Editors Introduction

The significance of N'joya for the cultural history of the Bamum

Die Bedeutung N'joyas für die Kulturgeschichte des Bamum-Landes

L'importance de N'joya pour l'histoire culturelle du pays Bamum

Universität Wien

Bonny Duala-M'bedy Leopold Joseph

1962

Introduction to Bonny Duala-M'bedy's thesis on Njoya and Bamum history

The doctoral dissertation of Leopold Joseph Bonny Duala-M'bedy was a pioneering piece of historical research into the role of King Njoya in the history of the Bamum kingdom. Bonny Duala-M'bedy did his research at the University of Vienna before major figures such as Claude Tardits but without later recognition of his pioneering work because the thesis had been written in German and was held in the University of Vienna, inaccessible to most researchers (even the few who knew of its existence: see Rovenchak and Riley (2025) for a recent bibliography).

As part of the ongoing work of Vestiges journal with its mission to promote the use and analysis of archival resources we are pleased to be making the text of the original thesis available now, not only in German but in translations in French and English so that it achieves a larger readership.

Sadly Professor Bonny Duala-M'bedy died in 2024. The work to make the thesis available for readers in Cameroon and elsewhere has been undertaken with the kind permission of his family.

Notes on editorial process

Once the original German typescript had been scanned we did the following: the spelling was revised to follow contemporary rules, handwritten corrections were incorporated along with phonetic characters handwritten in the original typescript. The scanning process revealed some typos and small mistakes that had been missed in the original so these were corrected. The bibliography was improved – some incomplete references were completed e.g. by adding missing pagination.

Where English and French sources had been given with a German translation the German translations were removed before preparing the English and French versions of the thesis to avoid duplication. The translations were prepared using Deepl as a first pass, the results were then edited and in some cases checked back against the German original. One recurrent problem was caused by the use of *Mum*, the singular form of Bamum. Several times Deepl rendered this as *Mummy*! We have used Bamum when talking about the people and the polity but retained Mum when talking of the language and the script (which are lower case in French).

We have *not* attempted to make the spelling of various names consistent throughout the text, rather we are inconsistent following M'bedy and the inconsistency of his sources: there is Bamum(s) and Bamoun(s), Foumban and Fumban, N'chare and Nchare, Njoya and N'joya, N'sangu, Nsangou and Nsangu.

Note on terminology and sources

M'bedy's research work for this thesis was undertaken in the late 1950s. The terminology and the terms of debate reflect those times. Furthermore much of M'bedy's work was to explore the German language source material which dates from before WW1 and uses the racist terminology then commonplace.

M'bedy therefore reports discussion of questions about the Egyptian origin of individual African ethnic groups and about physical characteristics of different population groups in terms that *even then* were outmoded. We have not attempted to revise the substance of the original text.

Much work has been undertaken subsequently on the history of the Bamum people and of the peoples of wider grassfields which we encourage readers to pursue. We are making this pioneering work available to enable Leopold Joseph Bonny Duala-M'bedy's place to be recognised in Cameroonian historiography.

The Vestiges editors wish to thank two guest editors for making this possible: Dana Dierks for working on the German and Séraphin Guy Balla Ndegue for help with the French translation.

Reference

Rovenchak, A. & Riley, C. L. 2025. An overview of Bamum phonology and orthography, with an additional focus on character and word frequencies in recent poetry. *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics* 46**,** 321-348.

Oxford, August-October 2025

DISSERTATION

The significance of N'joya for the cultural history of the Bamum country

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Vienna

submitted by

Bonny Duala-M'bedy Leopold Joseph

Vienna 1962

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Editors' note 2025: Readers are reminded that the language in this thesis dates from the early 1960s and is not current. The Editors' introduction above discusses this further.

Introduction

The topic of this dissertation is: "The significance of N'joya for the cultural history of the Bamum region". The examination of the various areas in which N'joya distinguished himself can undoubtedly only remain an attempt. The aim here is to consider a work – the work of N'joya – which has so far only been dealt with in isolated references, in its entirety and to make it accessible to scholars. This is not to say that N'joya was previously unknown to the ethnological world. On the contrary, his name has been found in ethnological literature since the beginning of the twentieth century. But his work was neglected for a long time, not to say ignored. This fact can be attributed to various external factors or political currents on which the science of ethnology and field research depended until recently. After the first world war, around 1920, the application

of most of N'joya's discoveries and inventions, including the most important one, writing, was banned by the colonial authorities. They were credited with an influence that ultimately led to N'joya's exile.

Everything that ethnological literature has to say about him can be summarised as follows: he was a very "intelligent Negro king" who invented a form of writing. This attitude on the part of a usually expansive literature can be explained by a phenomenon which, without being entirely dependent on political circumstances, arose from a resentment rooted in an awareness of one's own values, which we will summarise with the term ethnocentrism. In the question of the origin of the Bamum, this phenomenon is characterised by a tendency not only to attribute individual cultural elements to foreign origins, but also to regard the bearers of this culture as originating from a foreign high culture. However, the problem is extremely complex and cannot be separated from that of African cultural history in connection with African migrations.

These outdated views, which have become established tradition in classical ethnology, are contrasted by the modern nationalism of the peoples studied. This nationalism harbours similar dangers in its quest for self-justification. The characteristic representatives of these two views are represented in this work by Ankermann and Diop. Furthermore, the phenomenon is evident in N'joya's work . It has always been believed that European influences played a major role in N'joya's work, overlooking the fact that N'joya's personality and work were already fully developed before the arrival of the Europeans. We do not wish to deny the European or Islamic influence, but in both cases these were temporary, albeit long-lasting, phenomena, whose significance for N'joya is diminished by his critical eclecticism.

There is no need to analyse the various aspects of the phenomenon just mentioned in this preface. Opportunities will arise in the course of this work to return to some of them. However, two tendencies that are likely to underlie it should be highlighted here: obscurantism and the ethnocentrism just defined. One determines the other, so that they form a whole. Obscurantism

was the cause of the underestimation of N'joya's work, whose significance was not to recognised. Ethnocentrism, on the other hand, which can be found behind certain theories and views that seek to trace ancient and modern African cultures back to foreign origins, was the cause of the falsification of fundamental data in N'joya's work.

In order to compensate for these outdated views of ethnology, it was necessary to draw on more recent, more up-to-date works that already take into account the current realities of anti-colonialism and African nationalism. A way had to be found to assess his work objectively, as researchers had inevitably fallen from one extreme to the other as a result of political currents. This would have been easy if it had merely been a matter of finding a happy medium between the two extremes of the existing literature, which lacks breadth of perspective and goes into little depth. For every expert who studied N'joya's work sought a sphere of activity that largely corresponded to his personal interests. Some of them even used the achievements of this Bamum king to support their theses and achieve the desired result.

The area that has been most extensively covered, perhaps rightly so, is that of writing. However, this has done a disservice to other parts of N'joya's work. Not only are there countless commentaries and more or less complete and comprehensive studies on this writing, it is also cited as an example in all handbooks on the origins of writing.

We owe the first comprehensive study of this script to Idelette Dugast and M.D.W. Jeffreys. Due to the authors' inaccurate knowledge of the Mum language, this study was incomplete and cannot be considered a methodically sound documentation of the script.

The second and most noteworthy study, apart from treatises such as those by Carl Meinhof, Hans Jensen and Johannes Friedrich, is that by Alfred Schmitt, who has kindly made part of his two-volume manuscript, then {1961} being printed, available for this dissertation.[1] This

[1] The page numbers of the passages quoted from the manuscript may not correspond to those in the publication, which will be released shortly.

extensive work, for the sake of which the author took the trouble to learn the Mum language, may represent a turning point in our knowledge of the Mum script. However, it must also be said that this work does not take N'joya's other achievements beyond the script into account. Since Schmitt is only interested in the years during which the script was created, he is prone to errors regarding important dates.

Until now, researchers, whether ethnologists or linguists, have shown great interest in the Mum script. It was therefore necessary to take into account numerous publications that deal with or mention this script. Since N'joya's other inventions and achievements have received little attention from various authors, they can only be discussed here in a limited form, which does not mean that they could not be the subject of field research in the future.

In the descriptions or findings of these authors, one constantly encounters an attitude that is far from objective. In the course of our investigation, we were struck by the hopeless collectivism espoused by Meinhof, Jensen and Schmitt, a tradition that has long been peculiar to ethnology and its auxiliary sciences. Meinhof's knowledge of the Bamum and their writing obviously derives from Pastor Göhring. He endeavours to portray the Bamum kingdom as a foreign state, solely on the basis of the prevailing order. Jensen, whose work is more recent than Meinhof's, had the opportunity not to succumb to certain obvious temptations, had it not been for Delafosse, who himself represents the purest form of ethnocentrism, being so provocative in his account of the Mum script. It is unnecessary to point out the errors to which such weaknesses can lead us.

All authors most frequently cite Anna Rein-Wuhrmann. She was perhaps best suited to provide information about N'joya's environment and a good part of his reign. However, her writings, as well as the oral reports she was kind enough to provide at various times, refer too exclusively to daily life and provide little information about the work of the Bamum kings

themselves. Above all, she is the best expert on the Bamum people and provides a lively and insightful account of their life, customs and way of thinking in her books.

This work faced the challenges of limited available ethnological material on the subject, which is scattered and hardly exists in German. Although there is extensive ethnological literature in German from before the First World War, it would first need to be revised and reorganised. Publications relating to our topic have mostly been published abroad. It was therefore particularly important to resolve the issue of foreign-language quotations. The most suitable approach seemed to be to reproduce the texts in their original form and in translation. Only those texts that are themselves translations, such as those from the Mum language into French, were not reproduced in German.

Since this is not a biography but rather a monograph, we first had to deal with the interrelationships, i.e. the purely historical domain, before moving on to the functionalist, interactive aspects. In order to get closer to the essence of N'joya's work, it was sufficient to uncover the origins of his various achievements. One of the main goals we set ourselves was to search for the origins and impact of N'joya's work. As we will show, N'joya should mainly be seen as a mediator of an emerging acculturation process. However, this process had only just begun and never came to fruition, as N'joya's work also remained without any possible consequences.

Wherever we attribute absolute value to N'joya's work by talking about its necessity or relating it to the whole of colonised Africa, this study may well be essayistic in character. If no separate chapter is devoted to N'joya's psychology or behaviour, it is because these are clearly evident in his works, in his relationships with his environment and in his reactions. The particular importance attached to the chapter on the origins of the Bamum stems from a desire to take the historical background of the subject into account to some extent. It should also be noted that the

thoughts on the relations between ancient Egypt and Black Africa contained in this study are intended to stimulate discussion.

Finally, in this monograph, the first to deal with N'joya's complete works, the main aim was, for purely chronological reasons and in order to provide a better overall picture, to include as many details of the work as possible. For this reason, no chapter has been given more importance than another. However, it is hoped that this study will serve its purpose, even though the material available was insufficient.

It should be added that this work was made possible by our own field research, carried out in 1959 during a study trip, as well as by conversations with those who knew N'joya personally or who are familiar with his work.

THE BAMUM

Ethnographic overview

Location

The Bamum, Pamom (singular: Mum, Mom) or Shupaman, as they also call themselves, live in the grassfields of Cameroon, an area bordered by Banso (Nso, Nsaw) to the north, Bamileke to the west, the Nun River to the south-west and Banen to the south.

Located between 10°30' and 11°10' east longitude and 5° and 6° north latitude, the Bamum territory forms a triangle with the river M'bam to the south and the Nun and Mui rivers to the east and west, which serve as natural boundaries.

The approximately 80,000 inhabitants of the Bamum Land are spread over an area of 4,524 km^2, which means that there are approximately twelve people per km^2.

Ethnic groups

The Bamum form two distinct ethnic groups:

a. those of Sudanese origin, who came from Tikar country more than 300 years ago. Their last settlement is said to have been Rifum (M'buaku), from where they migrated southwards.

b. the Bamileke, who lived in Bamum country and were subjugated by the immigrants. The immigrants adopted the language of the subjugated people.

Language

Greenberg classifies the Bamum language, which is now generally considered to belong to the Semi-Bantu group, as part of the Niger-Congo language family. Westermann classifies the Bamum language, like that of the Bamileke, as part of the Nigritic language group, examples of which can be found in West Africa.

Class names in the Bamum language change both their prefix and tone in the plural. However, some remain unchanged in the singular and plural. Reduplication is also found.

There does not seem to be any grammar. The demonstrative distinguishes the number and not the class. The word order in a simple sentence is: subject, verb, object.

History

Before the arrival of the Bamum, the land north of today's Bamileke population was inhabited by the Nun people, most of whom crossed the Nun river to emigrate. The Bamum came via Rifum and Tikarland to Fumban, which was settled by N'share, the founder of the Bamum dynasty. N'share was the son of a Tikar chief from Rifum. Seventeen kings have secured the succession before {1961}.

The history of the Bamum country will be discussed in greater detail when discussing N'joya's book. Here, we will merely mention the name of the founder of the dynasty, N'share. One of N'share's successors expanded the territory, in ways which resembled other Bamileke

principalities, and subjugated forty-eight principalities in his military campaigns. However, it was N'joya, the penultimate king, who gave the country its present form.

Local and kinship groups

The Bamum have a patrilineal descent system and viri-patrilocal marriage. As with the Tikar, patrilineal local exogamy is the basis of social organisation.

Domestic association and settlement

Every married woman has her own house, in which she lives with her young children. The women's houses are built on both sides and opposite the dwelling of the head of the household.

The head of the household eats his meals alone. If children or "slaves" are present, they eat from their own bowls. Women eat in their homes.

Households vary considerably. Sons and brothers build their houses near the household head's compound, often several compounds are next to each other, all under the authority of the senior household head. The household are usually surrounded by banana plantations and gardens, but the fields are often located far from the compound. A number of patrilineal groups living in such compounds form a village under the authority of a village chief (a M'fojam appointed by the king). The M'fojam is responsible for maintaining order in the village and carrying out the king's orders.

