

THE IMPACT OF ISLAM ON CAMEROON'S SOCIO-CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Jabiru Muhammadou Amadou

Research Scholar, Department of History, Higher Teacher Training College, University of Yaounde, Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

Cameroonians have and peacefully accommodate a variety of religious beliefs, and many individuals combine beliefs and practices of world religions with those of their own cultural groups. Islam penetrated Cameroon through the Northern Region (Adamoua, North, and the Far North) especially around the Lake Chad long before the Holy wars. An approximation of about 53 percent of the Cameroonian population is members of Christian denominations, about 23 percent practice mainly "traditional" religions, and approximately 24 percent are Muslim (Mbaku: 2005:56). In the French-speaking area, which is largely the Muslim North and a handful of pockets of Muslims in other Regions of Cameroon, Islam has through its growing integration into the Cameroonian society influence the already existing complex socio-political background and multifaceted cultural jamboree. This paper as such aims at conceptualizing and depicting the impact Islam has had since its inception in structuring the socio-political picture of the group of people who are in contact with it and the cultural practices in Cameroon in general.

KEYWORDS: *Structuring the Socio-Political Picture, Cultural Groups, Law and Scriptures*

INTRODUCTION

The complex Ethnolinguistic nature of Cameroon generally referred to on this count as *Africa in miniature*, did not result exclusively from colonialism. Colonialism might have added two foreign languages to it but the complexity in ethnic groups occurred long before - through intertribal wars, the search for agricultural land, good climates, protective boundaries, the attacks of the Arab fighters especially in Northern Africa, resettlement of freed slaves, and so forth (Onwubiko: 1973:1-30).

Islam, one of the religious faiths practiced in Cameroon has in its own way modify the beliefs, lifestyle, philosophies, etc. of the new recipients of this new belief. The various religious groups in Cameroon have had and continue to have fairly peaceful co-existence. This is evident in not only the absence of religious wars but to even a current instant were about four years ago, in a strongly Muslim city of Cameroon, a Muslim from the Bamoun people group left his wife and children at church each Sunday and picked them up after the service. This may be surprising to those who do not know how Islam was practiced among the Bamouns, but this did not surprise the local community where religious tolerance is the watchword.

Islam's Inception in Cameroon

Before the arrival of Islam, it was originally claimed that all the people of Northern Cameroon (where Islam had its entrance into the country) were 'pagans'. The greatest period of Islam's expansion was during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and today there are millions of practicing Muslims in Cameroon.

Islam was first introduced by traders and then by the Fulani conquests, who were the first ethnic groups to embrace Islam. Most of them became scholars and soon graduated and became clerics or religious leaders. The educated or town Fulani later joined the administration of the 'pagan' states and served the illiterate indigenous 'pagan' rulers as scribes, interpreters, secretaries, advisers, lawyers and magistrates (Tajoche:2008:39.¹ Apart from the Fulani, the Shuwa Arabs, the Kotoko, the Kanuri, etc also embraced Islam in Northern Cameroon.

Islam gained grounds in North Cameroon through the opening of Quranic schools by Muslim adherents. Muslim scholars taught the youth elements of the history of Islam law and scriptures. The Fulani soon gained political experience and were reluctant to serve the illiterate rulers. They wanted to establish an Islamic, theocratic state. When peaceful and diplomatic means failed they employed military or holy religious wars called 'Jihad'.

In places such as Mayo Daga, Ngaoundere, Banyo, Tibati and other areas west of the Adamawa plateau, the Jihad soldiers established bases from which they persistently harassed at will the indigenes of the neighboring and distant regions through the 19th century, with the exception of those who accepted the Muslim faith and Fulani domination. From their military base in Ngaoundere, the Fulani organized raids down south and dispersed many settlements in the present-day Eastern region of Cameroon. From the Adamawa, Islam was later spread down south by Modibo Adama's Lieutenant and it finally reaches the Western Grassfields in the late 19th century.

Surprisingly, the Bamenda Grassfields which was quite close and on the same attitude with the strong Fulani military bases escaped total subjugation by the Fulani warriors. Two principal reasons explain why the Bamenda Grassfields was never brought completely within the sphere of the Fulani influence despite its precarious location. The reasons were (a) the existence of the powerful Bamoun kingdom which flanks the western Grassfields in the Southeast and (b) the advent of Europeans with their Christian faith.

After all odds, the Islamic faith had and still continues to exercise a lot of impact in Northern Cameroon. Islam is a world religion which adapts more easily than Christianity to African ways of thought and social organization. Polygamy and bridewealth, for example, are not accepted by Christians, but these are part and parcel of Islamic systems. Moreover, admission to Islam was much easier than to Christianity for Christians missionaries often placed hurdles in the way of those seeking membership to their churches. That greatly explains the reason why adhesion into the Islamic faith was enormous. According to Taguem (2003:215-242), most tribes in Cameroon such as the Mundang, Toupouri, Mbum, Gbaya, Kirdi, Ewondo, Sawa, Bamileke, Bamoun, Nso became fertile grounds for converts into the Islamic faith.

As a matter of fact, there was a smooth and easy integration of those indigenous people to the faith. All the converts of Islam were received hospitably without any discrimination especially during the post-independent era when the head of state then (President Ahmadou Ahidjo) was himself a Muslim faithful, from the North. Also, due to the fact that

According to the teaching of the Quran, the Islamic religion does not discriminate in between a Fulani, Hausa, new or old converts; it has continued to receive new converts. The number of Muslims in Cameroon today had tremendously increased thanks to religious tolerance atmosphere and the openness nature of the Muslim religion (Nkwi and Warnier:1984:84-88). Credence should be given to the role of some Muslim Agencies and Arab Countries. Nevertheless, it is very important to recall here that many non-Muslim tribes embraced Islam because of political reasons and did abandon Islam when the context changed in 1982. Islam significantly penetrated different areas in Cameroon from the Northern Region through different means, which will be examined below.

Islam into the 'Bamoun' (Western Region) Community

It was during the 20th century that the Islamic religion was officially driven into the Bamoun chiefdom. This was thanks to the initiative of the Lamido of Banyo. It happened during one of those occasions when king Njoya (of Fouban tribe) was preparing a decisive battle against Gbetkom to secure his throne, which Gbetkom had the ambition of seizing. It was during the reign of Njoya that we witnessed the first contact and conversion of the Bamoun aristocracy to the Islamic religion. Gbetkom's intention was to forcefully seize the throne from the Queen mother, as such, distancing the young Njoya from the throne. Njoya had to resist Gbetkom with all his force. This resulted in a very long civil war that lasted for almost two years (Hamadou:2004:33).

