; their people could be rounded up at will and forced to work for the white government, or forced to fight in white man's army. Traditional education, though still going on, was being gradually replaced by western education, what some see as the "mis"-education of the Africa. There was the uprooting of many cultural practices—especially ritual and religious doctrines. In the Francophone territories, as in others variably, French was forced upon the educated, as there was severe penalty awaiting any student (many of whom were forced to schools). The beginning of reading and writing was the beginning of the decline of the oral tradition. But educated Africans also started writing negatively about colonialism and its negative effect on culture and tradition.

- Many Africanists believe that neocolonial Africa actually experienced more trauma than colonial Africa. This is because the Africans who became leaders after independence were worse than their European counterparts in many ways. First of all, there is the observation that they became "more French or British" than the French and British, so they exploited the citizens more; they made themselves superior and lived in guarded quarters away from the ordinary citizens; they preferred the colonial language over their own—one reason the oral tradition slipped more and more into disuse and oblivion; they preferred sending their children and relatives for education overseas at the expense of the state, which encouraged the demise of cultural involvement; they practiced nepotism, which led to many feuds and the destabilization of the European created states. But many Africans wrote some more about colonialism and neocolonialism and their negative impact on the society, culture, politics, etc., which in some cases started the cultural revival in some African countries.

In each of these periods, or across two or three of them, there are cultural and other issues which make good instructional topics, independent of each other or as complement to each other. I have selected the following topics as being either important or interesting enough to educate on the cultural trend in Francophone African countries, especially Cameroon, before, during, and after colonialism.

- The Faces of Africa: Francophone Cameroon
- The languages of Africa
- Important Cultural Values of Pre-colonial Africa
- Kings, Prerogative Rights and Mysticism
- The Oral Tradition before colonialism
- Traditional Education Before Colonialism
- Colonial Education of Africans: missteps
- Kings, Prerogative Rights and Mysticism Answering to Whites
- Sprawling Cities, Morality and Ethnic Laws
- "Cities of Babel" and Children Without a Language
- "Ceremonial Bests" become "Sunday or Party Bests">
- Neocolonial Africa and cultureless leaders

- Writers In Search of Lost Cultures and Values
- Cultural Revival

Lesson One (Days One and Two): The many Faces of Africa (The Peoples of Africa)

Day One

Starting the unit lessons with The Faces of Africa is logical. It clarifies the fact that there is not one single homogeneous group to deal with in Africa. When most American students think and talk about Africa, they think, for instance that Africa is just one single country. They see only one face, and they think that there is only one other language spoken all over Africa besides the European languages such as French and English. Using Cameroon as an example, this lesson has the goal to make the students acquainted with the continent's many different faces and ethnic groups which translate into different languages and variations in cultural practices.

Cameroon is often called “Africa in miniature”—an appellation which is indicative of the many different races and ethnic groups it has. Many sources state that 250 different groups of peoples are inhabitants of this small country of about 487,000 km sq. The faces of most Cameroonian look the same to a foreigner—especially of non-African origin—because they are all black. But Cameroonians can most times identify the ethnicity of an individual just by looking at the face. Whether or not this is possible to everyone, the fact is that these many different ethnic groups exist, and the main differentiating attribute is the fact that each of these groups has a different language. In most cases these languages do not resemble each other in any way. Sometimes, however, some of the languages are variations of others, which means that the speakers of one can understand those of the other at various levels. Some Cameroonians think that it was good the French language became available for official and business communication, and they are happy that they did not have one of the other Cameroonian languages imposed as a national language. Some think that French or any foreign language as the official language is a bane to the cultural and other aspects of a land. So they are not fond of speaking French, but they have to do it, and they do it very properly, too, when they are required to do it. Some of these intellectuals have written against the French activities in Francophone African countries while others with same feelings in former British colonies have also written against British activities in Africa.

In some cases, cultural practices and observations may be exactly same as, or similar to, those of the group next door or even another group further away. But in most cases there are slight differences and variations. For example, the dowry paid to a bride's family may be different in substance and material worth in one group than the other. In my state, Bambalang, because of what is available besides money, the future husband's family has to give

things like fish, heads of plantains, palm oil, clothing, and of course a set amount of cash to individual's in the future bride's family. The villagers next to my village, however, do not include fish in their list. They ask for goats and chicken.