Political organisation

Most of the descendants of the conquerors live in the capital city of Fumban. It has a population of around 20,000 to 25,000, including a large Hausa settlement that was outside the city until N'joya's time. The city is divided into eight districts (quartiers), each of which has its own leader or "M'fojam". These districts are M'feuyuom, M'fintan, Manka, N'jisse, Zinnka, Zinntut,

N'kunga and Mamben. The deputy leader of a district is the Ngbatnyifoyom. According to Martin, the leader of a district is elected by the people who fall under his authority. He remains in office for three years, but the king has the right to dismiss him at any time. He must distribute the land allocated to him by the king fairly among his people. It used to be the district leader's job to sound the alarm with a special bell (war bell) when danger threatened the city of Fumban. However, it was not his job to punish criminals, rebels, and so on. This office was held by a man who bore the title Titangu or Tangu. All crimes were reported to him. He was the head of a group of men who had to carry out the king's orders. This Tangu also had to announce all important orders of the king to the people.

At each of the eight gates in the city walls leading to the individual districts, there used to be a gate or customs guard. No one was allowed to leave the city without the king's permission.

Administration of the Bamum Kingdom

Since the conquest by M'buembue, political organisation in Fumban has been centralised. The 48 vassal princes, who bear the title M'fontuo or M'fontue, continue to administer their territories, but are directly accountable to the king. To ensure central political unity, a number of officials with specific administrative duties are appointed and distributed throughout the kingdom. These officials, also known as M'foyem, preside over entire groups of villages and their position and duties are similar to those of a district leader.

Other officials of the king, who bear the hereditary title "Kom", are sent by the king to various parts of the empire to convey news and information to the capital in a kind of secret service. This hereditary title was introduced by N'share and passed on to his seven companions. The Kom gather in the capital whenever the king wishes and at harvest festivals. These occasions are used for reporting and for renewing the same oath of allegiance that their ancestors had already sworn to King N'share. These celebrations take place in the presence of the Titamfon, the

three ministers of the king, who must also receive the reports of the Kom. The specific duties of each individual are not clearly defined. They can be roughly defined as follows:

The N'jifonfon, or First Minister, holds the king's hands during his enthronement and acts as a liaison between the king and all the Bamum vassal princes.

The N'ga minyi tutuet is the liaison between the king and a group of men called N'get n'gu, or "friends of the empire."

The N'gu kpwita watched over the king, so to speak.

All three have the special task of remaining in close contact with the king at all times, not only for political and religious reasons, but also for the king's personal safety.

The Titamfon are appointed for life, as successors to previous Titamfon. They enthrone the king and limit his power through their control. Only in the event of the death of a Titamfon can the king appoint a new one. However, this personal appointment does not change the fact that the new Titamfon must fulfil his obligations to the people and may therefore have to oppose his king under certain circumstances.

The king

At the top of the pyramidal hierarchy of dignitaries stands the M'fon (king). He derives his power as head of government and supreme judge from the right of male succession after the first king and founder of the empire. He secretly designates his successor during his lifetime. The order of birth is therefore not taken into account. Since N'joya, there has been a law according to which the eldest son must take the position of first advisor in the kingdom. N'sangu summarises the duties of the king as follows: the king's most important task is to wage war and administer justice. The king is not only the political but also the religious head of state, presiding over rituals and ceremonies. He makes sacrifices to his ancestors, the former kings, to ensure the welfare of the empire and determines when the annual harvest rituals are to take place. During the rites, he alone

is allowed to touch and use the sacred staff, which was brought to the country by N'share and is kept by the respective king. He is also the head of all secret societies. Through the coronation ceremony, the king receives the mystical power of his ancestors, which he now personifies.

The king is equated with the leopard. All leopards that are killed must be handed over to him. In the cult, the king is personified by the sacred python snake. However, this is only known to a small circle of initiates. The king's strength is compared to that of a lion, his courage to that of an elephant.

The king's accession to the throne

Before the funeral of a M'fon, the future king raises and lowers his father's head, whereupon the seven advisors, the Kom, proclaim him the man who is to take the place of the dead king. After the funeral, the future king is led to the designated stone of the country, the *Wongu*, and placed on it. The N'jimonshara recites to him the laws of the Bamum, which originate from Rifum, as well as the provisions that bind the advisors, the heads of the Mungu confederation and the administrative officials to the king. Afterwards, the king swears his oath of allegiance. When day breaks, the king enters the Nshi River, where "medicines" and the insignia of kingship have already been prepared. The king is accompanied by the three Titamfon, the N'Jimonshara and his oldest slave. The N'jimonshara rub the "medicines" into his hands and then fills them with water, which he pours over the king. Only the king is allowed to bathe in this part of the river. The N'jimonshara addresses the king and asks the supreme god *Yoruban* to bless him and make his spear powerful. The king's body is then rubbed with the "medicine". What remains is thrown into the water together with the head of a sheep, a jar full of palm oil, powdered camwood and a little salt. The double bell is then rung and the people rush to pay homage to the new king. They also bathe in the river, but at a spot further downstream. Finally, the king returns to the palace while

the people shout: "N'share has returned, a warrior, the land is happy again." A mock battle ensues between the king and the N'jikomjua, in which the king defeats his rival.

Before the king enters the women's quarters, palm wine is poured into a jar belonging to the royal women. A special fruit called *galegh* is added. While the women drink, they promise to strictly observe the laws to which the royal women are subject. Afterwards, the king's firstborn son takes the name of the foreign king whose coronation gift arrived first. The king of Rifum sends two advisors with water from the place where the ancient kings of Rifum bathed. The Bamum king immediately washes himself with this water. The Rifum king also sends three of his wives to instruct the new Bamum king in their ancient traditions. One bears the title of "Mother of N'share", the second "Mother of Fumban" and the third "Mother of N'so". The people of Rifum present the king with a robe, a dagger, a spear and a sheep. The three Rifum women receive gifts in return.

The Queen Mother

The Queen Mother is treated with special respect, even by the king himself. The title of the Queen Mother is "Na Mandu", and that of the first-born princess, daughter of the country, is "Na Ndam". In the absence of the king, the Queen Mother assumes the duties of the supreme judge. She can also act as regent if her son is still too young at the time of his father's death.

The dignitaries

The title N'ji is held by the sons and daughters of the king, by the Kom and by twins. It is a title of nobility, but does not necessarily entail any specific duties. With the king's permission, it can become a hereditary title. Those who hold this title are divided into four different categories, depending on the degree of kinship and personal connection between them and the king.

The N'ji take part in ceremonies on the occasion of a king's funeral or coronation. In his report on these ceremonies, N'joya mentions the following N'ji dignitaries: N'jifonfon, N'jimonshara, N'jitampuo, N'jimonanka, N'jimonfira, N'jiamfu, N'jiamsum and N'jikumjua.

The N'shut-nshut

The N'shut-nshut, whose task is to form the king's bodyguard, are subject to a specific hierarchy. The N'shut-nshut also include the king's relatives on his father's and mother's side, and in most cases also the husbands of princesses. Within the palace there is a building called the "House of a Hundred Men" or *nda kut muin*, which is inhabited by those N'shut-nshut of lower rank who have not yet proven their personal worth. Those who live in the "House of Forty Men", or *nda knanngam mui*, i.e. within the palace grounds, belong to a higher rank. Then there are the "great" N'shut-nshut, who belong to the M'bansie association. Other association to which the N'shut-nshut belong are the Keumuet, the Kpuefon, and the Meutimbye, but it is not explicitly clear whether membership depends on one's rank in this hierarchy.

Other palace dignitaries

The Ta Kam, an official who presides over a group of young men housed in a palace building called *Pa nda ta kam*. These young men are responsible for summoning the people and arresting wrongdoers.

The Ta meunya, an official who commands about a hundred men housed in a palace building called *N'da mfo meunya*. They are among the bravest young men, who were once entrusted with dangerous missions.

The N'schotu, an official who guards the large warrior drums.

The Ta ndam, who is responsible for preparing meals.

The Ta nguet, the official responsible for palm oil. He has the right to punish anyone who sells inferior oil.

Court proceedings

Maintaining order in Fumban is the main task of the Tangu. With the help of the Mwtngu (punisher), he carries out the task of punishing those who break the law. He explains to the people the meaning of the laws enacted by the king and his advisors and threatens them with punishment if they do not obey the laws.

There was also a police force based in the palace, where the prison was located until the arrival of the Europeans.

Three types of court proceedings are known to us:

Mambasa: A man goes to court when he has a complaint to make. He is questioned by an official, the Gapasa.
Investigating judge: The judges of this court conduct preliminary investigations in the event of an offence and bring the accused before the king.
Ndagatinnsa: This is where judgements are pronounced. In cases of doubt as to guilt or innocence, the earth spider oracle was often used.
The use of poison oracles is also known (water and crushed bark from the *Leba* tree). If the accused vomits, he is innocent – otherwise his guilt is proven and he is killed.

Succession

As with the royal family, succession is patrilineal. The heir takes over the wives and all the property of the deceased and enjoys the same rights as his predecessor. A woman, and in some circumstances a nephew, can be appointed as heirs, but the woman only if she is childless.

The king also determines his successor in a similar manner. He informs his Titamfon, who form the closest council of the crown, of his choice. The heir does not necessarily have to be the eldest. When the king is dying, the Titamfon brings the king's chosen successor to his deathbed so that he can receive his father's last wishes. If the king dies without appointing a successor, the Titamfon and the Kom choose from among the king's sons. The mother of the son in question,

who can also assume the regency if he is a minor, then takes a higher rank. She is treated with great reverence by the other women and addressed as "mother-in-law".

Secret societies

Little is known about the nature of the secret societies known as Panju (singular: *yu nju. yu*: that which is real, that which exists. *nju*: that which is mysterious, supernatural). The cult of these individual secret societies is symbolised to the outside world by one or more musical instruments. Each society has its own instrument, the meaning of which depends on the significance of the society.

The most important known secret societies are: N'guri, M'bansie, Muinngu, Meunan.

All these secret societies have a cultic-religious socio-political character. A few other secret societies should also be mentioned, including Nikeup, N'tere, Channtu, Meusi, M'feukegni, M'fomu, N'sye, M'balu, Keumiet, Kpuefon and Meutimbye.

Religion and magic

The supreme being, the creator of all things, is *N'jinyi* or *N'nui* ("he who is everywhere, who sees everything and hears everything"). This is the god who announces the birth of a child through the medium of a toad. When a toad or a frog enters the hut, it is honoured and anointed with palm oil.

The Bamum believe that this god can be deceived if a woman has several stillbirths or her children die at an early age. She then decides that the next child she gives birth to will not be given a name. God will then believe that this child is merely a thing and not a human being, and will not cause it any harm.

In the first script invented by N'joya, the name for God is *N'nui* – in later times (royal script), this name is replaced by Yoruban.

The name Yaruba for God is also used by the Tangale in northern Nigeria (some of whom can also be found in the extreme south-west of the Bornu province). In Yaruba, they worship the personification of all dead souls. In the course of their wanderings, the Bamum are said to have adopted this name and retained it as a royal or courtly form of address for God. Yoruban is also invoked during coronation ceremonies.

Evil spirits

Much more than belief in God, belief in spirits plays a prominent role in the daily lives of the Bamum. The power of evil is referred to as *N'ga-M'büket*. This power manifests itself in the elements, in thunder, in tornadoes, in fire, in rivers and lakes, and also in leopards. Sometimes *N'ga-M'buket* also enlists human beings to serve him, who then harass their comrades without wanting to or knowing it. All elements and people who are in the service of the evil force are grouped under the term *Pa- Rwm* (singular: *N'zwm*). The evil spirit that possesses them is *Rwm*, who is believed to reside in a woman's womb and is transmitted by women.

The children of a female *Nzwm* are known as *Pa-Rwm. Pa-Rwm* are considered to be the source of illness and misfortune.

When there is a death in a family, a *Nzwm* is often accused of being responsible for the death. The judgment of God may then decide on guilt or innocence.

Ancestor worship

The spirits of the dead are revered and worshipped. Palm wine offerings are made.

The cult of ancestral skulls used to be an essential feature of Bamum culture. It was particularly important at the royal court. During coronation ceremonies, the new king held the skull of his predecessor in his hand as a symbol of the continuity of power, which was to be preserved in this way.

Annual festivals

A big festival is celebrated at the end of March, after the sowing and at the beginning of the rainy season, at the royal palace. Most of the dancers wear masks. Occasionally, the king also appears in a dance mask and dances.

The exact date of the harvest festival, which is celebrated in the month of July-August, is determined by the king. At this time, taxes must be paid to the king. Gifts of palm oil for the king are placed in a special oil house in the royal palace. As already mentioned, on this day the leading figures of the empire give their reports on the most important events of the year.

War medicine

War medicine includes calabashes in wicker baskets with the jaw bones of slain enemies hanging from them. If two warriors kill an enemy together, one receives the lower jaw and the other the skull. Another such medicine is the trophy calabash *Kakua*. The king, individual warriors and the villages own such trophy calabashes.

Twice a year, the king calls together warrior assemblies, large festivities at which all trophy calabashes are brought forth and arranged in two rows so that the jaw bones can be splattered with sheep's blood. It was believed that this act would paralyse the enemy in the next battle. There are also medicines to ward off the revenge of a slain warrior's spirit.

The trophy calabashes are carefully guarded, and women and children are not allowed to touch them.

Economy

When they arrived in the country, the Bamum were only familiar with millet and manioc. Maize was introduced later. After maize, manioc and sweet potatoes are now the main crops. Peanut

plantations have been increasing in recent years. Oil palms grow in the gallery forests along the rivers (M'bam Valley), while bananas are planted around the farmsteads.

Hunting is of little importance. The meat is smoked. The Bamum leave trade to immigrants such as the Hausa and the Bamileke.