In the course of the war, Njoya requested military assistance from the Lamido of Banyo, Lamido Umaru who decided to rescue the young monarch. Lamido Umaru arrived the Bamoun kingdom with a contingent of Fulani and Hausa warriors to help the young Njoya. When they arrived in the region, the Muslim army merged with that of Njoya and started preparing for an eventual battle. But then, before the commencement of hostilities, Umaru ordered his troops to take a little pause for prayer. He invited mallams who were leading the prayers to evoke "*Allah*" to help them assure victory. Following the Islamic tradition, the Fulani and Hausa warriors evoked God. A Mallam recited a verse of the Quran followed by his palms facing the sky after which the cavalry will answer. The Bamouns were very impressed with the ritual gestures of the Muslims combatants together with the lifting of their hands to the sky and bowing down altogether while evoking God as "*Allah Akbar*" continuously. The posture and way in which the Muslims soldiers accomplished their prayers charmed the Bamouns greatly (Tardits:1980:88).

After the war in which his Royal Highness Njoya emerged victorious with the help of Lamido Umaru of Banyo, he asked the Lamido what was at the origin of his success in the war. The Lamido of Banyo responded by sending him a *rosary, a white gown, a turban, and a trouser*. Lamido Umaru added that what gave him victory was that he is a Muslim and prayed to God "*Allah*". This was how Islam made its appearance into the Bamoun Kingdom. That is through their king and political leader. In order to consolidate and affirm the new Islamic religion of the Bamoun aristocrats, Lamido Umaru of Banyo decided to leave behind some Mallams to follow up and show the right way of Islamism to the new Muslims converts. These Mallams had as missions to convert the Bamoun Kingdom which later grew to a sultanate ruled by a sultan. Majority of the Bamoun population are Muslims. The Islamic religion covers almost 80 percent of the Bamoun population.

Islam into the Central Region

Islam in the MBAM Area

Islam implanted itself in the Mbam area toward the end of the 19th century. As a matter of fact, the first appearance of Islam in the Bafia community dates back to around 1890 by Hausa traders. They came from Banyo and the Woubar-Takuru (Nigeria) regions in search of slaves, cowries, ivory and kola nuts. Their real implantation in the area began in 1900. During their arrival, they were given land to settle by Chief Anony Adany. These Hausas had as leader a certain Sariki kiari. Sariki kiari became a very close and intimate friend to Chief Anony Adany of Bafia. Chief Anony Adany finally confined one of his sons, Machia, to the Hausa chief to bring him up. When Chief Anony Adany of Bafia died, he was replaced by his son Machia. Due to the friendship already established between the two communities, the Hausa and Bafia people became closer to each other.

A certain Mallam Adamu who was versed with the teaching of the Quran was charged to preach the Quran to the Bafia inhabitants. Chief Machia Anony later became interested in the Islamic religion and decided to be converted with his entire family into the Islamic faith. Presently, almost 25 to 30% of the Bafia population practices the Islamic religion. As a matter of fact, it is been said that this area comes third after the Northern and western region in terms of Islamic practices. According to Christian George(2005:19-26), intermarriages even take places between Hausas and the Bafia Muslims.

Islam in Yaounde

The first Muslims to settle in the town of Yaounde were Hausa and Fulani traders from Northern Cameroon. The area in which they first settled was called Ekoudou (Hausa Quarter), which later became known as 'Briqueterie'. Their arrival in Yaounde was precisely in 1936. Since then, the Muslim population in Yaounde has grown far and wide into many small pockets of settlements in the outskirts. They presently constitute a whole community (Umma) and have extended to six other localities of the town among which are: Mvog Atangana-Mballa, Elig, Belibi, Mvolye, Yaounde-station, Mfoundi, Marche Central, Hippodrome and Nlongkak. Apart from the Muslim communities such as the Hausas, Fulani, Kotoko, Arab Shuwa, we also have the Bamums and Bafia people who have adhered to the religion. As time went on, the Ewondo, Eton, Voute and Bamileke people became interested and started converting themselves to Islam. There has been a real integration between the original and new Muslim population in Yaounde town. Marriages have started taking place between the Hausa, Fulani and the Ewondo Muslims. Franco-Islamic schools have been opened, which is not restricted only to Hausa children. Children from various backgrounds attain those schools. This has gone a long way to consolidate unity and integration between the various communities.

Islam into Douala (Littoral Region)

Islam was introduced in Douala by Hausa and Fulani traders from Northern Cameroon. From the beginning, their main motive was commercial. Having arrived Douala in the early 1930s, they implanted themselves and started practicing their religion. The very first zones or areas they settle were New Bell, Bonaberi, Quartier Congo and Akwa. The Hausa traders in Douala later met local chiefs and quarter heads for land to settle. They also created good friendly ties with the Doula inhabitants. As time went on, due to the constant interaction between the Hausa and Douala inhabitants, some Doualas became interested in the Islamic religion and converted to it. Of recent, intermarriages have also started taking place between the Hausas, Fulani and Douala town. Many adherents are becoming interested and converting themselves to Islam. Islam presently comes second after Christianity in terms of practices in the city of Douala.

Islam into the South West Region

Another area in Cameroon where Islam had exercise great impact is the South West Region. Islam first came to this area thanks to the Hausa traders from Nigeria. From the onset, their main objective was to trade. They came to the region in search of Ivory, cowries, slaves and kola nuts. This was around the early 1930s. The first contingents of Hausa traders entered the South West through Mamfe, Ekok, Akwaya, and Kumba. By late 1940s and early 1950s, Hausa quarters were already established in towns like Mamfe, Kumba, Muyuka, Tiko, Buea, and Limbe. Those Hausa quarters encourage other Hausas to come and settle in the South West Region. The Muslim leaders created friendly ties with the local chiefs of these localities and as such, where given lands to settle. With time, some South West indigenous population became interested and converted to Islam. There have also been some few cases of inter-marriages between the Hausa and some South West indigenes. Islam comes second in terms of practice after Christianity in the region. The Muslim and Christian population of the South West region live in peace and harmony with each other. The Muslim population kept on increasing in number to the extent that last year (September 2009) an Anglo-Arabic school was opened by the Government at Down Beach, Limbe.

Islam into the North West Region

The Islamic faith was introduced into the North West Region by Fulani and Hausa clerics from Northern Nigeria and Adamawa Region of Cameroon. From then, it expanded into all the divisions and villages of the region. So many indigenous populations accepted and converted into Islam to become true practicing Muslims. We are going to examine the advent and spread of Islam into the seven divisions of the North West Region.