In my village, the traditional wedding takes place at night, when a group of the relatives and friends of the bride's family lead her to her husband's home. In some of the villages around mine, the wedding ceremony takes place in bright daylight.

The above are cultural practices that existed before colonialism, and are still practiced today. But the European practices—mainly French—are also being included in weddings. You may get married in the church and then go to the town hall for the Justice of the Peace to wed you legally. You may perform a traditional wedding, and then go the Justice of the Peace to make it official and legal. So this is another way of French intrusion in the lives of Camerounians, an intrusion which tells the citizens that their tradition is not recognized by the Napoleonic codes being used. It is an intrusion just like the language which was imposed and now is the official language of the country, which itself was created by putting together all these peoples whose practices may be same, or not similar at all.

Material needed

- Wall map showing African kingdoms and empires before colonization
- Wall map showing African countries after the Congress of Berlin
- Map with African countries after 1919 showing the assignment of former German colonies to France as League of Nations Trust Territories (Davidson's *Modern Africa*, p. 9, has one)
- The State Department's *Hand Book on Cameroon*. (Xerox pages)
- Clips of Ali Mazrui's film *The African*
- "The Many Faces of Africa", article on <http://www.highbeam.com> (copies to students)
- *L'Afrique en miniature: Brève présentation du Cameroon* (Xerox copies for students)
- Hand out from teacher with course outline
- Handout from teacher on the procedure of today's class procedure

Objectives of the Lesson:

After the lesson, the students will be able to:

1. Report about Africa as having many different types of peoples (races)
2. Use Cameroon as an example of this phenomenon
3. Relate the concept of many races and ethnic groups to the many thousand African languages and dialects
4. Recognize the cultural aspects (other than language) that make Cameroon a Francophone African country

5. Locate, and name the other Francophone African countries on the maps available

Procedure

Since this is the first class session, the teacher will first go over the syllabus to make sure that students have an idea of what its contents are, and what they will be expected to do. Then instructor will go over what the day's lesson covers. Teacher will lecture students on the diverse nature of African peoples, and their many languages. Teacher will also make students know that even though African cultural values and practices are same and similar in certain ethnic groups, there are variations of same practices and sometimes there are real differences to be encountered.

As part of this introduction, the teacher will also have the students read and react to the article *The Many Faces of Africa*, an article which talks about the difficulty in establishing democratic stability in Africa because of the many different peoples, who each have different goals, needs, and agenda. This, of course, is understandable even if the ancestors of these different ethnic groups—who were all independent or autonomous before colonialism—lived more than a century ago. The emphasis, though, should be on the many different faces in the continent instead of the political problems.

Assignments for the next day:

Students will be asked to read the section “The Peoples” in the State Department’s Handbook on Cameroon, and Jean-Louis Ndongmo’s “L’Afrique en miniature: Brève présentation du Cameroon” (Africa in Miniature: A Brief Introduction of Cameroon)
Students will also be asked to watch, if they possess the documentary, sections of Mazrui’s documentary *The African*

Day Two: Continuation of the Introduction to the Peoples of Africa

As a continuation of the previous day’s lesson, two major activities will be completed today. Clips of Mazrui’s documentary will be shown to instill in students the concept that Africa as a continent is not one country, has black races of various traits who speak thousand of languages. That due to invasions by Arabs, Europeans and Moors certain areas of Africa also boast of those races. In addition, students will be questioned on their reading assignment.

Same materials from the previous day are applicable, except the assignment to get the students ready for the next day’s lesson.

The objectives are the same as stated on the previous page.

To proceed, teacher will first test students' understanding of the reading of the Hand Book on Cameroon, and Jean-Louis Ndomo's *L'Afrique en miniature*. Probing questions will be asked on the contents of the assigned section. Questions such as, how many ethnic groups are in Cameroon? Approximately how many distinct languages are spoken? How many languages are related and may be named dialects? What are the physical characteristics of certain specified groups? , etc., are likely to tell the teacher if the students did their homework or not. The teacher can then give a summary of the reading, highlighting the similarities in physical appearance and cultural practices and the differences in cultural practices. In addition, teacher will remind students that all these very groups were actually independent peoples under their various rulers—kings, emperors, etc., before colonization. This statement will then be related to Africa as a whole in which different groups were independent before their colonization.