Markets

Markets are held frequently in all areas, and twice a week in Fumban and Fumbot. The Hausa have their own stalls where they also sell their leather and ironwork. In earlier times, cowrie shells were used as currency.

House construction

The huts of the Bamum people are very similar to those of the Bamileke. Almost the only differences are in the roof construction. Instead of wooden structures, the walls are covered with mud plaster. Recently, they have also been made of mud bricks. The ceiling (*plafond*) of the house, which protrudes above the walls, is sometimes supported by wooden posts (columns). The roof consists of four parts or surfaces, mostly made of wickerwork and Raphia ribs.

Division of labour

While field work and pottery are women's work, the men are skilled craftsmen. Both sexes are involved in house building. The men are responsible for making the wickerwork and roofing, while the women build the walls and do all the work involving earth.

Dance masks

The dance masks are made of wood, clay or cast bronze and are mostly headdresses with mask-like features, with the face covered by raphia. According to Lecoq, a stylistic development has

taken place over the last sixty years: from purely geometric, figurative representations to a more lifelike, realistic interpretation.

In jewellery, especially in ornamentation, a reverse development can be observed. For example, the toad motif has become increasingly symbolised.

Carving

Chairs, goalposts and wooden boxes feature intricately carved depictions of people, animals and realistic scenes. The Bamum are also skilled in the production of wooden statues and statuettes, which can be highly stylised and often caricatured.

Embroidery and dyeing

Embroidery is mainly found on men's clothing. The greatest care is taken in decorating hats. Women of the upper classes wear embroidered scarves. Decorative trimmings for horses are also frequently embroidered. Calabashes, masks and sometimes even sculptures were embroidered with glass and beads. The Sultan's throne is a beautiful example of this.

The dyeing process used the so-called plangi technique: the fabrics, including bark fabrics, were tied with raffia fibres at regular intervals across the entire surface to form small bunches and then dipped in grey or reddish clay or dye. After several days, the bast fibres were removed. They had prevented the dye from penetrating the tied areas, leaving light rings against the dark surface.

Batik techniques and stencils were also used. Diamond-shaped, rectangular or triangular pieces of leather were placed on the fabric and the outlines were traced onto it with a stick dipped in blue dye.

Leatherwork

Cushions and sandals, mostly made of sheepskin, were dyed yellow, red, beige or black and decorated using the stencil technique.

THE ORIGIN OF THE BAMUM KINGS

In their oral tradition, the Bamum describe themselves as descendants of the north or north-east. This means that they consider their country of origin to be Tikarland, north-east of the capital Fumban, the cradle of the Bamum country.

King N'joya not only acknowledged this fact, he also claimed to be a descendant of a race of giants. "Njoya, the king, once told me that his family descended from giants..." (Rein-Wuhrmann, 1948:12). This claim leads us directly to the problem of the African migration, because according to tradition, the ancestor and founder of the dynasty, of whom the Bamum boast to be descendants, was far from possessing the characteristics of a giant:

> N'sare was really small in stature, he had a prominent belly, his eyes shone like those of a panther. He was very cunning in war. He was black and had short legs. He was very brave but could not run. He loved to dance and drank a lot of wine. He was charitable. Such is the portrait of Nsa're. (Martin 1952:24).

We are familiar with at least one feature of this image: the eyes, whose exaggerated emphasis gave Bamum sculpture its characteristic appearance. The giant stature, on the other hand, can be traced back to an ancestor who was actually a giant, namely King M'buembue.

> Mbuembue was very tall, taller than all the Pamom. He had an enormous head with a protuberance on each side of his forehead. He had a huge nose that hung down over his lips. His lips were thin and his beard was thick. He was chubby, had large ears, almond-shaped eyes and a long neck. Broad-chested and broad-backed, he was hairy, stood straight, had a flat stomach, a hollow navel, long arms, protruding calves, and toes so long that when he put his foot down, the soles of his feet did not touch the ground, and his footprints were easily recognisable. His strength was equal to that of a lion, no one could defeat him in a race, he was braver than a lion, his voice was hoarse like that of a lion. When he spoke in the courtyard of his palace, the people of Nzilum heard him as if he were very close. He was arthritic. When he talked to someone, he lay on his bed. But if he ever got up, everyone ran away in fear of this giant. Often, those who were reprimanded forgot themselves in fear. His generosity astonished those who were on the receiving end

> of it. But he was also cruel. Of all the kings of the Pamom, from N'sare to the present day, no king has ever been seen who was like Mbuembue. (Martin l952:30).

It is certainly an enlarged image through which Bamum attempt to convey the appearance of a giant. However, the description consists of two portraits superimposed on each other. They show both the full Bamum mask on a robust body and, according to Frobenius, "Ethiopian" facial features, as well as equally strong hairiness and slimness. Why do the Bamum emphasise the "Ethiopian" features in their description of this king? And how strongly were these features emphasised? The drawings we have of M'buembue, which are based on anthropological observations, do not immediately suggest that he belonged to a foreign tribe.

Remarks on Physical Anthropology

Ankermann initially estimates the average height of the Bali peoples, among whom the Bamum are classified, at 1.75 metres.

> The tallest people are found among the Bali and Bamum, two tribes that are known to have migrated from Adamawa. Here you can also find tall women. The tallest woman I have seen – a Bamum woman – was 1.84 metres tall. The facial type is much finer than what you see in the forest. The broad nose, indented at the root, is disappearing more and more; straight, fairly narrow-bridged noses, eagle noses, are common. Very often one encounters faces of strikingly Jewish appearance. Beard growth is also quite well developed. One sees quite a few stately beards and would certainly see many more if most men did not shave constantly. The noblest types are found in Bali and Bamum. In the latter, in particular, it is not uncommon to see people who could easily be mistaken for North Africans or Arabs. (Ankermann 1910:293).

Although the Bamum reach the above-mentioned average height – very fine examples can be found in the ruling family – one should not be too misled by their facial features. One must compare the face of the Bamum with his self-made mask and will be surprised by the similarity between the model and the artwork – one could almost describe the representation as naturalistic.

> The comparison of our two photographs shows the extent of the realism of these works. Here, the artist has engaged in a genuine analysis of the ethical characteristics of his compatriots. (Lecoq 1951:177).

After separating out the elements that largely determine the relief of the face, such as the hypertrophy of the mouth and eyes, R. Lecoq continues with regard to the mask:

> New fabrication and, also, a noticeable evolution towards a naturalisation of the subject. This time, the elements no longer seem to be lost in the unity of a form, nor do they strongly oppose each other; each of them claims a kind of independence, the work ... regains the proportions of the human face and tends towards resemblance.
> ... Admittedly, these are not portraits, but we are very close to the human face. There is a great concern for accuracy, both in the representation of the eyes, ears, mouth and nose, and in the proportions and general expression. (Lecoq 1951:177).

One cannot help but see the distinctive appearance of the Bamum mask in the full face and puffed cheeks of a wind instrument player.

This is not the place to discuss the impressions one gains when assessing the differences between the facial features of the forest dwellers and those of the grassfield dwellers, as Ankermann does as an anthropological observer. If we stick to the idea that the Bamum depict a model in their masks, then Ankermann's description of a "Jewish appearance" is difficult to accept. There is no comparison between this and a Bamum mask, which may be considered representative of a widespread type among the Bamum, a type that is also found in the royal family. But what does Ankermann mean by "aquiline nose" when he applies this term to the Negroid and not to what we will call here "Hamito-Negroid"? The characteristic example he cites is a nose that, in profile, has a curve similar to that of an aquiline nose, but retains its typical Negroid appearance from the front to its broad tip.

The problem that arises with such remarks can also be assumed for forest dwellers. According to Ankermann, one would find many more bearded men in the grassfields if they did not shave regularly. To what extent is this a physical anthropological statement? From time to time, Hamitic types can be found among the Bamum, but any generalisation must be avoided for the following reasons: The Bamum had repeatedly repelled invasions by the Fulbe. For this purpose, the trench around Fumban was dug – however, later, during the civil war, N'joya called on the Fulbe for help. Even though the Fulbe element is present in Bamum, it is by no means

predominant, as it is limited to a few Fulbe women who have settled in the palace of the Bamum king or in the residences of some N'jis. It is therefore possible that the Hamitic type may appear here and there in the Bamum country.

> The skin colour varies between numbers 30 and 22 on Luschan's colour chart. The majority of the population probably has skin tones between 27 and 29. The lighter tones are particularly common in Bamum, especially among the women of the upper classes. Many of N'joya's children were also very light-skinned. Among the Negroes of the forest, there is also a mixture of dark and lighter-skinned people. However, I believe I have observed that a red tone predominates here, while light-skinned people in the grassfields look more yellowish. I also noticed this red tone among the people of the Gold and Ivory Coast, while the Senegambians I saw in Dakar had more of the colour generally attributed to Negroes, namely a dull grey-black. The hair is typically frizzy black hair everywhere. However, it grows considerably longer in the grassfields, enabling the women of Bamum to create elaborate hairstyles, albeit with the help of false hair. (Ankermann 1910:293f).

One finally wonders where Ankermann is going with this when he makes the Bamum and Bamumland into such an exception to the rule that he even accumulates contradictions. According to Ankermann, only women and children have lighter skin. This can only be explained anthropologically, or one must admit that we are dealing with an element foreign to the Bamum race, as we have already suggested, which entered the race through marriage.

> The king does not buy his wives. He receives almost all of them as gifts. Only when he sees a girl somewhere who is 'sweet' to his heart does he negotiate for her and buy her. Once, N'joya also wanted to buy a young girl. The father naturally agreed to the deal and brought the child to the royal court. She was tall, stately, young, beautiful and very fair-skinned. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1948:31).

However, in 1909, when Ankermann visited the Bamum country, the memory of the Fulbe who helped N'joya get rid of a servant who had become dangerous was still fresh. And more than one Fulbe still lived in this country or had established a household there. On the other hand, the differences that Ankermann claims to observe between the light skin of the forest dwellers and that of the grassfield dwellers seem to stem from his own impressions and do not correspond well with the few physical anthropological records we have so far. And his remarks are far from explaining the racial problems of Africa. On the contrary, such speculation further dilutes the little "physical anthropological material" available. The author of also shows a tendency to

contradict himself when he refers to the hairiness of the Bamum population, which seems to him to be more abundant than usual among Negroes, while at the same time claiming that it is typically Negroid.

On the question of their origin in Egypt:

Even if the Bamum came from the area north of Fumban, this does not necessarily mean that they are Hamites. In order to clarify the question of their origin in the north, we must first examine the issue of migration in Africa and the various theories associated with it. First, there is the claim that the Negridae settled in Africa at the level of the Comoro Islands from the southeast:

> According to Delafosse, it was the second of two waves from the Comoros, but these went to Africa, settling in the north-west (Sudan) and mixing more strongly with the Negrids than the first wave, from which they differed slightly. Certainly, such theories, overloaded with conjecture and lacking in arguments, were bound to provoke counterattacks brimming with quotations and boldness. Mention should be made here of a young African researcher, Cheikh Anta Diop, who, based on the writings of ancient authors, examines the question: Who were the Egyptians? In connection with this question, he discusses the origin of the Bamum and claims that they belong to a group of African cultures that are of Egyptian origin. He bases his argument on M.D.W. Jeffreys, who, on the basis of certain analogies – such as zoomorphic-bicephalic figures or the coiled snake in the beret of Egyptian priests – traces the Bamum's cult of kings back to Egyptian worship.
>
> Whether or not the Bamum came from Egypt, modern researchers have found other, more remarkable elements outside the Bamum region that suggest a connection. Diop wants to draw a straight line from Fumban to ancient Egypt based on the Bamum's cult of kings, but there are other, more compelling reasons and characteristics that link the Bamum to other peoples. (Diop 1950:247).

Bamum country and neighbours:

What would the Bamum country be without a king N'joya who drew the attention of foreign peoples to his kingdom? In human culture, there are characters who are particularly appealing to those who seek to decipher advanced civilisations. To them, writing seemed like a revelation. And N'joya, who in his youth came into possession of a book that had belonged to wandering Hausa people, later believed that this writing was the most natural possession of mankind, which only had to be acquired. He spoke as an enlightened man and designed a script that every traveller wanted to decipher.

What would Bamum country be without the influence of royal figures such as N'share, M'buembue, N'sangu and N'joya, who not only expanded the borders of their country but also gave it internal order?

N'joya soon saw his throne threatened and, in order to consolidate it, he unleashed his genius in all directions, so that his country finally became an exception in the grassfields. He even embellished the work of his conquering ancestors. In itself, it is not a very long period of time for which the Bamum can claim involvement – for it was only through the expansion of the border to the Nun River under King M'buembue that the Bamum land rose from the mass of small principalities to become a historically powerful kingdom. Hence the difficulty of finding traces of its origins.

The area of greater old Sudan remains an inexhaustible source of documentation on Africa's past, as does Senegal, the starting point of the last great migrations. These must be dated to the beginning of the collapse of the Sudanese empires and the first advances of Islam by the Almoravids (Abdullah ben Yassin) in the 11th century AD:

> If we are better informed about the ancient history of central and eastern Sudan than that of western Sudan, it is mainly because Muslims, followed by Europeans, did not establish relations with central and eastern Black Africa until well after they had penetrated the heart of the regions located further west. The Islamisation and exploration of the countries east of the Niger are relatively recent (Delafosse 1941:96).

The last population movements therefore took an east-west direction, following the West African coastline in a kind of semicircle.

> From the middle of the 11th century, a bitter and merciless struggle began between the Almoravid bands, who represented Islam and were driven by the desire to shake off the yoke of the Negroes, and the Sara-Kolle kings of Ghana, who, although they had always been hospitable to Muslims, were considered champions of paganism. In 1054, Audaghost, although the capital of a Berber kingdom, was attacked, captured and pillaged by Abdallah ben Yassine, on the pretext that this tribe paid tribute to the king of Ghana.
>
> At the same time, active religious propaganda was carried out by the same Abdallah among the heirs who then resided on both banks of the Senegal River, as well as among the Nigerien populations. In truth, it often encountered resistance which, when it could not manifest itself in any other way, resulted in the exodus of the inhabitants. (Delafosse 1941:46-47).