The Advent and Spread of Islam in Bui Division

Islam started gaining grounds in Nso and the entire grassland regions of Bamenda around the 20th Century. It is difficult to give exactly the year when Islam came to Nso before the second half of the 19th century. This view is based on the fact that during this period the Bansos (i.e. the people from Nso village) were involved in long distant trade with the people of Nigeria. Others hold the view that it entered Nso in the first half of the 20th century. What is clear is that the entry of Islam in Nso was a gradual process through trade contacts. It is also true that there might have been Hausa-Muslim and Fulani traders in Nso before the second half of the 19th century, but might have been more concerned with trade than with the spread of the religion. Whatever the case, Islam became prominent in Nso and all over Bui Division during the period of German rule in Cameroon because the Fulani were sure of their protection from the Germans.

Several versions have been advanced to explain the birth of Islam in the Nso society. The first of these is put forth by the Muslim community of Nso. According to some of them, the first group of Hausa and Fulani Muslims came from Bamessing and settled at Jakiri before finally moving to Kumbo in 1920 during the reign of Fon Ngah Bifon I (1910-47). They are said to have come from Northern Nigeria to Bamessing before moving to Nso. While in Kumbo, they requested a piece of land on which to settle. The Fon offered them the piece of land which is presently occupied by the Catholic Cathedral. This came about when Fon Ngah Bifon I's successor Sembum II (1947-72) offered the Catholics the site and gave the Muslims a new site at Mbeh. When some Muslims refused to leave the site for the new one, the Fon ordered their forceful expulsions from the site.

It should be pointed out that, contrary to this fact, Banso Muslims believed that it was because of the spread of Islam in Nso that problems arose between them and the Catholics over their first piece of land. They argued that it was for this reason that the Catholics attacked them and destroyed their property. Having been evicted from this site, some of the Hausa Muslims moved to Sabon-Gari and Ndu and some moved to different villages in Nso, while a small number remained at Mbeh.

Some Muslims also believe that Islam first came to Nso through Banso men who went to sell kola nuts at Yola and Kano in Nigeria and adopted, it calling it 'LiGasah' (Hausa way of life) and through a group of Hausa immigrants who settled at Mbivt in mbang in Kumba. To some people, Islam came to Nso through indigenous, Nso cattle drovers who either admired the religion practiced by their masters the Fulani, and decided to be converted to it or were provoked into adopting it because their masters referred to them as infidels.

Another version states the Hausa Muslims and Fulani first settled in the Bamenda station. They came from Adamawa as carriers, guides, and servants since they had invaluable knowledge of West Africa. They numbered around 30. By 1905, their number had increased to about 50 thanks to other newcomers led by Sarikin Balarebe and assisted by Mallam Baba Gando. Mallam Baba Gando had four wives namely Wurawa, Nuhra, Pulera and Habiba and 15 children. This settlement resulted in trade and exchange between the Hausa and the indigenes. Trade became so beneficial especially to the Hausa who often carried kola nuts and ivory to as far as Adamawa in Northern Nigeria that they cultivated an attitude of going directly to the kola nuts and Ivory areas so as to deal directly with the indigenes. This explains why a group of Hausas was said to have been identified in Nso during an elephant hunting expedition in about 1906 searching for ivory. This led their settlement in Nso a few years before the First World War (Awason:1984:34-36).

While in Nso, the Hausa presented themselves to the Fon (Ngah Bifon I) as friends of the Germans. This is because they felt that the Fon of Nso could not refuse their demands in view of the punitive raid which the Germans had organized against Banso people in 1906 when the Bansos attempted to resist German rule. The Hausa Muslims were thus settled at the site presently occupied by the Kumbo Catholic Cathedral which is a few meters away from Fons's palace. These Hausa Muslims were led by their leaders Mallam Maidougou Inusa of Katagam from Nigeria.

These different versions seem to suggest that Islam came to Nso from different directions. Even some widely traveled Banso traders who had embraced Islam were also instrumental in implanting Muslims in Nso. The first settlement of Muslims at the present site of the Kumbo Cathedral paved the way for another Hausa Muslims to join the group and by 1922, the Hausa community numbered about 100 people in Nso. This spread was in line with the Islamic stipulation that a "Muslim who professes Islam, must be armed and determined to spread the word of God (Allah). As the faith spread to other parts of Nso, a Home Quranic school was established by Mallam Abdullahi to instruct children and other interested persons of Nso in the precepts of Islam and way of life of Muslims.

Many Nso persons sent their children to this school which was also attended by an adult such as Mallam Gargari of Njoubow, who established their own school in their own village after completing tier course of study. The Hausa settlement in Kumbo also resulted in the construction of a mosque where the Hausa and Fulani settled, most of whom resided on a grazing hill top with their cattle. They and their Hausa brethren worshipped and practiced Islam together. It is said that this mosque was constructed with sticks and a thatched roof. This did not only concretize their settlement in Nso but also symbolized the presence of Islam in Nso.

It should be noted that economic, social and political factors were responsible for the spread of Islam in Nso. Economically, trade was the most common and important factor that helped in the spread of Islam within and without the Bamenda Grassfields and most especially in Nso. Kola nuts and ivory which the Hausa needed very much were in abundance in Nso and thus attracted their presence. Also, as earlier mentioned some Bansa traders had come into contact with Hausa Muslims from Ngaoundere, Garoua, and some of the Hausa states of Northern Nigeria, notably Kano, Katisina Ala, and Yola. This encounter had made some of them embrace Islam especially as the Hausa in these areas treated them cordially. It is said that when they came back to Nso, they did not practice Islam until the arrival of the Hausas because most people in the area did not know anything about it. They were thus only interested in their trade (Awasom:1984:34-36).

According to Mohammadou Madugu, the Hausa Muslims and the Fulani used to trade as the main vehicle for the spread of Islam. They understood that good relationship with the Bansa people could be created through trade and once this was done it would be easier to preach Islam and hence spread it to other parts of Nso. Geographically, Nso was characterized by grassy highlands suitable for grazing. Its rich pastures and a network of streams permitted the cattlemen to rear their cattle. Also, its rich soils were suitable for the production of food crops such as maize, beans, and Irish potatoes. These food items made it possible for the Hausa to settle without any problem, which thus worked in favor of the spread of Islam.