Chosen sections of Mazrui's documentary or any other educational film that explains the existence of many peoples and cultural values, norms and practices which are sometimes exactly the same sometimes slightly different from one group to another, and sometimes totally different from one group to the other will then be shown.

Evaluation

Student understanding of the concept of different peoples, speaking different languages and making one and the same country is what they teacher has to establish here. The oral questions in class based on the readings will start to show which students understand the reading; which ones read but do not understand the concept, and which ones did not do their homework at all. In addition, the Board's standards in world languages will also be measured here. The reading in French about Cameroon being a miniature Africa in itself is considered advanced level. If this is a high level of French class, then that article should be discussed in French. Though the students will not be expected to know all the vocabulary and grammatical structures involved, they should be able to answer basic questions in French, most of which will be in line with the ideas also presented in the Hand Book in English.

Assignment for the next two day

1. Students will be asked to answer 15 questions on the peoples and cultures of Africa. First, questions will be limited to Cameroon with answers mostly found in the Hand Book and the article on Cameroon as miniature Africa; then they will generalize the idea to include all of Africa while referring to the Mazrui documentary as well as the article *Many Faces of Africa*.
2. Students will also be asked to read summarized material extracted from Davidson's A History of W. Africa, Moumouni's *L'éducation en Afrique*, and Obenga's Afrique centrale précoloniale.

Lesson Two (Days Three-Six): Africa Before Colonization (Political and Cultural State)

This lesson is intended to establish the facts that before colonialism, Africa had well-established political institutes, had educational systems and other cultural institutions, values and norms. Because this unit entails a lot of material, and the lessons are for high school and underclass students, it is necessary to take a few days to get as much reading as possible accomplished and as much discussion as possible during class. Daily objectives will be provided by teacher and should be linked to the reading assignments of the previous day.

Material Needed

1. Summarized material from Davidson's A West African History.
2. Summerized material from Theophile Obenga's Afrique centrale precoloniale.
3. Selected clips from Henry Louis Gate's *Wonders of the African World* film documentary.
4. "L'education dans l'Afrique Noire pre-coloniale" in Moumouni, pp 17-30.

Day Three: General Introduction to Pre-Colonial African Civilization

Material Needed: Henry Louis Gate's *Wonders of the African World*.

Procedure

Teacher will discuss, and brainstorm with students to discover what they think about pre-colonial African society in terms of education and related institutions, contributions to civilization, and cultural values, norms and practices. The class may keep this list to use as a point of reference or verification as the sessions go on. Teacher will then present a short lecture about cultural development in Africa, making sure to mention interesting and advanced civilization indicators such as the University of Timbuktu, Zimbabwe, etc. Today the presentation of clips from Henry Louis Gate's *Wonders of the African World* will make an impression on the students so that when they are reading the assigned texts for the following day, they can visualize things more clearly. If the showing of the selected clips is not complete because of time, it can be continued the next day before the discussion of materials assigned to be read.

Assignment for the following day

Students will be asked to read the following sources in order to prepare for the next day's discussion:

1. Teacher-summarized version of Davidson's West African History, in English
2. Teacher-summarized version of Obenga's Afrique centrale precoloniale in French
3. Teacher-summarized version of Moumouni's L'education dans l'Afrique noire.

In addition they will be given questions based on the readings, and they will be expected to answer questions about the greatness of the Ghana, Mali, Songhay, Kanem-Bornu, and Benin Empires as well the various several states that existed or emerged as a result of certain activities. This will be a concentration on mainly Davidson's book.

Day Four: The Peoples, Empires, Kingdoms and Other Institutions of Pre-Colonial Africa

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Name major empires and kingdoms of pre-colonial Africa.
2. State the characteristics of certain highly structured social institutions.
3. List definitive vibrant characteristics of main national groups.
4. Identify specific "Educational" institutions and processes in place.

Material Needed: Discussions will be concentrated on the contents of Davidson's West African History.

Procedure:

Teacher will give a short lecture to highlight the institutional and organizational strengths of West African empires and states, and how they were not only rich in tradition and culture, but also wealthy enough materially to attract the covetous eyes of their Berber and Arab neighbors who caused the downfall or diminished stance and influence of these empires and states.