The population pressure exerted by the Arabs on the settlement areas of the Negroes in West Africa caused the Sudanese to migrate to their present-day areas of residence, where, over time, a mixed population developed on the Sudanese border, which we now refer to as "Semi-Bantu".

> Their previous habitat in Nigeria must have corresponded to only one period of their migration, the penultimate one. Pressed by conquerors from the north and Nigeria, these Sudanese tribes of diverse origins, probably already mixed, retreated once again to the south, to the mountainous region of their current habitat. Their migration must have extended as far as Upper Mbam, where it encountered the Fulbe invasion in the 17th century. These advanced elements were forced to retreat once again to the regions of Foumban and Bafoussam.
>
> Oral tradition, fairly well preserved here in the most important chiefdoms, traces their arrival in this region back to a maximum of fifteen generations of chiefs (commandment). This mass of displaced people encountered an already settled population, numerous but weaker, most likely also made up of immigrants. (Reynaud 1934:12-13).

This is specifically a study of the Bamileke. It is therefore understandable why the Bamum are only mentioned in passing. The Bamum do not have fifteen generations of chiefs or reigns, but rather seventeen kings, some of whom were notable for the longevity of their reigns.

> The Pamom, or at least some of them, are very assertive on this point. Their chronology, which makes Nsa're (1394-1418) a contemporary of King Charles VI of France, is pure fantasy. According to this chronology, the first Fulbe invasion took place during the reign of King Ngu I (1519-1544). However, everyone knows that it was not until the beginning of the 19th century that Ousman-dan-Fodio, taking up the cause of the Fulani herders who had rebelled against their Hausa masters, succeeded in establishing an empire with Sokoto

> as its capital, which soon encompassed all the Hausa kingdoms, part of Adamawa, Kebbi and, in the Niger loop, Liptako. (Martin 1952: Introduction).

The author seeks to place the first Fulbe migrations at the beginning of the 19th century. However, this means accelerating the Bamum history to the point of incomprehensibility. To our knowledge, the last Fulbe migrations took place under King M'buembue, four kings before N'joya.

On the one hand, the Fulbe settled in various parts of Africa two centuries after the Muslim campaign of the Almoravids:

> The Ful (Fulbe, Fula, Fulani, Fellata), whom we will encounter again throughout inner Sudan, spread from Toro on the Senegal River and across the Volta region to northern Nigeria from the 13th century onwards, partly as nomadic and pagan herders (Bororo), partly as Muslims who settled in cities (Fulani-Gidda= the city of Ful) in central Sudan. The latter remained much purer in terms of race than those who quickly mixed in the urban settlements. Before the 18th century, the influx into Ful - it was a peaceful intermingling - seems to have been relatively weak, but by around 1800 they already represented a considerable power. (Baumann, Thurnwald, Westermann 1940:266).

The later decisive action, already mentioned, by Ousman-dan-Fodio and his standard-bearer, who founded the Emirate of Adamawa in 1805, with Yola as its capital (1841).

On the other hand, the author of the history of the Bamum is very keen to specify the life of M'buembue (dated to around the middle of the 18th century) more precisely in the relevant section:

> During his reign, the Fulbe of the South came to wage war on the Pamom. (Martin 1952:24).
> This undoubtedly refers to the Southern Fulbe. However, they had long since settled there, so that Adama only carried out the decisive final act: a seizure of territory that was arbitrary and not carried out on behalf of Ousman-dan-Fodio.

> In Adamaua, too, there were numerous Fulbe settlements in the 18th century and probably much earlier. Among the immigrant families, the Ilaga and Wolaro (sg. Bolaro!) stood out. A certain Adama became the leader of the new movement. (Westermann 1952:139).
> In addition, the inhabitants of the Bamum country before the arrival of N'share and his entourage are recorded in the Fumban archives:

> Originally, several indigenous tribes shared this country: the Bachem, the Panduetmbu, the Panye, the Papiekam, the Papa, the Bagam, the Bati, the Bapito, the Bassam, the Bandjoum, the Balumsap, the Baben, the Bandoum, Bassangam, Bandingap Bangoun, Bancanbil Beripap, Baneha, Bakambe, Bafolap, Bapet, Batiapen, Baloum. These indigenous people were either driven out or absorbed by the invading Bamoums.
>
> The Bamoums appear to be descended from the Mboum tribe, which settled on the Ngaoundéré plateau. At some unknown point in time, one of the chiefs of this tribe, Rifoum, broke away from the Mboum and settled first on the left bank, then on the right bank of the Mbam, at the present location of Bamkin. Rifoum had several children, among whom Mourounta was to succeed him upon his death. Yen, one of Rifoum's daughters, had a son named NChare. He settled in Ditam, while NChare settled successively in Sas, Njimom, after massacring the indigenous chief Mfondono Tambou, then in Miepue after massacring the chief Mfochom. He then took up the fight against Pamben and, victorious, settled on the current site of Foumban and gave its inhabitants the name Bamoums (Bamoums: hidden, a qualitative term given by the Pambens to the subjects of NChare). Foumban comes from Mfon-ben, the residence of the chief of the Pambens.
> NChare fought the tribes occupying the plateau, subjugated them and drove them back. The defeated tribes took the name Pamom: vassal (vassaux) of the Bamoums. NChare, an independent king, established himself as Mfon (king), a term that Europeans translated as "sultan." His ministers took the title of Nji. (I.M. Njoya 1935:63).

Jeffreys and McCulloch classify the Mbum or Bum under the Tikar ("McCulloch 1954:13). Whether these differ from the Bamum is a question that will be addressed in the following chapter.

The Bamum themselves make no distinction between the names Pamom and Bamum. According to Ida C. Ward, another spelling of the former is "Pamem" (Ward 1937:423). In pronunciation, Ba and Pa are the markers of the plural – often indistinguishable, as are the final M and N. The author's overly precise distinction is therefore irrelevant. On the other hand, some useful explanations are given about the possible origin of the words Bamum and Fumban.

> *Mum* means alive, *mun, mum* = 'the living person', Bamum is the plural, meaning 'the living'. The king himself told me that his people got their name because they returned alive to their camp after a cruel battle. Fumban, or rather '*Mfom mbän*', means 'the settlement on the rubble', which is again a warlike memory and tells us that the Bamum people built a new town on the rubble of a defeated city. So it has been in the pagan land through many evil times, through fear, plagues, trembling and trepidation, and through much bloodshed, just like us, and the people are now happy 'that the wars are only fought by the white men'. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1948:12).

When the meaning changes due to the consonant shift m>n, which gives *mum* "alive" and *mun* "human", we encounter the same difficulty of insufficient differentiation in pronunciation as

before with the final consonants m and n. If *mun* means "human", this reveals a fundamental problem in ethnology as a whole. So-called primitive peoples often choose the title "human being" to refer to themselves, for example Khoi among the Hottentots, San among the Bushmen (cf. the "Khoistinids"), Huit among the Eskimos. The word Bantu also means, when broken down, "the people". (See Haekel's ethnology lecture "Grundfragen der Völkerkunde" [Fundamental Questions of Ethnology], summer semester 1960). This is a question of linguistics, for which we do not have sufficient material to solve. And pursuing it would take us too far away from our actual investigation.

We follow the documents in the Fumban archives, which are more coherent, albeit more concise, as our primary source. They refer to historically more probable data than Rein-Wuhrmann's statements. However, the writer of the archives did not include the Pamben in the list of tribes that were settled before the Bamum invasion. He explains that the word Mfon never meant sultan and cannot be translated as such. It is only since N'joya's initiative, barely fifty years ago, that the Bamum can say they have a sultan. But the word *Mofon* means "king".

However, Rein-Wuhrmann's explanation of the word *Mum* does not seem entirely correct, as her interpretation is likely based on a distorted meaning of the word. That is to say, it may be that the word *mum* did not originally mean "alive" but that Bamum, having returned alive from battle, gave the word *mum* a new meaning (namely "alive" or "survivor"). Incidentally, the word Bamum, "the hidden ones" in the translation taken from the archives, fits this cunning people very well. This character trait helped the progenitor of the dynasty to ascend to the throne.

In themselves, the terms "hidden" and "alive" (the survivors) are not contradictory. It was the first and most important duty of the Bamum to be warriors, and "hiding" must be seen here as an important means of warfare.

> The Bamum esteem themselves as mighty warriors and in their traditions there are numerous accounts of wars and skirmishes with neighbouring tribes. Nchare is particularly remembered for his skill and bravery in war, and all Bamum kings are exhorted during the coronation ceremony to follow his example. Thus, when the king is

> washing in the special washing place, the *njifonfon* exclaims, 'this water is the water of our land wherein previous kings washed before you were born. They made a law that no descendant of a foreigner should wash himself here or lead people to hold him in awe as king of the Bamum. This law was made because many foreign kings were the enemies of Nchare. Because he carried a conquering war spear, they would be delighted to see the kingship pass from such warriors. Cease not to be a proud and haughty warrior. On these qualities depends the increase of your domains. Yoruban stands behind you when you fight in a good cause.' (Littlewood 1954:75).

Yoruban is the supreme god, and the idea of war takes on a mystical meaning. It cannot be ruled out that the origin of the Bamum in their mythology is rooted in the idea of a supreme god, similar to some West African peoples (cf. the Oba of Benin, Bradbury 1957:40).

The word "Nji" mentioned in the archives does not mean "minister", but is the hereditary title of N'share's companions. However, a N'ji could also become a minister.

"Autrefois les Pamom étaient à Rifom." Thus begins the Book of the Bamum Kings, written by N'joya and translated by Henri Martin, in which the ancestor N'share appears as a direct descendant, the biological son of the King of Rifum. The translator seems to offer a solution to the problem by also providing a possible etymology for the names Fumban and Bamum: "Nkafut" - *nka* = period, time. *fut* = past, and today refers to Monday. "Futmum" (also spelled Futmom) - *Mom* is the singular form of *Pamom*. Some believe that the word originally comes from Tikar. When N'share, the first king, left Matam and settled where the palace stands today, he declared to those who had followed him and over whom he had full authority that from now on they would bear the name Pamon because they had left Mbuekim = Rifum on the day of Futmum.

But we found a second etymology: "*mom*" could come from the verb *yi mummo* = to conceal. Thus, Pamom means those (*pa*) who conceal (*mom*). The name Futmum now means Tuesday. The question therefore remains whether the meaning of Bamum as "those who hide", as found in the archives, or Martin's meaning, "those who conceal", is the correct one. For the reasons mentioned above, we stick to the first explanation, because it is likely that the Bamum only managed to conquer their new home by cunning, since, to our knowledge, N'chare had only

seven companions (whose descendants are now called Njis) who helped him defeat the indigenous inhabitants.

Martin further explains:

> Fəmbɛn: today it is pronounced and written Foumban. Originally, this word meant: *Fɤm*: ruin, *mbɛn*, from Mben, the name of a tribe that was driven out of Foumban by the Pamom. There is still a neighbourhood in the city called Ma-mbɛn and a village called Ma-ngwən-mbɛn. (Martin 1952:260 note).

While Rein-Wuhrmann's interpretation is tempting and Martin's seems convincing, we believe that clarification is necessary here, specifically with regard to the word Fumban. The etymology of the first syllable is still open to debate. A tradition of the former rulers, the Bamileke, states that the land or city of origin bears the same name as the chief, without the prefix Ba, the plural marker.

> Those we call Bamileke are distinguished from one another by the chief they depend on ... Where do you live? I live in A Mougoum. (Delarozière 1949:8).

This remark is only true if the name Fumban refers to a Bamileke chief. For the conqueror, if he is even slightly aware of the consequences of his conquest, cannot think of being remembered without describing himself as the victor. It was therefore important for N'share to acquire the new title before he began building on the ruins of M'ben, to become the new king of M'ben. It seems more reasonable to assume that he preferred to introduce this innovation rather than rely on a play on words such as "N'share or the ruins of M'ben" instead of "Fumban or the ruins of M'ben". Incidentally, the fact that cities were built on rubble can be considered a tradition among the Bamum, which will be discussed later.

We conclude that the word Ba-mum can mean "the hidden ones" or "the survivors" and that Fumban (Fon-M'ben) means the residence of King M'ben.

We must continue our reflections on the origin of the Bamum, at least as far as the ruling class is concerned. Everything suggests that the migration originated on the Adamawa Plateau. However, Adamawa cannot be the country of origin, but rather a stopover that is only important

insofar as it contributed geographically to the settlement of the Bamum at their present location. According to Franz Hutter, this entire area, including Adamawa, known as "the actual grassfields" or the "Bali countries", must have been inhabited initially by tribes that are now concentrated on the high plateaus of the Nun province and are generally referred to as Bamileke. Our study of the Bamum must therefore also address the issue of the Bamileke.

> Although the culture of the grassfields, viewed as a whole, has such a uniform character, it is certain that it is the result of a series of successive mixtures and has relationships in various directions. And it is remarkable how far these relationships extend.
>
> The geographical location and natural characteristics of the grassfields, which were probably once woodlands and rise like a fortress with steep walls between the lowlands of Cameroon and Adamawa, make them a suitable refuge for displaced tribes. The last refugees to seek shelter here were the Bali, who left their homeland in Adamawa due to oppression by the Fulbe and found new homes here after a long period of wandering. Like the Bali, other tribes undoubtedly fled to the protective highlands before them to escape powerful enemies. (Ankermann 1910:308).