Socially, the ideas preached by Uthman Dan Fodio during the Jihad of 1804 greatly influenced the spread of Islam in Nso. Uthman cautioned his followers that whenever they gain the influence they should teach those who have accepted Islam and after their understanding of the Muslim religion, they may intermarry with them. This situation greatly enhanced the spread of Islam in Nso, as some of the people of Nso who completed the Quran were converted to Islam. Typical examples were people like Adamu Karajan and Alkali Salle, the father of Aoudou Tar, who with some other Hausa Muslims inter-married with the local population of Nso. This helped to increase the number of Islamic believers in Nso and hence its spread. Even more important in the spread of Islam in Nso was the fact that a majority of Nso traders had to learn the Hausa and Fulfulde languages for communication purposes (Njeuma:1989:5).

The Hausas and Fulani understood neither Pidgin English nor Lamso and preferred to use their languages. Although some Bansa Muslims felt that the Hausas and the Fulani were pruned to these languages, in order to force the Nso people to learn them, this paved the way for their conversion into Islam. However, there were some Nso traders who studied the language in order to facilitate communication with the Hausa Muslims and the Fulani community (Aboubakar:1997:24).

Politically, the Hausa Muslims and the Fulani were said to be peaceful people. In addition, the hospitable nature of the people of Nso and their willingness to accept any new religion helped to hasten the spread of Islam in Nso. It is said that Fon Ngah Bifon I sent Umaru Dor and Garba Langwa to Ngaoundere to study the Hausa and Fulani languages so as to ease communication problems between himself and the Hausa Muslims. The gesture by the Fon and the willingness of the Nso to be receptive to new ideas, also worked in favor of the spread of Islam. It should be noted that while in Ngaoundere, Umaru Dor and Garba Langwa also studied the Quran and when they returned to Nso, they established home Quranic schools in their respective villages of Mendzem and Mveh in Kumbo. By so doing, they prepared the way for the conversion of more people to Islam. Ibrahim Nformi, Adamu Chin and Adamu Ndze were converted to Islam by this

means. The first woman to be converted to Islam was Kiwoushu. Inter-marriages also took place between the Hausa-Fulani and indigenous Muslims.

The attitude of the various Nso Fons towards Islam also contributed to the spread of Islam in Nso. The Fons were willing to accept newcomers. The warm reception accorded the first Hausa Muslims and Fulani settlers who requested a piece of land for settlement indicated his willingness to allow the newcomers to settle, worship freely and spread their religion. His decision to send Umaru Dor and Garba Langwa to Ngaoundere to learn the Hausa and Fulfulde languages also showed the importance he attached to Islam. Before his death in 1947, he had helped to lay the ground-work for the spread of Islam and his successors did their best to accomplish it.

His successor Sehm III as already indicated continued with Fon Ngah Bifon's policy of encouraging Islam. Unlike his predecessor, Sehm III's dealings with the Hausa and Fulani Muslims went further in that he acquired the name Ibrahim which made him a full Muslim. His decision to be converted to Islam with the name Ibrahim is said to have been due to his admiration of the Fon of Bamum, Sultan Saidou Njimoulou, Njoya who had just returned from Mecca. It is said that before leaving sultan Njimoulou's place, where he was visiting, he had already made up his mind to become a Muslim. There are two versions concerning the story of his conversion. The first is that Sultan Njimoulou sent a delegation to Nso to convert him with 100 notables and 300 other persons. The second one is that Sultan Njimoulou personally officiated his conversion into Islam. What is important is that he finally became a practicing Muslim. Fon Sehm III laid the foundation stone for a Friday Mosque to be constructed near the Nso Palace. As a matter of fact, he gave part of his Palace for that Mosque to be constructed. His decision to construct a mosque in the Palace was unsuccessfully opposed by many Nso Christians (Aboubakar:1997:24).

When Fon Shm III died, his successor Fon Ngah Bifan II (1972-83) continued with his religious policy. As a Muslim converted, Fon Ngah Bifon II earned the name Mohammadou. He was converted at the same time as Shunfaafy Yuwar, Shunfaay Luun and Shunfaay Mvem all of them great Lords, Fon's councillor and councillors of the Friday mosque started by his predecessor and personally supervised the collection of funds for the project. The construction began in earnest with contributions in cash and kind from the Hausa and Fulani Muslims as well as non-Muslims. The importance of the construction of this mosque lies on the fact that it attracted the highest sense of responsibility from every Muslim in Nso through contributions towards its realization. Jumbam (2005:86-89) is of the opinion that the Fulani from all Bui villages contributed immensely in cash and in kind. Besides this, another mosque was constructed at Roogasa. The Fondom of Nso could then boast of a giant mosque besides many other minor ones spread all over the Fondom. Fon Ngah bifon II was the first Nso Fon to go on pilgrimage to Mecca, under the sponsorship of the then president of the United Republic of Cameroon Ahmadou Ahidjo.

The third Fon of Nso to be converted to Islam in the same order of reign was Ngah Bifon III (1983-1993). He was previously a Catholic and converted into Islam in December 1986. Fon Ngah Bifon III became the second Nso Fon to go on pilgrimage to Mecca, sponsored this time by the Muslim community in Nso. His conversion earned him the name Saidou. During his reign, he helped in the spread of Islam by completing the building of the Friday mosque begun by his predecessors. About fifteen of his wives and their children were also converted to Islam. The conversion of all these three traditional rulers greatly advanced the cause of Islam in Nso. After having examined the advent and spread of Islam in Bui Division, the Mezam and Ngoketunja Division will be discussed.

Islam into Mezam and Ngoketunjia Divisions

The coming of Islam into Mezam and Ngoketunjia Divisions was viewed by most of the indigenes with mixed feelings. This was because the first Caravan of Hausa traders who came to Bamenda between 1902 and 1903 signaling the advance of Islam into Ngemba land entered the region from the direction of Bali Nyonga. Before long, Muslim communities of Hausa people were already settling up in different parts of the Grassland generally and in Mezam and Ngoketunjia areas in particular. If there was any hope of forestalling the implantation of Islam forcefully before it had won its first adherents in the regions, such hopes were destroyed by the German's proscription of war after they had set up an effective administration in the western Grassfields and established a military fort of Bamenda in 1902. The Germans outlawed war and any form of repression in the regions. This actually encouraged the influx of Hausa traders and Muslim scholars who did well to implant and spread the Islamic religion in Mezam and Ngoketunjia Divisions. The early Hausa settlers were mostly German guides, carriers and servants recruited from the Adamawa Plateau and Northern Cameroon because of their wide knowledge of West Africa (Keller:1969:28).