Teacher will ask students to either read out answers to the questions or respond independently of the answer sheet if they know their answer by heart.

Assignment for Next Days:

Students will be asked to read carefully and conscientiously Obenga's Afrique centrale precoloniale. They will also be asked to answer similar content questions as to those they did after reading Davidson.

Day Five: The Empires of Central Africa.

Objectives:

Students will be to:

1. Name, in French, the kingdoms, states and empires of “central” Africa, including those in the lower Nile area.
2. Describe in a few French sentences their the political structure
3. Describe in a few French sentences the social institutions including court systems
4. State in French the economic activities, including manufacturing.

Materials Needed:

Teacher-summarized version of Obenga’s Afrique centrale precoloniale.

Procedure

Since this lesson is really complementary to the one on West Africa, teacher should first of all ask questions to students to make them think about connecting those two. Basic questions, if correctly answered, will show the students that Obenga starts where Davidson stops, so one is more or less the continuation of the other, though there is no evidence to establish that either or both authors thought in that direction.

After this, teacher will have students read out their individual answers to questions previously handed out the day before on the empires and kingdoms of Central Africa. The questions, following the objectives, should be centered on issues that help develop the students’ learning and understanding of the kingdoms, their political and economic bases, as well as the social structures.

Evaluation:

Students’ ability to connect Obenga and Davidson shows a good understanding by the student to see the continuity of the structure and nature of pre-colonial governance, social institutions and the economic bases. In addition, student’s ability to read and understand Obenga’s book or the teacher summarized version is an indication of his/her mastery of the advanced level, albeit in reading only. In order to certify student’s mastery in oral proficiency at this level a conversational situation will have to be put into effect.

Assignment for the Following Day’s Class

Students will be asked to read, again, the teacher summarized version of Moumouni’s L’Education dans l’Afrique precoloniale. Students who can read the whole section on pre-colonial education in the book will be encouraged to do that. Davidson’s Modern Africa also provides relevant information, and

teacher can assign that section on pre-colonial education for reading. In addition, questions based on the readings will be assigned, emphasizing the concepts in the objectives. The concept of the involvement of the whole nation in the education of the child has become very important in America recently—as the children in America become more and more removed from the nuclei family.

Day sixth: Education in Pre-colonial Africa

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. State the various stages in the pre-colonial education of an African child
2. Provide the essential activities which are involved in each of these stages
3. Show how the pre-colonial education of Africans was very cognizant of modern child development stages and theory.
4. Defend the practicality of the pre-colonial education of African children
5. Discuss the involvement of the “whole village” in educating a child.

Materials needed:

1. Teacher summarized version of section on pre-colonial education in Africa. (Full text for students who are more ambitious).
2. Section on pre-colonial education from Davidson.

Procedure

The teacher can start the class by restating the concepts and their importance in the development of any society. This is especially important for Africa, given the fact that Europeans have disputed the existence of real educational activities in pre-colonial Africa, and have instead claimed that it is their education that has mattered to the continent.

In his/her lecture, teacher should connect similar ideas presented by both Davidson and Moumouni, but should also emphasize concepts forwarded by each individual.

The second half of the lesson will be used for student discussions and out-loud reading of prepared answers to questions given the previous day. Other students are encouraged to correct what they think is wrong in their colleagues' answers.

Evaluation

Student understanding that “education” is a relative and not an absolute term or concept is important in this lesson. It is imperative that the teacher makes students understand that before European schools, there were individuals, groups, and institutions that educated Africans. Moreover, student understanding that the traditional African society actually incorporated child developmental stages in the educational processes is of high interest for students as well as for teachers. Lastly, the student’s measurement against the standards in reading French may be obvious in their understanding of the assigned text and their ability to provide written correct answers in French. To determine their oral proficiency, teacher will have to listen to oral answers to impromptu (not the prepared) questions. The student’s ability to quickly understand teacher and to correctly answer back with explanations, not just simple statements, without hesitation, will indicate his advanced standing in the proficiency evaluation.

The Remaining Lessons

The remaining lessons will simply be outlined. No lesson plans will be provided anymore, but the objective(s) of each lesson will be stated, as will the needed materials. With the given, the teacher can then prepare lessons with all the necessary details in each case.

