

CRITIQUE OF CHURCHHILL EWUMBUE-MONONO'S *MEN OF COURAGE*

By *BATE BESONG*

In a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic nation such as Cameroon, national unity, identity, political destiny and economic independence can only be attainable through the collective will of the people.

Cameroonians have been left at the mercy of every half-baked sham democratic circus under the sun. They have only perceived peace and good governance in their dreams.

The more machiavellian a leadership, the more reliance on primordial forces.

An autocracy has wrought socio-political and economic disequilibria. Yet, the essence of democracy is accountability.

Intellectuals must therefore refuse and reject all forms of internal and external subordination, arbitrary limitation and exclusion.

The strategic goal of Julius Che Tita (M.Phil, UK), Lecturer at J.M.C, Managing Director and Publisher of DESIGN House (Limbe), has been to forge a new nationalism wherein pan Cameroonianism will be an integral part, serving as a driving force and giving it meaning.

A look at the iconography and symbology of DESIGN House demonstrates, a clear and unequivocal commitment to the cause of social change.

Wole Soyinka informs us in his prison notes, *THE MAN DIED* that, "Books and all forms of writing have always been objects of terror to those who seek to suppress the truth." [1976:8]

Some DESIGN House books proffer a kaleidoscopic view of the Biya phenomenon and thereby offer a resumé of the vision of a publisher who articulates commitment to the ennoblement of humanity.

If as stated elsewhere, Julius Che Tita finally breaks the cocoon of political, tribalised mysticism and debilitation that often occludes collective myths and national historiography, by directing his alter-native (publishing) venture towards the dissemination of frontline books that aim at the reconstruction of the society along the path of peace, progress and true democracy, he will, I am convinced, achieve icon status

even under Mr. Biya's clan regime of exclusion and programmed lynching of university students.

Churchill Ewumbue Monono's *MEN OF COURAGE The Participation of Independent and Civil Society Candidates in the Electoral Process in Cameroon. A Historical Perspective, 1945-2004*, 237pgs, designed, and printed by DESIGN House has, attracted my current analytical exploratory exercise, because the author's quest, I am convinced, is to show that MINAT's goal under Andre Tschoungui and subsequently Marafa Hamidou Yaya has been, to install, the medieval monster named ELECAM, a nervous condition of megalomania that would eventually efface a democratic culture, in Cameroon, with Paul Biya as Life President and "God."

It is therefore not surprising that Churchill Ewumbue-Monono's research challenges the party-centered elections, which are not only anti-constitutional and ahistorical, but also in contradiction with the organic law on political parties, which makes membership in political parties optional. The author indirectly posits that the present faustian, jeremiads of PM Ephraim Inoni and Marafa Hamidou Yaya, his Minister of Territorial Administration, is not founded on the country's democratic traditions, political culture, and even political history of either Anglophone or Francophone Cameroon.

Modeled after the American President, John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1908-1963) Pulitzer prize-winning *PROFILES IN COURAGE*, in which J.F.K referred to great men in American history who defied the odds to individually fight against dominant societal prejudices, ideologies, and opinions, and in the process ended up changing the course of history for their country, Ewumbue-Monono, in turn, celebrates Cameroonian pearls of freedom who, as independent and civil society politicians have left an indelible imprint on party recruitments, improvement on the quality of the opposition, management of political institutions and participation in political reform (p. 23).

In chapter 13 the study faults the Biya clan regime for failing to create conditions that would have "allowed an even greater number who could have contested as independents between 1983 and 2004 had the conditions been favourable"

(p. 187).

PEARLS OF FREEDOM: EAST CAMEROON

Ewumbue-Monono's research, celebrates the over 200 men of courage, character and conviction from Anglophone and Francophone Cameroon who against insurmountable odds, contested elections as independents.

From Francophone East Cameroon were such profiles in exemplary courage and character as Chief Woungly Massaga Alphonse, farmer and civil servant whose elections in 1952-56 was endorsed by the Association of Kribi Schools; Okala Charles René Guy, public letter writer and Secretary General of the Cameroon Social Movement, Elected Senator and MP of the Independent Sans Inscrit Group, Chief Djoumessi Mathias, Paramount chief of Dschang and President of the Kumze Bamiléké Tribal Organisation, Chief Abega Atangana Martin, Paramount Chief and President of the Cameroon Traditional Chief Association, who contested and was elected as "independent" for Nyong et Sanaga, in 1947-1952.

Ewumbe-Monono's work is structured as a discourse, that is; the attempt is to examine all the issues in a continuous flow.