The penetration of Muslims into Mezam and Ngoketunjia areas were marked by tension, fear, and suspicion on the part of the indigenes. The people developed apprehensions against the Muslims because the memories of the Bali-Nyonga-German wars against Mankon and Bafut ally in 1891 and in 1889 were still very fresh. Those wars had resulted from an alliance contracted between the German, Eugen Zintgraff, and the Fon of Bali-Nyonga on August 24, 1891. One of its provisions was that Bali would serve as the base for German expansion and control of the powerful chiefdoms of the Bamenda Grassfields. When the German military station in Bali was transferred to Bamenda station in 1902, the indigenes feared that it was another attempt by the Germans to wage another war against the Mankon people. This fear was increased when Hausas again came from the direction of Bali. Stories were already told about their skills in wars.

The reason for accepting Muslims to settle in Mankon and Santa was because of the German administration. The Hausas were considered to be friends of the Germans. They provided the Germans with intelligence reports concerning the activities of the indigenous communities. But the fear that any war against the Hausa might be considered as an attack against the Germans prevented the Mezam people from rising in the war against the Muslims.

This reason, however, encouraged the Muslims to build their mosques in Mankon and Santa. Sarikin Hausawa, together with some elites, made possible the building of a mosque and a Quranic school, and appointed, an Islamic scholar, a certain Mallam Suley Manu as the Imam to lead the community in prayer. Mallams were appointed to take charge of the Quran in the school (Awason:1984:32-36). The Imam was somebody very versed in the teachings of the Quran and the Hadith. He was assisted by a Naibi. When both the Imam and Naibi were not around, any Mallam was chosen to lead the prayers. The calling of the faithful five times a day to prayer was done by the Ladan in obedience to the five pillars of the Islamic faith. Everyone who desired to be a Muslim was under an obligation to follow the Quran and the Sunnah which constituted the basic laws of the Islamic faith. A few years later, two other Hausa settlements were also established in Bali and Bafut. Hausa traders from Northern Nigeria and Northern Cameroon were at the origin of these settlements. From the beginning, these settlements were small in size in terms of population; but as time went on, it attracted other Hausa migrants to come and settled there. The Hausa communities in Bali and Bafut eventually choose their leaders to head their settlements. As the Hausa population kept on increasing, the Sarikin Hausawas of Bali and Bafut decided to build a mosque each in their respective settlements. With the contribution of the Hausa faithfuls in cash and

kind, two erected mosques saw the light of day in Bali and Bafut. Quranic schools were also open beside those mosques to teach the faithful the Quran and basic principles of the Islamic religion. With all this development, some of the indigenous population of these villages became interested in the Islamic religion and were converted to it.

The first erected Hausa settlement was Mallam Abakpa-Mankon Hausa settlement under the leadership of Mallam Baba Gando. At this time, he was at the head not only of the Hausa community in Mankon but also of all the other Hausa settlements in the Bamenda Grassfields. The Mallams in the Muslim community was in charge of spiritual affairs and led the prayers at dawn and at dusk. This was usually done in the mosque. Mallam Baba taught and encouraged the study that was the Quran. This was done in all the mosques that were constructed in Ngemba before and after the First World War of 1914-1918 (Aboubakar:1997:24).

When the Germans were dislodged from the Western Grassfields in 1916, the British took over the administration of the region from the Muslims in Abakpa-Mankon who then took refuge in Fouban and Bafia. Under G.S. Podevin, the region extending from Kentu in the North to Ossidinge (Mamfe) in the south was reorganized and named Bamenda Division. G.S. Podevin decided to negotiate the return of the Hausa refugees from Fouban because he faced the administrative problem of lack of adequate intelligence and auxiliary staff. When the Muslim refugees returned in 1916, they made their first settlement at Poto Poto near the German Fort. But because of their noisy activities-announcement of prayer sessions and the sound of maize pounding at late hours and early mornings, they were forced to move their settlements to the foot of the Bamenda escarpment where they constructed another mosque for religious worship and prayers.

The British administrators then informed the village head of Mankon that the Hausas were authorized to settle only after their chief offered the Fon of Mankon some gifts in the form of beads, salt, cloths, and a variety of European goods and made a formal request to settle in Mankon. They then established a Muslim settlement at Azire quarter where they were only for a short time. They later moved to the present settlement (old town). The Hausa eventually called the whole town Abakpa, meaning in Hausa 'a stranger settlement'. The original population of the settlement was estimated in 1932 at about two hundred Hausas.

Since 1961, a bigger central mosque had been built in a place of the old one, and two other mosques have been added in Down Town and New Town. From the time of the founding of the Abakpa settlements, four Imams have led the community in prayers. These are Mallam Suley Manu from 1918-1950, Mallam Hamisu from 1972-1993, and the present Imam Alhaji Swaibou Baba Mallam who took over in 1993. It is important to note here that many indigenes of the villagers in Bamenda have been converted to the Islamic faith.

Some of the Hausa who earlier settled in Abakpa-Mankon later decided to migrate and settle in Bamessing, Ndop. Haven arrived there, they contacted the traditional rulers of Ndop for permission to settle. The traditional ruler granted them the permission and they sent gifts to him as a form of gratitude and good-will. They then founded a new settlement in Bamessing, Ndop. After that a mosque was built to enable the faithful to pray five times a day. Quranic schools were also opened to teach the Muslim faithful the Quran and Hadith. Here also, some indigenous people became interested in the Islamic faith and they were converted into it (Christian George:2005:19-26).

The second Muslim community after the Hausas was that of the Jafun Fulani who is a mixture of patrilineal clans also from Northern Nigeria and Northern Cameroon. The branch of Jafun that penetrated the region with the help of Hausa

traders from the Adamawa plateau about 1916 was led by Ardo Sabga Bi Hobba. Sharing both a common religion (Islam) and place of origin with the Hausa, the Fulani developed a closer relationship with them than with the local people of the Bamenda Grassfields. By the 1930s a considerable number of Fulani pastoralists were already settled in the Bamenda Grassfields. The Gosi clan of Ardo Sabga who was deeply rooted in the Islamic faith settled at Babanki Tungo. Those who settled in the Ngemba region were concentrated in the South-Western outskirts of Mankon and Santa central.

Due to the fact that the Sabga settlement was made up generally of nomadic pastoralists, some of them only began to settle in Abakpa-Mankon after the 1950s. But the Fulani Muslim population in Mankon remained small in comparison with that of the Hausa. Ardo Saba contacted the traditional rulers of Ndop for permission to settle in the area. When the request was granted, the Fulani sent some gifts of cows to the traditional ruler of that area. Ardo Sabga was then chosen as the traditional leader of all the Fulani in Ngoketunjia in particular and the Bamenda Grassfields at large. According to Rhamani (2004:8-11), he first took the title of Ardo and later Lamido when the Ardorate was up-graded to a lamidate.