Lesson Three: Colonial and neocolonial Education and Administration (Days 7 through 14)

Objectives of lesson

After the completion of the lesson, students will be able to discuss the process and effects of the French education and administration in Africa, including but not limited to “mis-education” of the African; the up-rooting of the social and political structure of the society; the inferiority complex placed on both the “educated” and the “uneducated” Africans; the break-down of the traditional societies; sprawling cities bringing immorality and crimes; the shift of power bases from the traditional to the “educated”; examples of disrespect toward traditional rulers; the demise of the oral tradition; the traditional ritual best clothing becomes the “Sunday best” for converts, etc.

Materials needed:

For these topics and objectives, the main materials to use include Moumouni’s L’Education en Afrique (which tells of the processes and consequences of French education); Obenga’s Afrique centrale precoloniale; John Jackson’s

Introduction to African Civilizations, in which he discusses the destruction of African culture (pp. 296-316); and Davidson's Modern Africa, which gives good background on colonial activities in Africa. For all my lesson plans, though, I have a lot of personal experience, some of which I have already mentioned, which I can readily use here.

Evaluation

Student understanding of accidents of history is important. So instructor will have to determine in various ways as to whether students grasped the concepts about the

African society before colonialism and the education and political activities that changed the society thereafter. While the social studies teacher will have benchmarks mostly related to this field, the French teacher will certainly accentuate activities related to French educational, political and cultural activities but must also observe student proficiency in the language.

Lesson Four: African Conscientiousness, the Literature of Protest and Revival (Days 15 through 19):

Lesson four may be viewed as one in which many dissatisfied Africans start to question both the colonial and neocolonial activities and effects in Africa, and how their questioning in various ways attack not only colonialists but also the Africans who take over and in some cases become "more French than the French" or "more English than the English." After the lesson, students will be able to discuss issues dealing with the up-rooting of the African and his response. In French, the literary trend is called "la littérature du deracinement." Literature of up-rooting is literature of protest and most of it is said to have contributed to the many coups in Africa, though the Army leaders themselves became no better in most cases. Those are the issues that students ought to be able to understand, discuss, analyze, and give opinions on.

Materials Needed

For this lesson, there are many resources that are available for instructors and students. In English and French, equally, there are resources without end. David Ndachi Tagne's Roman et Realites Camerounaises discusses many Camerounian writers of political and social issues involving pre-colonialism, colonialism and the fall of the absolute monarchy, as well as other social issues disappearing or appearing as a result of colonialism. Larson's The Emergence of African Fiction discusses Achebe's view on colonialism, and also has a chapter on the views of the assimilated negro under the French. Kaba's book Lettre à un ami.. is an open letter that discusses the arrogance of neocolonialists' misuse of power in former French colonies. In Imbo's Oral Traditions as Philosophy, the legacy of Okot P'Bitek for African Philosophy is defended on especially his drama *The Song of Lawino*, in which the oral tradition is emphasized, as the main character—Lawino, married to a western

educated man, complains that she cannot understand (and therefore finds meaningless) the new Western ways of her husband, Ocul. (p. 62). She asks her husband all through the song to go back to nature, to listen to the songs of the water, the trees, and the oral tradition. While all the books mentioned are important for the teacher and their pages can be Xeroxed from time to time for students, the one book which students ought to have for this section is Litterature Africain: Le Deracinement by Fouet and Renaudeau. Though this book is written in French, it treats African authors of all colonial background up till 1980, which includes the crucial period in this unit. It contains excerpts from novels, poetry, and tales—all of which has something to do with colonization and effects.

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Okpewho, Isedore. African Oral Literature. Bloomington: Indiana university Press, 1992.

Oliver, Roland and Anthony Atmore. Africa since 1800. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1978.

Reyher, Rebecca. The Fon and His Hundred Wives. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1952.

Vansina, Jan. Oral Tradition as History. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.

Wright, Quincy. Mandates Under the League of Nations. Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1930.

Annotated Teacher and Student Resources

Cameroon: A Handbook. The US Government State department, 1972.

The handbook on Cameroon is by the US State Department. It gives detailed information on the peoples and languages of Cameroon. In addition, it talks about the traditional political set-ups as well as colonialism and the political, social and economic consequences

Davidson, Basil. A history of West Africa. New York: Doubleday, 1966.