Ankermann then describes the linguistic element as linguistic evidence for his arguments before returning to the cultural motives, so that one agrees with him, one of the founders of the culture circle theory, when he says a little later: "Just as the grassfields represent a transitional area linguistically, so too do they do so culturally: Here it lies on the border between the so-called West African and Sudanese cultural spheres." From a physical anthropological point of view, one can speak of two types: the Sudanese—tall, long-headed, with a long face—and the paleo-negroid broad-skulled. The two types have mixed to such an extent that it is easy to confuse them.

And he undoubtedly echoes Hutter, whose anthropological reports are not very clear, when he says

> Baumann makes a distinction between the Bamiléké and the Bali. There is no difference between these two peoples. It suffices to note that the Bali constituted the extreme point of the Bamiléké migration to the south and were therefore in contact with the civilisations of Cross River and South Niger at an earlier stage. (Delarozière 1949:10 note).

However, one need only remove from Baumann's argument the question of the basic element in the population of the two countries separated by the Nun to reveal Baumann's error regarding the "migration of the Bamiléké". The Sudanese lived on the left and right banks of the

Nun for the same length of time. The appearance is deceptive only because, over half a century, the Bamumland underwent a decisive transitional period in its development with the various Fulbe immigrations. Delarozière says about this:

> What we see here is also noticeable among the Bamum: one gets the distinct impression that the great families of chiefs belong to a different race, much taller and much more robust, more complete physically and intellectually than the common people. (Delarozière 1949:10 note).

The geographical and climatological unity and, beyond that, the cultural and racial characteristics raise questions about the origin and composition of the peoples in the Semi-Bantu region. It is surprising that all researchers who have addressed this question have only come to very general conclusions, for example, that those who are grouped under the general term Bamileke form an inextricable racial conglomerate. On the other hand, they strive to accord the Bamum and their ilk a special place, again because of the characteristics of racial mixing. This does not simplify the problem, but rather makes it more complicated. One can indeed establish as a principle that the linguistic element is originally native to the area now assigned to the Semi-Bantu population, i.e. starting from the northern border of the Mungo department, where the Bamileke population is increasingly losing its originality, up to the height of Adamaua, which is still referred to by some tribes as their country of origin. This is a partial migration as the founding element, not a total migration, as Delarozière believes, who has the Bamileke come from upper M'bam, which belongs to the Tikar. He has the Bafussam refer to N'dolie and the Baleng, Bapi and Badeng to a second village, namely N'doba.

> We have no information about the populations that the Bamiléké found on the plateau and assimilated. When asked, chiefs and notables replied that the country was unoccupied. This was certainly not the case: the language and customs of the Bamiléké prove that there was a clash between at least two civilisations. It is reasonable to assume that the indigenous populations were much more sparse than the current Bamiléké population. The deforestation of the plateau is indeed recent.
>
> One observation must be made: we are in a country that was once heavily forested. This is clearly demonstrated by the presence of remnants of forest, clinging to the steepest slopes or on land not suitable for cultivation. The numerous savannahs we find today are solely due to human activity. (Delarozière 1949:13).

The answer given by the notables is clear enough: migrating groups encountered relatives. Only the author makes a mystery of it. What is more, he could not help doing so. The Baleng tribe, which according to calculations must be considered one of the oldest, claims to be 500 years older, and the Bandjum, who claim to be descended from the Baleng, can only be dated to the beginning of the 18th century. The figures themselves are of little interest to us here, but the discrepancy in the chronology between these two related tribes is striking and significant.

Using this example as a model, one could continue the discussion ad infinitum. However, there is another explanation for this development: namely, that one of the tribes that was driven into exile (the Bandjum) submitted to a native tribe or a tribe that had been settled there for some time (the Baleng), in which the relative (in this case the son) automatically becomes chief. Otherwise, it would be difficult to explain why the son of the Baleng would have separated from his family to become chief of another tribe. The Bamileke were therefore already settled when the Sudanese arrived, having been driven from their homeland in the first Fulbe inversion. Depending on where they advanced on Bamileke territory, the invaders subjugated or drove them away, first in a north-south direction and finally in a north-east-west direction. This explains why they had the Fulbe behind them and the Bamileke in front of them, and why the displaced inhabitants never came into direct contact with the Fulbe. These waves of migration must have taken place several times, as this is the only way to understand why the newly advancing Sudanese groups had to drive out their own kind and the defeated.

Thus, the guerrillas and the internal struggles, which had escalated to a state of "every man for himself," became a kind of natural disaster, and the natives, who were accustomed to the open air, soon found these attacks too frequent. They had to remember to huddle together. Under the fierce pressure of the Sudanese conquerors, a social organisation adapted to the circumstances became necessary. The branch of the last forced migration, formed by the Bamum, had initially come from the north-east with the task of holding back the Fulbe and making room for themselves

by forcing the indigenous people to wade through the Nun. This makes it easier to understand how so many cultural elements could overlap.

> An older current, which apparently came from Bafum via Bekom and spread as far as Bangangte in the south, brought with it woodcarving and highly developed pottery. Another wave came from the northeast, from Tikar, introducing brass casting. Finally, the last immigration, that of the Bali, can probably be traced back to the Benue. Firstly, the ancient language of the Bali, Mubako, which they have now largely abandoned in favour of a language adopted during their settlement in the Bamum lands, seems to be most closely related to the language of the Vere. Secondly, the Bali have some ethnographic characteristics that are only found in the Benue. Throughout the grassfields, there is a simple xylophone whose wooden bars are loosely placed on two banana trunks. Only in Bali is there a xylophone – only two examples, incidentally – with a fixed frame and resonance gourds, which, as in the Benue, consist of two gourds placed together. The Voma society has four iron throwing knives as ceremonial implements and large trumpets made of several gourds as musical instruments, both of which are similar to those found in northern Adamawa. The knife with a ring handle and spirals on the handle, as well as some emblems of the chieftain, also point in this direction: sticks with iron decoration at the end and the well-known bundles of spears with a common tip sheath made of hide. (Ankermann 1910:30S/9).

In connection with the migrations, Ankermann draws a map of cultural exchange and cultural affinities for the Cameroonian Grassfields, Adamawa and Benue. The connection between the Grassfields and Nigeria is not limited to cultural elements, but also includes linguistic similarities.

> The greatest diversity in physical features appears among the tribes of the Benue Valley. In a single day, one can see pygmy, brachycephalic, Bantu-speaking Bafum from Cameroon side by side with giant dolichocephalic Sudanese Yen. (Meek 1925:29).

With other similarities, this part of Cameroon, again according to Ankermann and Frobenius, forms the link between Bakube and Benin.

> Leo Frobenius has also pointed out the great similarity of ornamentation in both cultures. The characteristic band pattern is certainly less prominent in north-western Cameroon, although it is not entirely absent. In its place, zigzag and triangle patterns dominate, along with meanders and a series of animal figures: spiders, frogs, lizards – derived ornaments. (Ankermann 1910:309).

The similarity in ornamentation is undeniable, but the development of these motifs in the different styles is remarkable. For example, what Ankermann calls the "zigzag pattern" is nothing more than a stylisation of the toad in Bamum art. Spiders and toads are motifs that are particularly

prevalent in the Bamum community, especially in the art of divination. This brings us to the confusing problem of the cultural unity of Black Africa, which is inseparable from the question of migration. Must we adhere to the theory that art and culture in Africa have a common origin in Egypt, as claimed by Cheikh Anta Diop and defended to a certain extent by Jeffreys and Meek, who even see physiological similarities? "Many Nupe, however, have the appearance of ancient Egyptians." (Meek 1925:29) The author does not, however, specify particular features.

Of course, as the last immigrants, the members of the royal Bamum family may have preserved the evidence of their origins with a certain freshness. But when one considers the fact that the original Sudanese did not take concerted action against the descendants of the savannah and were themselves displaced by followers of Islam because a systematic defence was not possible, one cannot help but marvel at the strong survival of the indigenous element, especially in terms of racial mixing and language.

> Ruling dynasties always followed different norms than their subjects. We can observe this phenomenon time and again in Africa. (Baumann 1926:79).

This is particularly applicable to the Bamum royal family, which had to modify the social order and establish a status according to its own standards. And these "norms", as Baumann calls them, are traces for us on the path to the origins of the Bamum. Institutions that do not refer to any tradition are often the product of their own memory. In other words, norms that are remembered and adapted to. If we trace the Bamum back to the Adamawa Plateau, as everything seems to indicate, there are, apart from the M'bum, from whom they claim to descend, and the Tikar, from whom they also claim to have inherited the bronze technique, the Durru. These are one of the tribes that seem to have suffered the same fate as the Bamum, i.e. they were also driven out but settled in Adamawa.

These tribes are largely lost branches, islands of a population that differ from the last invaders as much as they do from the indigenous people.

> The Durru, who call themselves Divio, live in the middle between the Tschamba in the east, the Mundang in the northeast, and the Bum (Mbum?) in the south and southeast. Their comrades in the middle are the Nandji and Bokko, the former of whom are linguistically less distinct from the Durru. The Durru have apparently been ruled by the Bum since ancient times. Nevertheless, they have preserved many of their institutions and even maintained their own type of chieftainship. Since the Fulbe invasion, which changed all conditions, part of the Durru came under the rule of Rei Buba, part under that of Galadima of Tschamba, and part under that of the powerful Ngaundere prince. (Frobenius 1913:225).

The author is undoubtedly unaware of the various problems raised by such a list, since certain groups neighbouring the Durru, such as the Tschamba (Chamba), who belong to the same linguistic group, and the M'bum, whom he calls their ancestors, may just as well be their relatives. What is essential is to identify cultural elements that do not originate in an isolated environment, but in a different one. This is also the case with the Bamum, who, although traced back to Adamaua, do not necessarily originate from the Tikar, since the Tikar also came to this country and brought their cultural heritage with them, just as the Bamum did (cf. McCulloch 1954:20).

> On the other hand, there is no doubt that the peoples of the western Cameroonian grassfields, especially the Bamum, adopted brass casting from the Tikar and passed it on to their northern and western neighbours. (Thorbecke 1919:19).

The brass casting technique used by both tribes does not necessarily imply adoption, but rather suggests that brass casting is a cultural heritage passed down through the generations in both cases. If we knew all the "secrets" hidden in all the information about Africa, we would not see adoption everywhere. In most cases, we are inclined to assume family ties. N'joya himself never wanted to reveal his "secret" about the discovery of colours. He did not do so, even for the most tempting innovations, such as the secret of the blast furnace.

> The king regrets that the tanning and dyeing of sheep- and goat-skins is not yet at a high level among his own people. He is equally pained that his neighbour, the king of Babungo, knows how to smelt iron ore. He has already offered him treasures, but the Febungo will not reveal his secret. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1925:85).

It was not that the King of Babungo simply refused – King N'joya did not want to entrust him with the secret of dye preparation, no matter what price the Febungo was willing to pay for this knowledge.

It is more than likely that the Bamum took the route through what is now Tikar on their migration. It is even generally accepted that the royal family's claim that they and all Bamum originated from Tikarland is correct.

The organisation of the dynasty

> The ruling class, especially the royal family, has repeatedly resorted to peculiar social reforms that are far removed from all social and blood ties of the masses due to their isolation, which is required for the preservation of blood purity and magical powers. This gives rise to legal obligations within the royal family and the nobility descended from it, which often run counter to the feelings of the people in every respect. Then it is only the instinct to submit and respect for the powerful that prevents the people from committing regicide, widow murder, incest, female rule and other such acts. These are two social worlds that are held together only by their differences. (Baumann 1926:138).

Baumann takes up the idea from earlier and attempts to highlight the characteristics of the foreign royal families. One of the most peculiar institutions of the Bamum royal house is the social structure, a kind of pyramid with the king at the top. The fourth generation of royal blood or the third generation descended from the Nji become slaves. In other words, the great-grandson of the king and the grandson of the noble Nji belong to the group of slaves. The latter, who form the working class and have no right to (female) property except as a reward, can only reproduce thanks to this system. After four generations, therefore, no blood relationship is recognised. But instead of becoming slaves, the women of this first generation complete the number of the king's wives and secure the succession to the throne, preferably before complete strangers, as they themselves are of royal descent – a status not recognised among men of the same category. The women pose no threat to the continuation of the dynasty.

This system cannot be compared, for example, to that of the Daura in the Hausa country, where princesses were given to slaves so that heirs would be born, since the offspring of the ruling king were automatically eliminated. The only similarity between these two systems, of course, is their common goal, namely to preserve the crown. Among the Bamum, the fact that the brothers of certain royal wives are slaves is explained by the peculiar secondary role they have

to play in the state. The succession is secured by a chosen son who inherits his father's property before all others, so that his brothers automatically enter his service. He may have a brother from the same mother in the royal family. If one is born, he must die. The person of the reigning king thus limits membership of the royal family to the queen mother, the sons and the wives of the king. His brothers are excluded and have no right of succession, but this right allows a woman to rule if there is no male heir. She must then secure a successor, to whom she abdicates the throne and then assumes the position of queen mother, who plays a no less important second role in the kingdom. The Daura and the Ashanti have matrilineal succession, while the Bamum have patrilineal succession with a matrilineal tendency. One might be tempted to make no distinction and say that the Bamum also have matrilineal succession, but this is not correct. For example, in the line of succession, the mother secures the election only through voting and participation. A son whose mother is of royal descent is called a "well-born king".

Among the Bamum, the eldest daughter bears the title "daughter of the city" or "daughter of the country" to distinguish her from the future heir to the throne, and she leaves her father's house (the king's state residence) when she marries so that her husband has no opportunity to claim the throne. He is entitled to a share of the inheritance, and there is a fear that he might attempt to usurp the throne.

Another feature that could lead one to speak of "women's property rights" among the Bamum is that upon the death of the queen mother, her eldest sister is recognised as her successor and inherits her court, part of her property and the title of queen mother.

However, Baumann describes such characteristics as a "family system and not a clan system" of small family organisation (Baumann 1926:69), which is not the case with the Bamum. Paradoxically, they do not have what Baumann refers to as primogeniture in the true sense of the word, as the eldest son never inherits. Since N'joya, he is only regarded as an advisor.