The Lamido of Sabga immediately ordered the construction of a mosque for prayers. Contributions were made in cash and kind by the Fulani and Hausa Muslim faithful to build the mosque. A giant mosque was then erected in Sabga where the Muslim faithful pray five times a day following the prescription of the Holy Quran. Islamic schools were also opened to teach the Muslim faithful the Quran and the Hadith. The building of this mosque attracted other Hausa and Fulani Muslim faithful to migrate and settled in Ndop. The manner of worship of the Muslims also attracted some indigenous population of Ngoketunjia. Many of them were subsequently converted into the Islamic faith. As time went on, two other mosques were erected in Bamessing and Babanki respectively. It is worthwhile noting that the Muslim population in Mezam and Ngoketunjia Division has grown to alarming proportions. This is thanks to the numerous conversion of the indigenous population into the Islamic faith.

Following the implantation of Islam in Mezam and Ngoketunjia Divisions, some indigenous people accepted conversion into that faith. Such conversion helped to swell the Muslim population and to the spread of the faith in the areas. Some of the indigenes who embraced Islam moved to settle and stay in Muslim quarters with the rest of the Muslims. This equally forced them to change from their traditional ways to the Muslim ways of life. Examples were Mama Hellen Mambo in Santa –Ndzong, Mama Mary, Titus and Mr. John of old Town who converted to the Islamic faith. All the Muslims in Mezam and Ngoketunjia who were converted were educated and given doctrine classes by the Imams and Mallams in both areas. In preaching the Islamic faith, the Imam made it clear that there is the existence of the Supreme Being who controls the destiny of Mankind. He emphasized the existence of “Heaven” for the faithful after death. He preached the doctrine of predestination, resurrection and the last day of judgement (Christian George:2005:19-26).

In a nutshell, activities of other religious and economic partners like the Hausa merchants, Kanuri clerics (*goni*) and Fulani herdsmen, and more especially the role played by Muslim civil servants, were instrumental in bringing about a substantial number of conversions.

Medium of Islam Dissemination in Cameroon

Islam, which had as original language Arabic, was disseminated to the different areas in Cameroon mostly through the language of the speech community of the converts, languages of wider communication of the region concern, Hausa or Fulfulde. This implies that with the advent of Islam, most of the converts became scholars and soon graduated and became clerics or religious leaders for their speech communities. Most often, the educated in Arabic now had to

translate or interpret the Holy book 'Quran' into the indigenous languages (considering a large number of languages in Cameroon!) so that they could make it comfortable to reach and subsequently appeal to the non-Arabic speakers of the different ethnic groups. A good example of such situations was the case of Sultan Njoya who after studying the Quran interpreted it into the Bamoun language for his people. Islam gained grounds in North and other Regions of Cameroon through the opening of Quranic schools by Muslim Fanatics or adherents, where the Muslim scholars taught the youths elements of the history of Islam, law, and scriptures. Worth mentioning is also the fact that Muslims activists, especially those who have received their training in Arab countries/institutions became veritable actors of the Arabization of Cameroon. Unlike their predecessors who thought Islam could expand through local languages (Fulfulde, Hausa, etc), they strongly believe that a good Muslim is someone who speaks, writes and reads Arabic (Takou:2011:1-300).

It is therefore not surprising that the indigenous languages of those ethnic groups that embraced the Islamic religion have experienced some phonetic and/or morphological changes as a result of their indirect or direct contact with Arabic, the main language of the Quran. In some areas like in the North, Western and NorthWest Regions of the country, most of the converts did not only change or acquire new Muslim names but went as far as acquiring Hausa and/or Fulfulde language(s), which were the languages of the early Muslim faithful who had the charge of converting the 'pagans'. It is on this ground that Hausa, Arabic, Wandala, Kanuri and to a larger extent Fulfulde in the Northern Region have been considered as some of the languages of wider communication in the Cameroon linguistic landscape. Islam, for example, is part of the Pulaaku which is the Fulani way of life or philosophy. The distribution of some of the media for Islam dissemination are summarized in table 1

Table 1: Languages used as Lingua-Franca in the Ten Regions of Cameroon for Communicating and Propagating Islam

No	Regions	Lingua Franca (S)
1	Extreme North	Arabic, Wandala, Kanuri, Fulfulde
2	North	Fulfulde
3	Adamawa	Fulfulde
4	Littoral	Duala, Basaa, Pidgin English
5	South West	Pidgin English
6	North West	Pidgin English
7	West	Medumba, Mungaka, Pidgin English
8	Centre	Ewondo, Basaa, Pidgin English
9	South	Ewondo
10	East	Ewondo

Source: Adapted from Neba et. al. 2006: p.42

From the above table it can be observed that in three out of ten Regions in Cameroon (the Extreme North, North, and Adamawa), Arabic, Wandala, Kanuri and Fulfulde have obtained the linguistic status of 'lingua franca' (language of wider communication) thanks to the expansion and practices of the Muslim religion by the indigenes. That is also the case of Bassa language in the Littoral and Central Regions of Cameroon. Thus, it can be seen that the arrival and peaceful penetration of the Islamic faith in the Cameroonian society has and is having a significant structuring of the sociolinguistic landscape despite the already complex linguistic nature before Islam's arrival.

Islam's Impact on the Academic, Economic and Political Situation in Cameroon

The political, economic and social-academic developments, especially in Northern Cameroon, were conditioned by the aftermath of the 19th century Islamic Jihads. The Islamic doctrine which was the basis of the Jihad was propounded

by the prophet Mohammed in 610 AD. It is claimed by the Muslim faithful that Mohammed introduced this doctrine to complete the divine revelations already given to human-kind by God (Allah) to earlier prophets such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Jesus. The Islamic faith was first established in Mecca, Arabia, where it began to spread to other parts of the world through the actions of Muslim clerics, scholars, and traders (Christian George:2005:19-26).

Education and Islam

History has it that toward the end of the nineteenth century, Sultan Njoya of the Bamoun tribe emerged as one of Cameroon's most important intellectuals. After he studied the Islamic texts, he developed a written script for the Bamoun language, which was later used to produce tracts on traditional medicine, his kingdom's laws and customs, and a volume that contained a new religion based on Islam, Christianity, and Bamoun traditional religious practice. Unfortunately, the French (due to selfish political interest) destroyed Sultan Njoya's printing press, closed down all the royal schools, and exiled the king to Yaounde, where he died in isolation (Mbaku:2005).

The evolution of Islam's impact on the educational landscape of Cameroon can be better evaluated after independence and reunification in 1960 and 1961 respectively. The reason is that not much was realized before the first President Amadou Ahidjo who was a Muslim Faithful from the North, came to power. The Ahidjo's regime was welcomed with a proliferation of schools, Islamic learning and training institutes as well as Islamic health centers, which demonstrated how Islam was progressively supplanting the state.