This is a good resource from which pages can be xeroxed and given to students. It starts with pre-colonial history and progresses to colonial and post-independent times. It mostly discusses the society, kingdoms, political and economic situations across the centuries. But it is limited to West Africa only

Deschamps, Hubert. Les Methodes et doctrines de colonisation de la France. Paris : Armand Colin, 1953. This is a very important source from which to

understand how French and other colonial wishes were forced on African peoples. Force and force were used in many instances, though in rare cases both carrot and stake were used.

Fouet, Francis and Regine Renaudeau. Litterature africaine : le deracinement. Dakar: Les Nouvelles editions, 1980. Litterature de deracinement is probably the one book that every student must have. Though it does not say much about the pre-colonial era, the book talks about all the colonial experiences suffered by Africans, and why there is writing that is against the European ways: education, religion, political rule, etc.

Groves, Charles P. The Planting of Christianity in Africa. Vol IV. London: Lutterworth Press, 1958. Christianity was mostly planted in Africa, as most of the traditional religion was forcibly uprooted or let to thrive with the traditional religions. This article discusses the fact that Christianity was not native to most of Africa before the arrival of Europeans and the various means in which this was introduced.

Hardy, Georges. La Politique coloniale et le partage de la terre aux XIXe et XXe siècles. Paris: Editions Albion Michel, 1937. Hardy's book describes the colonial politics which eventually led to the partition of Africa. Since this is emphasized in the unit, it would be of interest for the teacher to make copies of relevant pages for students to read during the discussion of this topic.

Imbo, Samuel Olouch. Oral Traditions As Philosophy: Okot P'Bitek's Legacy For African Philosophy. New York: Rowan and Littlefield, 2002. Though the title of this book seems to stress only the importance P'Bitek place in African philosophy, it also is crucial in incorporating the oral tradition which emerges beautifully in the *Song of Lawino*.

Jackson, John. Introduction to African civilizations. New York: Citadel press, 1994.

Jackson's book is very important for the understanding of the origin of world civilizations. He posits very strong arguments that Africa did not simply acquire civilizations from Europeans, but it could actually have been the other way round. He demonstrates in many ways including the origin of Man, and the ruins of civilizations dating far back, in Africa. On top of that he blames European for the destruction of African civilization.

Kaba, Lansine. Lettre à un ami sur la politique et le bon usage du pouvoir. Paris: Presence Africain, 1995. Mainly directing his opinions at the neocolonialists, Kaba writes an open letter to a friend in which he talks about the colonial past and all the atrocities, and how unfortunately the neocolonialist carried on the same and even worse practices. He addresses his

concerns to the conscience of these rulers, who have become more French than the French.

Larson, Charles. The Emergence of African Fiction. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971. Larson discusses most trends in Africa literature since its emergence. Chinue Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is the Archetypal novel with a character who stands up to the English "invasion" of his land. He also discusses what is "wrong" with the assimilated Africans.

Obenga, Theophile. Afrique centrale precoloniale: documents d'histoire. Paris: Presence Africaine, 1974. Obenga's book is an important documentary source, and as such is very central in establishing the fact that kingdoms existed; it even gives information on court procedures; installation of kings, etc., in Central Africa. This is a good complementary source to Davidson, whose book is on kingdoms and empires of West Africa.

_____. Cheikh Anta Diop. Volney et le Sphinx. Paris : Presence Africain, 1996.

Diop has been a hero of the African scholar for many years because of his dedication to research and proof of African civilization being the bases of world civilization, and Obenga's *Cheikh Anta Diop, Volney et le Sphinx* is a study in Diop's works linking African civilization to Egyptian.

Tagne, Ndachi David. Romans et Realites Camerounaises. Paris : Editions L'Harmattan, 1986.

Tagne is one who understands the concepts of assimilation and the concept of indirect rule. In either case, the mighty kings of Africa fall because they are not the equals of the white man. That concept and many others about Cameroonian novels is what makes his book the analyses of the realities in Cameroonian novels.

Documentaries

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. *The Wonders of the African world*. A PBS Home Video. Wall to Wall Television, 1999.

Mazrui, Ali. *The African*. A PBS Film Documentary

Web Information and Articles

The Many Faces of Africa. <http://www.highbeam.com>