Meek reports that among the Koro, a semi-Bantu people in northern Nigeria, children take their mother's name rather than their father's. This also applies to the Bamum and is apparently practised for reasons of convenience in view of the polygamous relationships. For this reason, the mother's name comes after the given name to define it if it occurs more than once in the same family. For example, one would say: *Mama N'sangu* (born) of ... (this woman). This naming convention is also frequently used to distinguish between "son of my mother", i.e. son of the same (own) mother, and relatives on the father's side. The terms "son of my mother" or "son of my father" have no special meaning and are found in all polygamous societies.

> Not only Ashanti is apparently influenced by the North Hamites, but also all those states of Sudan in which the ruling families are organised according to matrilineal law, but the subjects according to patrilineal law. Western and Central Sudan, which are strongly influenced by Berbers, have a whole series of such states. It is not only the succession to the throne through the maternal line that is decisive for the recognition of matrilineal dynastic customs. The high position of the queen mother, the king's sister, and royal women in general is often conclusive evidence, as are marriages between half-siblings in the royal family. (Baumann 1926:157).

The Bamum do not practise marriage between half-siblings, nor do they practise regicide, although there is one known attempt to assassinate the king because he was too old in the history of the Bamum. However, the origin of all these matrilineal tendencies in Africa remains no less Meroitic (Hirschberg 1955:95).

> Except in the cases mentioned, the right of primogeniture is particularly prevalent along the coast from Dahomey to the Cross River. It also seems to be common in northern Nigeria and the Cameroonian grassfields. Whether it can be traced back to ancient states (Benin!), as the inheritance law of the Nai and so on could be explained by the conditions in ancient Quoja, seems possible but not certain. We can only make more definite assumptions once we have a better understanding of the ethnology of northern Nigeria and Adamawa. (Baumann 1926:101).

But the scattered groups in Adamawa, of which the Durru are only one among many others, whose bond was the threat posed by Islam, seem to live halfway along the path that connects the Bamum with the heritage of the West African states. Baumann is far from doubting this state of affairs.

> The high status of the mother's brother among the Bamum should also be mentioned here. The brothers and maternal uncles are present at the circumcision ceremonies of the Durru. The right of the mother's brother, or his family, to the sister's children is also found among some peoples of northern Nigeria. (Baumann 1926:131).

The Yergum of northern Nigeria are among the populations in which the uncle on the mother's side has duties towards his nephew. Among the Vere, as among the Koro, the uncle also plays an important role in the upbringing of the child. There is also the "right of theft" of the nephew, characteristic of the Mande, Mossi and Bosso peoples on the Niger.

> A rich man who has no children appoints his nephew as his heir. When the nephew comes to his mother's brother's farm and sees something he likes, he may take it. That is the nephew's right. If he would like something but cannot afford it, his uncle will help him. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1925:104).

Theft or nephew's right is found not only in West Africa, but also in East Africa among the Maasai.

> Matriarchy has mainly survived in an area where all the great states of Africa arose and fell. And where, as in the south, matriarchy is no longer common today, so many matriarchal traits have been preserved in the chieftain and royal families that this fact alone leads us to associate matriarchy with a ruling class, which in Sudan, for example, is strongly suspected of being 'Hamitic'. In the inter-lake region, where paternal law also prevails, there are such undeniable elements of matriarchy in the ruling families that it is also linked to the structures of power. And in the core areas of matriarchy, where it is still alive among the people, lie the Ashanti-Agnista states, Loango, Congo, Lunda (in part), the Baluba, Awemba, and the old and new Zambezi empires. However, large states almost always arise only through a mixture of a resident element with a nomadic element. It cannot be ruled out that the same ethnic group that founded the old Ghana and Walata in north-western Africa and ruled entire ethnic groups throughout Sudan together with the Fulbe, who may have been the core population, also created the states in the Zambezi region and in the northern areas of the Congo. (Baumann 1926:137).

The structure of the Bamum state bears the hallmarks of a large African state, where the presence of an absolute king demands a hierarchy with an unshakeable foundation, a central authority, a governing body and an executive that is both secret and public. With their cult of the king, the Bamum demonstrate an important element of the great African states.

The position of Bamum art

Art, for its part, is a privilege of the court. Artists are sponsored by the king and work for him. They create figures representing ancestors or simple art objects, gifts for guests of the court.

> This is clearly an originally courtly art, an art that was closely connected to the monarchy, and it is entirely justified to assume connections with the ancient Benin art. (Hirschberg 1960: 92).

With a description by L. Underwood of the casting technique in Benin art, Hirschberg draws a comparison with the technique used by the artists in Fumban. He concludes that the techniques are the same. However, in the case of the Bamum royal family, we are not dealing with a special art and techniques, but rather an art form that has become a lifestyle compared to its source, just as W. Fagg speaks of Yoruba sub-styles which can be identified by groups and masters, insofar as these are known.

> We also know that Benin's major industry, bronze casting, originated in Ife. For more than fifty years, we have been familiar with indigenous traditions, probably dating back to the 13th century, according to which the Oba of Benin asked the Oni of Ife to send him a man skilled in bronze casting to teach the art to the Bini. A comparison between the heads of Ife and what we believe to be the oldest Benin bronzes generally seems to confirm this tradition. They do indeed appear to mark a definite progression in style. (Fagg 1951:113).

It can be admitted that at the time when the Oba of Benin's request was granted, others besides the Bini benefited from the spread of this art.

Fagg is also surprised by the simultaneous presence of two specific elements in the culture of Ife that are also found in Bamum art, namely symbolism and naturalism.

> Finally, we notice a strange phenomenon in the culture of Ife that is extremely rare in the history of world culture: the coexistence within the same culture of an entirely naturalistic art and an almost completely abstract art. This phenomenon can be understood in the classical and Renaissance periods in Europe. (Fagg 1951:115).

It is not without reason that this author insists on distinguishing between secondary styles in his article. As far as the Bamum style is concerned, its naturalism developed in an extremely mixed environment in which the Sudanese element was overwhelmed by indigenous elements.

> One notes an important solution of continuity between this work (dating from the 16th and 17th centuries) and the dance masks found in this region. These date back some sixty

> years. During this relatively short period, however, we can observe an evolution from idealised figures – apparently influenced by Sudanese and Bantu elements – to more figurative representations and the very faithful representations executed in clay by Mosé Yéyap. (Lecoq 1951:176).

There is no need to dwell on the various symbolist and naturalist features mentioned above, where, in a development that starts from abstract art, the artist has embarked on a proper analysis of the characteristic ethnic traits of his compatriots.

> The very recent works, executed in bronze using the lost wax process – known to the Bamoum long before their contact with the Germans (1899) [sic] and undoubtedly learned from artists from Benin – masks with curious caricatured smiles, seem to be better understood when placed in this stage of evolution. (Lecoq 1951:177).

In terms of technique, Bamum brass casting belongs to the Akan-Ashanti group and not to that of Benin-Yoruba, while stylistically it must be classified in the Benin-Yoruba group (the other two style groups are the Ashanti-Akan and the Dohome).

Finally, we must mention the cult of twins, which still plays a role in art among the Yoruba in the form of Ibeji figurines or images of dead twins. Among the Bamum, however, the cult of twins now only has sociological significance. The sculptures and ornamental objects used in ceremonies can also be mentioned. Apart from the masks, the Bamum and Yoruba share the drum for secret societies with carved, often anthropomorphic motifs.

The relationship with the Sao

After this overview – from a cultural and anthropological point of view – of the relationship between the Bamum and their immediate neighbours, we must now turn our attention to a lost people who not only have similarities with the Bamum, but whose influence can be felt throughout Central Africa and from whom, according to Meek, the semi-Bantu element originates.

> The Sao, who are reported as having been a giant race, were possibly tall Nilotic invaders like the Jukun, or they may have formed a portion of the aboriginal semi-Bantu stock. They had successfully maintained themselves against, and even defeated, the kings of Kanem, killing four successive Kanem kings between 1346 and 1352. They ceased to be mentioned as enemies of Kanem after the close of the fifteenth century. (But Idris Amsami at the close of the seventeenth century had again to deal with them.) (Meek 1925A:79).

The reappearance of the Sao in the history of Kanem, after two centuries of complete obscurity, proves in an almost symbolic way their roots in this "Chadian Mesopotamia" and the peoples of their sphere of influence (Lebeuf 1950:7).

However, even though the Sao became part of the Semi-Bantu element, they never ceased to exist. Their culture, geographical location and the mediating role they had to play may have made them the direct heirs of the original inhabitants of Meroe. The influence of the Ethiopian rulers of Napata, founders of the 25th dynasty, must have extended across the whole of Sudan and probably even across the whole of Nigeria, whose first inhabitants also bore the name Sao (Meek 1925B:162). Among the most direct heirs of Egyptian culture, it was therefore the Sao whose origins we will attempt to trace here. Above all, who were the Sao?

> At first glance, the Sao appear legendary, and the imagination runs wild, attributing the most surprising actions to them. With one hand, they blocked the rivers. Their voices were so loud that they could call out to each other from one city to another, and when one of them coughed, the birds flew away. Their hunting expeditions took them far from their homes, hundreds of kilometres away, which they covered in a single day, and the animals they killed, hippopotamuses and elephants, were easily carried on the shoulders of the happy hunters. It was during one of these pursuits that the Sao lacerated the five stones that have since stood at Hadjer-el-Harnis .
>
> Made invincible by their strength, their monstrous appearance discouraged other men from even attempting to fight them. Their weapons, bows made from palm tree trunks, balls of stone and baked clay that they could grab a hundred at a time, were less useful than their fists, a single blow from which was enough to kill a horseman and his mount. Even the ground could hardly support their weight, and there is still a valley that is said to have been formed at one of their dancing places, where the drum used on these occasions turned into a mountain. (Lebeuf 1950:27-26).

The Bamum, like the Sao, who, according to Lebeuf's description, were said to resemble M'buembue in appearance, are therefore descendants of a race of giants. The legends of these two peoples give free rein to our imagination. Like the Sao, M'buembue was endowed with "enormous strength," the voices of the Sao could be heard from one city to another, and the traces of their giant steps were easily recognisable everywhere. They could cover enormous distances on foot, were invincible in battle and apparently also tireless dancers.

This legend, which depicts the Sao as such, can be explained by the fact that they had to compete with the indigenous population, "little red people who are 'Gwègwèy', the classic original inhabitants of this part of Africa" (Lebeuf 1950:32), whom they encountered in the Chad Basin. Before Lebeuf's research, however, this region and its inhabitants were shrouded in mystery. Even in recently published works, errors can be found, as their authors are unfamiliar with Chadic culture and its bearers, the Sao. Peter Fuchs, for example, without denying the significance of Lebeuf's work, which is now {1962} more than ten years old, considers the Sao to be an "old Nigritian element (in Baumann's sense), in order to make them – and here his intention is clear – the "indigenous population of Tibesti-Borku" (Fuchs 1961:198). And yet the fact that the Sao were giants is now generally accepted. The old-Nigrite element that Fuchs is trying to find most likely consists of the "Gwègwèy" as imagined by Lebeuf, but these are only connected to the giant Sao because the latter settled in their area and spread their culture.

> A nation would not have allowed itself to be subjugated without reaction. In reality, the social and political state was certainly that found among the least evolved black Sudanese tribes, which seems congenital to the race of agricultural communities, strongly organised around a family formed by the descendants of the founder of the village, the one who first, in a virgin bush, made an alliance, through sacrifices, with the local genies of the soil and thus acquired for himself and his descendants the religious (priestly) power and political authority exercised in agreement with the council of patriarchs of the village families. Above these theocratic collective farms ('kolkhozes') (there is nothing or almost nothing, a vague sense of kinship with people who speak the same language, the memory of clearer links with a number of villages that have spread out around a mother community. Sometimes a turbulent chief imposes on a few neighbours an honorary and fleeting domination that in no way undermines the natural structure. That is all. It is almost nothing. (Urvoy 1949:19).

This reconstruction of the Sao tradition, which is also a kind of retelling of the origins of the Kingdom of the Bamum, may rightly appear romanticised. And we are faced with the same problem: who were the Sao? There is the legend of the elders of Zinder, who describe them as a people who lived by gathering and herding cattle. Another version, however, depicts them as cannibals. However, sacrifices to the local genies of the earth appear everywhere as a primal

element. It is astonishing that Fuchs, although he clearly draws on Urvoy when he speaks of the genies of the earth, nevertheless wants to make the Sao the original inhabitants, so to speak.

As for the origin of the Sao, it is to be found in the vicinity of Kordofan, Dar-Fur and Fitri-Sees. The migration – for contrary to Urvoy's claims, there was indeed a migration of the Sao – took place in a south-southeasterly direction, and probably also towards the east (Urvoy 1949:21). Lebeuf, who believes that there was a progressive migration from north to south within a radius of 500 km around the Sahara, describes the south as the direction from which their dispersion began, among other directions taken by the Sao during their final flight at the end of the 15th century. (Lebeuf 1950:35).

The mass emigration of the Sao must have begun in the 7th century, when foreigners invaded their territory. According to the history of Kanem-Bornu, which mentions them for the first time at this point, these foreigners appeared approximately 500 km north of Lake Chad. In addition to this historical source, there are various oral traditions that tell of the Sao. According to one account, they came from the east (the Middle East, Palestine or Arabia).

> They were descended from a woman from Jerusalem, mother of twins, a boy and a girl, who married and founded the Sao people. (Lebeuf 1950:28).

Another version, which belongs to the realm of legend, claims that they came from Kheiber, north of Mecca, also at an unspecified time. We will only mention these sources and leave aside those that have a biblical character and at times even hint at the figures of Adam and Eve. No criticism of any of these legends is intended here (they represent the weakness of Urvoy's work, of which he is well aware), above all to avoid emphasising certain aspects of the Islamic influence of more recent times.