President Ahidjo with the help of some Arab countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia granted state scholarships to more than one hundred and fifty students from 1965 to 1980 to pursue religious studies in Arab countries. His concealed intention was to substitute scholars trained in Arab countries for local illiterate clerics in the Arabic language as a strategy to dismantle and weaken the opposition to his regime mounted around the traditional rulers. During Ahidjo's era, the steady increase in the number of students benefiting from private foreign scholarships to read the religious sciences of Islam in renowned state universities such as Al-Azhar in Cairo (Egypt) or Um al-Qura' in Madina (Saudi Arabia) was an "open secret." (Adama:2004:29-38). A country such as Saudi Arabia did not hesitate giving scholarship to Cameroonian Muslim student to study in her country simply because it was a means of expanding Wahhabism which is a state ideology.

Locally, he favored the introduction of the Arabic language in the curricula of public secondary schools and encouraged the creation of a new educational system made from a blend of the Arabic and French curricula: the resultant structure was dubbed Ecole Franco-Arabic. Even though the concept of Franco-Arabic Schools began during the French Colonial period, President Ahidjo was the one who promoted them and ensured their proper functioning. Traditional Qu'ranic schools flourished with subvention from the government. Both the traditional and modernized or renewed Franco-Arabic schools increased their intake by progressively integrating qualified personnel, the majority of whom were trained in Middle Eastern universities.

Generally in Cameroon, remembering one's ancestors, elders, and origins is an increasing concern of most parents whose children spend long hours in public schools and often leave their homelands to find work in urban centers and on industrial plantations. Considering the fact that beliefs and practices concerning child-rearing vary by ethnic group, those communities that had embraced the Islamic faith, have somehow a stereotype approach to education, which is largely influenced by their Muslim beliefs. It is for this reason that even when some Muslim parents allow their children to pursue the western Education format, they later complement it with these children attending Quranic schools or better still Anglo-

/Franco-Arabic schools if available in their neighborhoods. These Islam oriented schools are there to instruct the children and other interested persons of the community in the precepts of Islam, the Quran and the way of life of a 'good' Muslim. The numbers of Quranic and Anglo-/Franco-Arabic schools are fast increasing even in some regions of Cameroon that were formally strongholds of the Christian faith. This and the conspicuous presence of Mosques in almost all the localities that Muslim congregations can be sited are pure indications of the fact that there is not only a peaceful co-existence of different religious groups in Cameroon but that Islam is no longer a religion of the northern region but it is fast having its roots throughout the entire territory.

Economical Influence from Islam

Economists have increasingly emphasized the role of institutions in shaping economic activity. Among the many studies on institutions, however, there has been relatively little research on the economic role of religion in modern societies or in recent episodes of economic growth and change in Cameroon. This lack of research works is surprising because religious practices, traditions, and philosophies are important components of national cultures that shape institutions. Considering the fact that the penetration of Islam in most areas in Cameroon has been under the cover of trade contact, it is therefore normal that the economic landscape of Cameroon has been greatly influenced by Islam faithfuls. The Hausas and Fulanis penetrated the Yaounde, Mbam and Douala regions as traders from the North of Cameroon searching for slaves, cowries, ivory and kola nuts. In the South West and North West Regions, the Muslim warriors came from Nigeria and some from North of Cameroon all in the name of commerce.

The impact of Islam on the Cameroonian economic landscape cannot be underestimated. Today, a visit in any market of the towns and especially the Yaounde and Douala cities will confirm the fact that the Muslims are the backbone of most commercial activities (second to the Bamilekes) nationwide. Their trade-inclined nature can be strongly associated with their Muslim practices considering the fact that those who were their mentors or leaders earned their living through trading. In this respect, the embrace of Islam has been more of a blessing to the Cameroonian society than a curse.

Politics and Islam in Cameroon

The first President of Cameroon, Ahmadou Ahidjo was a practicing Muslim from the northern city of Guider and as such the political landscape of the country was carved from an Islamic conceived perspective. Talking politics in Cameroon, two attitudes punctuated the Ahidjo's regime in its interaction with religion in general and Islam in particular. These were the policy of "generosity" and "containment" carried over from the colonial period. The regime was overly generous with regards to Muslim traditional or religious authorities by multiplying symbolic acts that were to constitute landmark gestures in favor of Islam. Among the many activities carried out was the 1963 decree creating the 'Association Culturelle Islamique du Cameroun' (ACIC). The new structure had two main objectives: (1) the management of central mosques and (2) the organization of the Islamic educational system throughout the republic. Today, it is known that the Islamic Cultural Association did not meet all the expectations placed on it both by the state and Muslim community, and this inability and failure of ACIC was partly rectified by the state. With regards to the construction of central mosques, for example, prospective enterprises were selected and retained at a higher decision making level.

The dialogue promoted by the state was extended to clergymen and their entourages. To let actions speak louder, religious authorities or their relatives benefited regularly from the generosity of senior administrators in terms of scholarships in Arab countries, transport requisitions during the pilgrimage (*hajj*) or preferential treatment during visits at

the presidential palace. Interestingly, the activities of the number of Christian churches, notably evangelization campaigns were reduced to a minimum. Jehovah's witnesses were prohibited from proselytizing activities. In public administration as well as in the national army, the hierarchy, with regards to commanding positions or promotion in grade, treated the educated Muslim elites, mostly graduated from high schools, with preference. Some were even recruited in public administration and they ended up being promoted to the high post of responsibilities. Nonetheless, most of them remain jobless especially those who earned their degrees from Arab institutions. Their training did not fit the local job system and they were unable to find jobs. The fact that they lacked jobs developed animosity with locally trained Muslims leaders. Exchanges with the Arab countries and the Muslim world were intensified and in 1974 Cameroon became a full member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) (Adama:2004:54-55).

The early days of Amadou Ahidjo's reign were marked by a policy of openness toward Islamic and Arab countries, where Cameroon's privileged relationships with some politically moderate Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt became outstanding. Within the country, Islam benefited from the overt support of the political authorities. Members of the Muslim literates were recruited in public administration and some were promoted up to cabinet level. Consequently, Islam attracted a substantial number of converts regardless of their religious past or ethno-cultural stand. The growth and multiplication of the faithful from various horizons necessitated the setting up of intake structures to prepare their integration into the Muslim community.