PEARLS OF FREEDOM: ANGLOPHONE SOUTHERN CAMEROON

In *MEN OF COURAGE* the author also attempts a general answer at what should constitute the basic relationship between the Anglophone Cameroonian politician of Southern Cameroon ancestry and ideology. He recollects the epic march of freedom of men of vision and courage like A.K. Ndikum, Cooperative Sales Assistant, and later businessman who contested the 1961 election as an independent in Lower Ngemba.' Martin Fusi Nforbe, teacher and politician who, in 1961, contested, and won into the West Cameroon House of Assembly (SCHA) as independent for Bafut West. Chief J. Manga Williams born in 1887, a leading politician and natural ruler who ran, and won as independent for Victoria NA in the 1957 elections into the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly (SCHA).

The author suggests that had he lived long enough (Chief Manga Williams died on 14 April 1959 in Nkongsamba), the history of Southern Cameroons might have been

different as he could have been in a position to mediate among the various political parties i.e., before the Muna-Ahidjo slaughter house at Foumban.

There was firebrand S.E. Ncha, born in 1922 and widely regarded as the father of political independence who contested and won as independent in 1953 in Mamfe Division.

Lifio Carr, Chief C.J. Lekunze, George Etame, S.K. Kilo, Anthony Tafor Ngunjo, B.T.B. Foretia, Bau I Okha, Isaac Neako Fombang, J. Nsame, N.E Nkwanyuo, J. Nsame, these were all men of character and courage.

The veteran iconoclast and British trained lawyer, Fon Gorji Dinka, contested, in 1961, for Mamfe North West which consisted of the following electoral zones: Kembong Mbulu Federal, Assumbo, Takamanda, Mamfe Town and Council Area, Menka and Widikum NA area.

Yet, the most colourful, the most endowed with moral courage and consistency, in Ewumbue-Monono's historical canvas, was: H.R.H Solomon Anyeghamot Ndefru Angwafor III.

EARTH PROVIDES WHAT HEAVEN PROMISES

MEN OF COURAGE seeks to correctly apprehend the forces and factors that influence political decision-making and political metamorphosis of His Royal Highness Fon Angwafor III of Mankon.

Ewumbue-Monono's research reveals a fascinating, sophisticated and highly principled politician and states-man. Not for the royal monarch and politician the genuflection demonstrating their most idolatrous admiration of John Ngu Foncha KNDP brand of political toadies or the social self-promotion and self-aggrandisement of John Fru Ndi's SDF puppeteers.

It was therefore only in character that HRH Angwafor III would endorse Achidi Achus' candidature in 1986 against D.A. Nangah (a Foncha ally and later SDF's chief financier) for the position of CPDM Section President for Mezam. History will again replay itself when, Achidi Achu, on the eve of his political apotheosis, defeated John Fru Ndi in a decisive and most significant, CPDM encounter.

A product of the Aggrey Memorial Secondary School, Arochukwu, and the School of Agriculture in Ibadan (Nigeria) between 1934 and 1953, Angwafor went into politics three years after his enthronement because he realized that the Mankon people were inadequately represented in the political sphere although they were the major tribe in Upper Ngemba. In the 1961 election, he stood against the official KNDP candidate, D.A. Nangah and the Ndeh Ntumazah OK party candidate, Maximus Chibikom.

As a Parliamentarian in West Cameroon, Angwafor, “refused to cross to the KNDP, which offered him lucrative positions like Speaker of the House or Secretary of State” (*MEN OF COURAGE*, 194-5).

What Faustian werewolf could have decapitated Fon Angwafor III’s vision?

CONCLUSION

Cameroon History has suffered from a hasty attempt at generalizations, schematization and crude codification.

Francophone and Anglophone children have been taught to see that history, culture and progress as beginning with the arrival of *L’etat c’est moi*, Madame Chantale Biya’s phantom, FEICOM, the Great Debate and the leprous troglodyte named ELECAM.

For close to five decades the neo-colonial Francophone Foccart bourgeoisie supported by the Ngole Ngoles and the Fonkam Azuus -- has devalued the nation’s past, seeing in its pre-Re-Unification era as a historical void.

The overall picture is smudged and blurred.

In *MEN OF COURAGE*, Churchill Ewumbue-Monono employs a wide range of theoretical and methodological perspectives to confirm what Ayissi Mvondo Victor, former Cameroon National Union (CNU) Political Secretary and Minister of Territorial Administration, from hindsight, had condemned as “the dictatorship of political parties in our country, which removes all the vitality in political and parliamentary life, as well as the prohibition of candidates without party platforms to contest for all the public offices” (*MEN*, 9).

Julius Che Tita’s DESIGN House is alter-native publishing that represents non-conformity and encourages diversity.