However, it is acknowledged that in the 11th century, i.e. before the arrival of foreign ethnic groups, the Sao exercised complete hegemony over the entire region surrounding Lake Chad.

> Other emigrants, whites also called Sao by the current inhabitants, originating from the vicinity of Jerusalem (Ardicham, in Arabic) or the land of Cham (Syria), are said to have arrived in successive waves from the 12th century until the end of the 14th century, some of them taking the route Koufra, Fayd, Bahr-el-Gazal (Chad), Mao, Moussoro and Lake Fitri. They then crossed the Chari. (Lebeuf 1950:34).

In order to attempt to explain this apparent confusion among the Sao people, it would be appropriate at this point to look for the origin of the word Sao, the etymology of which, it must be added immediately, has not yet been clarified. In the absence of such an explanation, we will highlight certain hypotheses, such as that the dialect word Kotoko used by Goulfeil brings to mind a people who built defensive walls, in which case "saw", another form of "sao" (wall), derives from "sawe". It must be unanimously agreed with Lebeuf that this explanation has a warlike connotation. This author is in fact of the opinion that the word Sao, which was originally used in this narrower sense, later spread to all ancient peoples. It is rather an Arabic term whose meaning is not precise, perhaps closer to Amharic, or Sao with the meaning of human being, without us wanting to make them Abyssinians. In this case, the word could refer to (all) people (of the past), which would correspond to the facts (Lebeuf 1950:26).

The meaning attributed to the word Sao here brings us back to the fundamental question we had to deal with earlier, namely the origin and meaning of the word "Mum", to which certain etymological opinions attribute, among other things, the meaning "human being". The words "Mum", or "hidden warrior", and "Sao", or "builder of defensive walls", both contain the concept of the "warlike human being".

What became of the Sao can be learned from the tribes that claim to be descended from them. Sudan, as well as semi-Bantu Cameroon and Nigeria, serve as the areas in which they are distributed. The Kotoko, who are still known today under the name Sao, seem to be the main heirs of the ancient Sao. The mestizos of the Kanembu, the Kanuri, also belong to this group. The tribes on the banks of the Komadugu Yoobe, those of the Yadseram Valley and, in the south, the Gwegwe, the Njeigne, the Bata, the Holma, even the M'bum, whom we have already seen to be

related to the Bamum, and finally the Mundang and the Gamergu, all claim to be descendants of the Sao. The research undertaken by the Logone-lac-Fitri expedition extends far beyond the territories of the above-mentioned tribes, beyond the southern borders of Lake Chad to Molom on the Logone (Lebeuf 1950:58).

This makes it almost impossible to get an idea of the actual expansion of the Sao. This people seems to share the fate of several African nations that formed a linguistic unit, such as the Bantu.

> The Sós must have had a certain unity, since they had a common name. However, it is certain that they did not form a 'state'. Nowhere is there any mention of a single king of the Sós, or rather, in each oral tradition there is mention of a 'king' or chief of the Sós who lived precisely in the place in question. There is no memory or mention of a war of conquest... (Urvoy 1949:18-19).

It therefore remains to be seen what parallels can be drawn between the Bantu tribes and those of Sudan in the context of African history. But whatever form or social organisation Urvoy attributes to the Sao, it is clear that they were primarily fishermen who deliberately built their towns near flowing water and fished mainly on the banks of the Chari, Togone, Komadugu-Yube or Benue rivers. Small statues they left behind, reproductions of animals they hunted, such as porcupines, hippopotamuses and marine mammals, perhaps lizards, are evidence of their maritime activities.

The fact that they settled on the banks of the rivers and streams of Chad is probably not a coincidence, given that they themselves were descendants of fishermen. And, despite the importance that must be attached to the Sao in terms of their role in the Sudan as a whole, they are undoubtedly not the element that Murdock refers to as the "nuclear Mande". However, they can probably be regarded as descendants of the Negro race that inhabited Nubia since the Mesolithic period, i.e. from the second cataract to the confluence of the White and Blue Nile at Khartoum. These Nubian hunters and gatherers lived mainly on fish and hippopotamuses, which they killed with spears. They lived in the middle of a network of mud and clay and produced

stone tools in the Caspian style as well as clay pots, and knocked out their lower incisors. (Murdock 1959:158).

The material culture of these Nubians is very reminiscent of that of the Sao, who also worked with stone, practised pottery and hunted hippopotamuses. Even the knocking out of the lower incisors may well have been common among the Sao. Contrary to what Murdock believes, this was considered an ideal of beauty that was unknown to the Bamum and, far beyond the borders of the Semi-Bantu, to the Bentu. Similar customs can also be found among certain Bantu tribes in Cameroon, among others.

Lantier does not deny the ties that bind Chad to the Nile Valley:

> There is no dividing line between the civilisations of the upper Nile Valley and those of Central Africa. Recent linguistic studies have proven this. But this is not enough, and while there is enough evidence to link African metallurgy to Nubian metallurgy, the stages of the transition between the Nile basin and the Chad plain, remain unknown. The most remarkable pieces from the Sao, the gazelle head from Midigué and the fan pendant from Makari raise a series of questions about the ancient history of Africa. The bridges between the Nile and Chad have not been broken, and the prototypes of these objects may perhaps belong to the furnishings of contemporary 8th-century Black African cemeteries. However, as for the gazelle head of Midigué, the model, if there was one, has been transformed according to African standards: the elongation of the muzzle at its lower part marks an accentuated prognathism, and the rendering of the eye is reminiscent of certain copper figurines from the Mossi country. No less characteristic is the type of mount ending in a nail head at one of its ends. These pieces seem closer to the art of African bronze or copper masks and statuettes and have a truly African character. The lost-wax casters of the Sao country are similar to the bronze casters of Benin and the Mossi country (Lantier 1943:177-178).

The metalwork therefore appears here as fundamental evidence not only of the relationships that bound the influential, large Sudanese peoples together, but also of those with areas under Egyptian influence.

According to Lebeuf's excavations, the Sao not only worked bronze and copper, but also gold, although there is no evidence other than oral tradition that this precious metal was in the hands of the greedy Sao. In any case, not a single gold object was found among the artefacts discovered by Lebeuf. However, the motifs underlying these legends (or traditions) are the same as those we know from the Bamum.

> In the river, precious metal, owned by the megboula or water men, was guarded by a crocodile or a two-headed snake. The latter would come out in the evening and vomit gold that lit up the river while the reptile searched for food under the eyes of the fishermen. Sometimes, shiny pieces would escape and fly like fireflies. It was difficult to catch and, despite numerous attempts by humans, it always escaped. The only way to get hold of it was to try to catch it with red millet seeds when it was flying, which would cause it to 'die' when they touched it. After the rain, it could sometimes be found on the ground. It was then used to make jewellery (Lebeuf 1950/144).

The analogy with the double-headed snake of the Bamum is obvious. For the Bamum, it is the symbol of kingship and also the guardian of the sacred fire. Although the element of fire and shining gold are interpreted differently by the two peoples, it seems entirely reasonable to describe the two myths as closely related. The living gold of the Sao becomes the living fire of the Bamum, which in reality is not fire, but a stone: the stone of the snake. (Jeffreys 1945:9).

It is worth mentioning here, albeit only briefly, the role that jewellery played in the lives of the ancient Sao people. The magnificent ornaments on the statues and the jewellery found in some clay pots speak for themselves (Lebeuf 1950:146). Among the Bamum, wearing jewellery is a privilege of the ruling class. Only princesses and the king's wives are allowed to wear a bead crown. It is also this privileged class that buries their dead in a sitting position or, in the case of a king or queen mother, even seated on a chair. The grave is round. A necklace made of beads and one made of copper adorn the neck of the dead king. He wears ivory bracelets, an artificial beard made of beads on his chin and a cap, also made of beads, on his head. The grave is also decorated with wine gourds and cola nuts. An embalmed stone – probably a gravestone – and an ivory tip complete the grave furnishings. The Sao must also have known two types of burial: the magnificent ones of the privileged class and those of the poor, in the style of the Togone-Birni and Mididué cemeteries.

> In a pit lined with ashes and charcoal from the deceased's home, a large urn was placed, shaped more or less like a very elongated half-lemon, which was sometimes covered internally with an ochre coating. Curled up, arms wrapped around legs bent at the chest, chin resting on knees, the corpse, previously embalmed (?), rubbed with oil, dressed in its finest clothes and adorned with jewellery, was lowered into this jar in the presence of mourners. Next to the corpse, charcoal and calabashes were placed for the deceased's

> food and drink. A second pottery vessel covered the whole thing. The joined necks were cemented and the burial was covered with earth (Lebeuf 1950:91-92).

Strong similarities between the two cultures can be found not only in ornamentation, but also in other aspects of funeral customs, such as the care with which the deceased is wrapped. Among the Bamum, cloth is placed around the body in such a way that it cannot touch the ground. A similar idea probably lies behind the use of urns. The food placed in the grave and the seated position of the deceased are clearly common to both cultures. Ashes also play a role in Bamum funeral customs, in that the deceased was rubbed with ashes before being dressed for burial in the absence of soap (Isaac Paré 1956:123). Whether the presence of gravestones among the Bamum has the same meaning as among the Sao or whether they indicate a megalithic culture remains open to question. It is interesting to note that this stone, which is replaced by a post among the Kotoko, comes from the house of the deceased, which is no longer inhabited after his death. Lebeuf remains cautious and does not comment on the word "embalmed" so as not to have to refer to Egyptian ceremonial practices. Nevertheless, this is an important factor, as the Bamum also embalmed their dead.

The cult of twins, which still plays a role in the lives of the Bamum today, also seems to have been common among the Sao.

The art of the Sao

Let us now return to the brass casting work, which we briefly mentioned earlier as being known to both the Sao and the Bamum. In a recently published work, Hirschberg describes the production of a wax model in Fumban. He believes – following Thorbecke – that the brass casting method originated with the Tikar, from whom the Bamum adopted it. The Bamum, in turn, passed this art on to the Bagam. However, according to Thorbecke, the Bagam claim that they inhabited the Bamum territory at that time, while the Bamum believe that they originated from Tikar. In this study, we have already dealt with the semi-Bantu migrations, which, as we have endeavoured

to show, were due to the constant advance of new tribes, all of whom, of course, claim to trace their ancestry back to the same origin. It does not seem necessary to return to the questions already discussed, which seem to prove the common origin of certain cultural elements, such as brass casting. Whether this source is the Tikar or not is secondary. What is important is that all tribes skilled in brass casting can trace their art back to one and the same source.

If we consider the tribes known collectively as semi-Bantu to be related, the question remains as to the origin of this part of the African population. Could it be the Sao who were forced to emigrate during one or more invasions in the 7th century or even earlier? And did they then scatter in all directions to such an extent that, as Urvoy believes, they were no longer able to form a large state? Or should the reason for this disintegration be sought rather in the decline of the states of Meroe and Napata?

All that is certain is that the Sao were already engaged in gold casting before the Tikar, the Bamum and the Bagan.

Among Lebeuf's finds, the number of objects made of fired clay far exceeds that of all other archaeological excavations. Although the quantitative aspect must in principle be regarded as secondary, it can nevertheless serve as a basis for a qualitative analysis of the finds:

> Their abundance and diversity demonstrate the immense development of the art of ceramics, which was applied to the manufacture of a wide variety of objects, some of them quite unexpected: funerary urns, drinking vessels, pots, bowls, toys of all kinds, coins, jewellery, pipes, spindle whorls and net weights, pot wedges, animal representations, human masks and statuettes, ritual equipment and offering plates, cylinders, decorated bricks, whistles and even bells and an arrowhead. (Lebeuf 1950:98)

One could conduct comparative studies here, not only from the point of view of material culture, but also from that of pure ornamentation. This would, of course, require precise knowledge not only of the development of the two cultures, but also of the various elements that compose them. Unfortunately, we are almost entirely reliant on archaeological finds in this regard, so that the present work can be nothing more than a first attempt in this direction. This is actually the first time that the Bamum have been compared with the Sao. The representations of humans

and animals among the Sao show so many analogies with those of the Bamum that it is impossible to skip this chapter.

We have already mentioned the similarity that Bamum artists sought to establish between their work and their models. Although Lebeuf denies that the Sao made any such effort, certain characteristic features are extremely useful in finding these very analogies in Lebeuf's own words:

> The sense of observation is evident in Chadian statuary, and certain artists knew how to animate the clay and give the faces expressions of astonishing realism. The problem of resemblance does not arise here, but it is curious to note how much the prominent lips of the masks resemble those of the Kotoko, broad, thick and fleshy, and how much the elongation of certain skulls is similar to human dolichocephaly. Beneath the features distorted according to an unexpected canon, it is difficult, if not impossible, to guess the man with his shaggy beard, the dust, sweat, moisture on his lips and gleam of his teeth, the light in his eyes charged with sadness or joy. (Lebeuf 1950:121)

By dismissing the question of similarity out of hand, Lebeuf suggests that he does not wish to call things by their name. To better achieve his goal, he turns the works of the Sao into religious art that is "determined by the existence of rules that are sacrosanct for reasons bordering on the supernatural." (Lebeuf 1950:121).

This is an argument that may be valid in all religious art, except in those that relate to ancestor worship — as the author himself emphasises.

Such a religion knows least of all about the myth of standardised reproduction. In other words, ancestor worship is about reproducing a specific person, the ancestor, and any standardisation refers only to that particular ancestor.

In accordance with Lecoq and in a somewhat more abstract form, this idea can be illustrated by an example from the Bamum:

> While the costumes and external rituals derive from Islam, the Bamum, in their deep relationship with the world, remain animist and—as their art attests—retain from their past a taste for human representation, mask-wearing and dance. (Lecoq 1951:175).

It is precisely this "predilection" that prevented a whole series of peoples, who can be regarded here as direct descendants of the Sao, from abandoning certain characteristics of their

original religion, despite the Islamic influence to which they had since been subjected. This cultural-historical criterion, which is important for us, will be discussed later in this treatise.