In 1982, Ahidjo resigned his office and handed the government to a Southern Christian, Paul Biya, who now started orienting the political machinery from a Christian view -point. This abrupt changes of religious camp lead to the Muslims' lamentation that the Biya's regime is systematically implementing policies that have steadily marginalized their regions and pushed Muslims to the political periphery. In 1984 there was a failed coup attempt to overthrow the newly installed Biya's regime by military insurgents who were nostalgic for the former regime and mostly, as it was disclosed, later on, Ahidjo's sympathizers. After this betrayal incident, it was just but obvious that the Muslims who made up a greater majority of the former government had to sense such marginalized political position.

The significant comeback of the Muslims into the Cameroon political scene was from 1990 when multipartism was re-introduced. At this point, the Northern-based political parties re-emerged to fight for the rights of Muslims and other northern groups. This led to the inclusion of many Muslims to serve in leadership positions in the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Party (CPDM). Others adhere to the National Union for Democracy and Progress (NUDP) party.

After 1990, the re-entry into politics of Muslim intellectual agents, scholars, and clerics, constituted enough proof that the latter was no longer contended of their political marginalized position and with playing the traditional roles of moralizer and moderator. For numerous reasons, they aspired for increased involvement and commitment in the political game by multiplying intervention areas while actively engaging themselves in reforming the state according to the *Salafi* teachings. Likewise, attacks against Islamic values as well as political and professional marginalization constituted the site of contention of their political propaganda. The emergence of the associative structures, which gave them access to political expression, was for the moment the privileged forum of Arabic speaking intellectuals. The networks of private relationships they maintained and animated with the rest of the Islamic world, the international exchanges as well as the development of communication furnished the necessary energy for the functioning of these Islamic associations and fuelled the spread of the Cameroonian version of Islam. In 2000, Muslim faithful represented approximately 30 per cent of

the 16 million inhabitants. The two major Islamic celebrations, *Aid al-iftâr* (Feast of the Ramadan) and *Aid al Ad-ha* (Feast of the Ram), were declared public holidays (Adama: 2004:54-55).

Cultural Touch in the Cameroonian Society from Islamic Encounter

A sense of a common national culture has been created through shared history, schooling, national holidays and symbols, and enthusiasm for soccer. However, ethnic distinctiveness remains, and ethnic identity became an increasingly important source of social capital during the 1990s in Cameroon. Culture can be considered as a complex tool which every individual has to learn to survive in a society. In other words, every society has a distinct culture that forms the backbone of society. It acts in a subconscious way so much so that whatever we see and perceive among members of our own culture, seems to be normal and natural. Sometimes, other societies and people seem to be a little odd because they have a different culture from ours. This is the case in Cameroon that has about 250 ethnic groups and about 286 languages. It is not an overstatement when it is said "Cameroon is Africa in miniature" (i.e. if you have a tour in all the Regions in Cameroon, you would at the end of your tour have idea of the different nations within the African continent since almost every Region is a catalogue of the different cultures and to an extent languages you would find in the different nations of the entire continent).

How has the Muslim Culture Influenced the Already Complex Cameroonian Culture?

Just as every society has a different culture where people share a specific language, traditions, behaviors, perceptions, and beliefs; these cultures cannot remain stagnant when exposed to other contact cultures. Considering the fact that Islamic religion has its own culture, which gives it its identity thus, making those practicing it to have a unique and different way of behaving, dressing, eating, etc. From people of other cultures, one is bound to imagine that for all these years, Islam must have had some evolutionary hold on some of the cultures of those who have embraced the Muslim practice.

Behaviors

When we are considering behavior, we are encompassing the ways of worship, greetings, life style (i.e. marriage, birth and death celebrations), and music.

The Muslims in Cameroon from the onset of love living together. Where ever they were found in Cameroon, they lived in groups and communities. This behavior is largely explained by their cultures and tradition. The Islamic religion is the most important aspect that explains this togetherness. As time went on, the Muslim communities started living in the midst of non-Muslims and interacting with them.

Social celebrations such as feasting were important occasions of Muslim integration. Feast days like Christmas, the feast of the Ramadan and Ram, New Year celebration, marriage celebrations, naming ceremonies, death celebrations, welcome and prize-giving ceremonies, meetings and birthday parties (born house) were all social celebrations that united the Muslims and non-Muslims in most part of Cameroon. These interactions occurred mostly among the youth and adult Muslims, Christian and animist population in Cameroon (Awasom:1984:32-36).

Dressing Modes

Despite the numerous traditional outfits from the different ethnic groups in Cameroon, the Muslim faithful have significantly imposed their dressing habits not only to those practicing the religion but also on the passive admirers.

Muslims in Cameroon had a unique way of dressing. When they arrived Cameroon, their men commonly appeared in gowns variously called *sharrow*, *gare*, *jumpa*, and *dan chiki* with accompanying caps. Their women dressed in wrappers and blouses. The Muslim way of dressing spread quickly in Cameroon and became popular. Non-Muslim people were more and more dressing like the Muslims and some made such dressing their official wears.

Food Types

As concerns food, the Muslims in Cameroon had different types of diets that they fed on. Here, the Islamic religion had an influence on the types of food the Muslims ate. Their most favorite dish was corn fufu produced from pounded maize and eaten with arich sauce of vegetables and meat. As concerns meat, the Muslims ate cow meat, goat and sheep meat, and chicken. These animals had to be slaughtered only by a Muslim after reciting some prayers. Since the chief butcher was a Muslim, all the cows slaughtered for the market were slaughtered by a Muslim. Today, the slaughtering of cows in Cameroon is done generally by a Muslim. On the part of Muslims hunters, they used to recite a prayer before shooting an animal. Nowadays, many Muslims in Cameroon eat different types of food.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has successfully conceptualized the advent and dissemination of the Islamic religion into the different Regions of Cameroon. We did appraise the different means that were employed to recruit converts and how the government after independence acted as a booster to the implantation of Islam into the socio-political and cultural landscape of the country. To the best of our research, the impact of Islam in Cameroon has been more of a blessing from diverse points of evaluation. The Cameroonian Muslims had been trying in their own way to encourage religious dialogue with their Christian counterparts. Trice during the visit of the papacy (Pope John Paul II, twice, and Benedict XVI, once), the Imams led a delegation of Muslim dignitaries to welcome them. Moreover, the Cameroon government always organizes inter-religious prayer sessions for peace at the end of the year in which Muslim officials headed by their Imams always participate. To crown it all, in the year 2000, the Grand Imam of Yaounde initiated a peace structure called CIDIMUC aim at promoting inter-religious dialogue and tolerance among Muslims and non-Muslims (Mallam Ahmadou Oumarou maikoko and Mallam Ibrahim:2010).

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