We have already discussed "realism" in connection with Bamum art, whose oldest statuette made of fired clay dates back to the 15th century. And if the Sao, or Kotoko — as their depictions of humans suggest — indicate dolichocephaly, certain features reminiscent of the Bamum aristocracy would allow us to draw some justified conclusions (cf. Boulnois 1943:82). Another aspect is precisely what Lecoq described as hypertrophy of the eyes and mouth, which Lebeuf seems to find in certain statuettes.

> Certain aspects are specific to a region or city and to that region or city alone. At the confluence of the Chari and Logone rivers and nearby Midigué, there is a facies characterised by the considerable importance given to the eyes and the excessively enlarged mouth, which are prominent and round when viewed from the front, giving these objects curiously tormented profiles where the nose, although starting from the top of the forehead, is barely visible. All stages exist, from eyes that are slightly slit, as if half-closed, to eyelids that are dilated and stretched forward, to balloon-like lips between which opens an enormous mouth, always toothless, slit like the mouth of a frog, from tapered skulls to foreheads as bulging as those of people suffering from dropsy. The furrows and star-shaped or chevron-shaped stripes covering the faces are probably tattoos reproduced in a disproportionate manner. On other examples from the same source, these marks alone are shown with the same magnification. They are similar to symbols found at Goulfeil and Sao, where these scarifications, in the absence of any facial features, are only sketched, or even hinted at, around the slight protuberance of the mouth. (Lebeuf 1950:125)

What Lebeuf expresses so vividly about an art form that we now only know from excavations, Lecoq writes, albeit in different words, to describe an art form that is still alive today, that of the Bamum.

> The hypertrophy of the facial features (eyes, mouth), the discretion of the relief and the absence of anecdotal signs (teeth, ears), the circular rhythm that animates the whole, all contribute to giving it such a disturbing ecstatic air. (Lecoq 1951:176).

With the exception of stylised elements, other motifs, such as figuration, suggest that the art of these two peoples can be traced back to the same origin, and sometimes to an origin in which strongly protruding facial features play a prominent role. One cannot help but gain the impression that, in terms of anthropological features, both cultures are based on the same model.

In this context, the question may be raised as to whether the Bamum are really related to the Kotoko and whether, since their ancestors, the Sao, began modelling clay, they ever made anything other than models with the same anthropological features. These "voluminous foreheads" mentioned by Lebeuf are perhaps the same protuberances found in the depictions of one or other of the Bamum kings. Even in the area of stylisation, certain similarities can be observed. The furrows and the star- and braid-shaped ornaments may have their origins in the stylised toad of the individual phases of Bamum art, as analysed by Lecoq (Lecoq 1951:178). In terms of ornamentation, both the Bamum and Sao styles tend towards pure abstraction.

Religion and state structure of the Sao

The Kotoko or Sao, as well as all descendants of the ancient Sao, who have been Muslim for several centuries, can be of great benefit to the cultural history of the semi-Bantu and even the Sudanese peoples. In the various cultures, elements can be found that have been practically covered over by Islam, and others that are more deeply rooted and have been able to withstand it, so that a genuine symbiosis with the new elements derived from the Islamic faith has been able to take place. At the same time, however, the indigenous tradition continues to live alongside the tradition related to Islam. The religion of the Kotoko, who were introduced to Islam 200 years ago, as well as the Bamum, who converted to this faith barely half a century ago, is nothing more than "a superficial religion that has overlaid very ancient beliefs, whose foundations, despite foreign influences, have retained an undeniable value". (Lebeuf 1950:150).

The beliefs of the Sao are continued in the traditions of the Kotoko, which, like those of the Bamum, include ancestor worship, a water spirit (who plays a role in coronation ceremonies) and totemism, if one can speak of totemism. Animals also play a role in both cases – among the Bamum, they personify the ancestors, while among the Kotoko they serve as a link to the supernatural world (Lebeuf 1950:151). Reptiles have a special significance among the Kotoko.

They are regarded as lords of the cities whose boundaries they have defined. They also play a certain, albeit lesser, role among the Bamum.

We have already touched upon the question of a megalithic culture among the Sao and the Bamum. These are gravestones or menhirs, which have already been discussed in this chapter in our attempt to shed light on the role of stones in the Sao cities. The Bamum also have a "land stone" (*wongu*) on which the king is placed on the day of his enthronement. Based on Lebeuf's work, is it possible to establish a connection between the *wongu* of the Bamum and the stones in the Sao cities?

> Every town has large stones that are found in the prince's palace, under certain trees or near the gates. They are imbued with a formidable power, and if, by misfortune, a common citizen touches one of them, he will be struck by an illness from which he can only recover after offering the stone a calabash of wild rice and sacrificing a red rooster. The sultan himself is obliged to honour them regularly with offerings of rice and, should he fail to do so, they will appear to him in a dream. (Lebeuf 1950:157).

In addition to the role played by stones in the Sao cult, the earth or rubble mounds located near large cities are also noteworthy. People would go there to seek the protection of mystical powers (Lebeuf 1950:158). This is also true, for example, of Fumban, which means "settlement on the rubble" (Rein-Wuhrmann 1948:12). It is entirely possible, even probable, that N'share built his capital on a mound of rubble for religious reasons.

Among the Bamum, as among the Sao, it is the duty of the first minister to announce the death of the ruler and to crown his successor. The successor is usually chosen by the ruler himself, but the choice must be confirmed by the minister. Some of the Bamum's enthronement ceremonies still seem inexplicable today. Would it perhaps be possible to come closer to a solution to this question by looking at what is known about the enthronement ceremonies of the Sao, which, for example, accelerated the coronation (as among the Bamum on the day of the deceased ruler's funeral) in order to prevent unfavourable intervention by the water genies? (Lebeuf 1950:162).

The coronation ceremonies of the Bamum are based on the same fundamental principles as those of the Sao. They also use the same symbols, such as the idea of an underground passage that leads to the palace of the Bamum and is inhabited by the water spirit, who is sacrificed on the day of the coronation. In both the Sao and Bamum beliefs, the water spirit attends the enthronement ceremonies.

Similarly, the descendants of the Sao have not lost the idea of the king snake, which is considered a symbol of royal dignity among the Bamum. When a prince ascends the throne, a drum is made especially for him, which is used throughout his reign. The Sao destroy this drum upon the death of their ruler, while the Bamum simply stop using it. In N'joya's time, there were sixteen such drums in the palace courtyard.

The role of the first minister, who is assisted by two other ministers, is the same in both cases. He is the head of government and at the same time the king's closest associate. The power of the latter, around whom the entire aristocracy is gathered, is limited by his servants and the will of the great men of his empire.

The purpose of a comparative study such as this is to highlight the fact that deeply rooted values were able to outlast Islam. The various similarities allow for a study of these peoples, whose cultural elements can be traced back to the same origin. This attempt to trace the Bamum kings back to their origins seems to have achieved its goal with the present study of the complex issues surrounding the Sao. No claim is made to have actually solved the problem. Rather, only the necessary references to Chadic culture, its manifestations and its expansion have been provided. This study must therefore be regarded as a draft, the elaboration and completion of which will take place at a later date.

At least it was possible to show that the Bamum and their neighbours, the Tikar, the Banso and the Bagam, who are all too easily the subject of treatises seeking to explain their migration, even though it is in fact a process of cultural exchange, are, so to speak, cut from the same cloth.

They are related to the M'bum and the Duru, who are spread across the entire region of Ngaundéré and are already direct descendants of the Sao. The Sao, whose influence extends far beyond the borders of Central Sudan, can therefore be regarded as the legitimate ancestors of the Bamum. Incidentally, toponymic elements such as Nso (So or Nsaw) even allow us to trace the origins of the Sao in this name, whose analogy seems obvious.

So instead of searching for the origins of the Bamum in Egypt, as some authors have attempted to do, it seems more plausible to regard the Sao as their ancestors, who undoubtedly served as a link between Egypt and Sudan and left behind cultural elements that suggest the kinship of all Sudanese people and their affiliation to one and the same culture.

The Bamum tradition, which according to certain authors can be traced back to white ancestors of "Assyrian origin", is probably none other than that of the Sao, a group of white emigrants who left the Near East to mix with the Bamum (Isaac Paré 1956:132). At the end of this study, a white origin remains as doubtful as it was at the beginning. Such a hypothesis is completely inadmissible. There is no sufficient anthropological evidence to make a European bloodline among the Bamum seem credible. Nin or the other cultural characteristic may well correspond to those of distant peoples, but their connection to the Bamum is difficult to reconstruct. The mere fact that the Bamum custom of "*pa-ngu*" bears an analogy to the Oriental concept of relic worship, as Issac Parré suggests, does not allow us to assume that kinship ties must connect the Bamum to the Orient. However, this author is right to use the term "Banum-Mbum kinship" in a work on the funeral customs of the Bamum people to confirm the accuracy of the legend that attributes the same family tree to the Bamum and the Mbum, the latter being aware of their Sao ancestry (Paré 1956:127).

At the same time, however, all elements of art and tradition that have survived Islam testify to the kinship of the Bamum with the Sao. The entire region of Lake Chad, which has

proven to be the territory of the Sao, can therefore be regarded as the starting point of the last, decisive stage of Bamum migration.

Apart from certain characteristics attributed to the Sao, which, according to legend, crossed the desert from the east or north-east via the Chad Bahr-el-Ghazal, it is conceivable that they lived on the left bank of the Nile as part of the Napata or Meroe population before their emigration.

The question of the Meroitic-Egyptian origin of the Sao and their descendants forms part of a larger complex of issues dealing with Egyptian influence in Black Africa, the problems of which cannot be separated from the question of the origin of the great African states. Characteristic features as remnants of such states can still be found today throughout the entire region from east to west, in the Hima states in the Interlake region, in the matriarchal Bantu states of the Congo, and in southern Africa.

During this study, mention was already made of Napata, the capital of an empire whose kings were of Libyan origin and which, after about half a millennium, ceded its fame as a cultural offshoot of ancient Egypt to Meroe, which became the capital around 440 BC. The ruins of Meroe are located about 150 km downstream from present-day Khartoum, which formerly belonged to the Kingdom of Meroe.

The elements that link the African kingdoms to this Egyptian-style civilisation lie in the area of state organisation in the cultural and religious spheres. The sense of hierarchy associated with the idea of divine kingship and the matriarchal tendencies point to a tradition, if not the origin of a tradition, attested to by ancient writers. The conclusions that can be drawn from their various accounts give rise to countless speculations about the problem of the Egyptian heritage.

> From these few examples, we see the continuation of matriarchal tendencies from the Meroitic period to the present day, in an area extending far beyond Meroe. (Hirschberg 1955:96-97).

Egyptian matriarchy is evident in the position held by the sister's son (nephew — cf. the right of inheritance among the Bamum), who also inherited from his uncle. The same naturally applies to sibling marriages, where the son is also the nephew. Incidentally, it is quite possible that this privileged position of the nephew is due to sibling marriage. Since a connection with ancient Egypt was not considered in this context, but other European goods, including dyes, had found their way onto the African market, it seemed obvious to attribute this custom to European influence.

In more abstract terms, attempts are often made to form a picture of the African psyche based on certain character traits, without taking into account the possible origins of these traits. For example, the exaggeration of musical and dance elements in ceremonies could just as easily be a cultural legacy of ancient Egypt. Furthermore, the Bamum, like the Sao and even the Baule, used to build on rubble, as in ancient Egypt (Delafosee 1900:434-435). Above all, however, there is pottery, the method of dyeing used by the Baule and the Bamum, which is reminiscent in the most peculiar way of the method commonly used in Egypt. The origin of the yellow dyeing technique in the Nile Valley is also more than likely — incidentally, there are now three styles and two methods of this technique in Africa (Hefel 1943: 15 and 37). In the religious sphere, the mythology necessary for the ideologies of the great states in question shows numerous analogies with Egyptian mythology. Delafoese attempts to draw parallels between the latter and that of the Baule. And the similarities he uncovers show that these parallels can be either total or only partial from the point of view of analogy, as we have seen in the case of the Bamum. This means that only individual elements are analogous to those of ancient Egypt, such as the snake cult or certain aspects of the funeral ritual.

Magic in Africa was often considered a religious custom. However, the cult itself was always a privilege of the aristocracy, and only a limited number of initiates could participate in it.

The fact that cultural elements of the privileged class of Egyptian society were transplanted to Black Africa, where they took root in a class that alone preserved their meaning and mystery, inevitably raises the question of who brought this culture from Egypt to Black Africa. In fact, an exodus from the ruling classes after the destruction of Meroe can be assumed.

> It is believed that the first impulses for the formation of larger state structures were given at that time. The ancient Meroe was reborn in these structures, albeit in a much modified and declined form. If Meroe had already proven itself to be a cultural offshoot of ancient Egypt, then the young or new Sudanese empires can also be regarded as offshoots of Meroe and thus of ancient Egypt, albeit not in a direct sense. In all these empires, however, the spirit of the pharaohs lived on, albeit often mutilated beyond recognition. (Hirschberg 1955:98).

Although we know today of the existence of this culture in Black Africa, the way in which it spread there remains shrouded in mystery and is probably in ly linked to the problem of African migrations. The paradox of Black African culture itself may have arisen from the mixing of two cultures, one of Egyptian origin and one indigenous, descended from the "lords of the soil". These migrants would naturally have brought with them not only a general knowledge of culture, but also the simplest elements of material culture, which we have outlined in order to give the problem a broader basis.

Equally unresolved is the problem of racial distinction between the bearers of this culture and the (Negritic) elements they encountered.

At the end of this chapter, the question was raised as to whether more than one African people originated in Egypt, including the Sao, who provide evidence of Egyptian origins in art (through standardised portraits — cf. Egyptian mummy portraits) and mythology (the legend of descent from a sibling marriage). Due to the Egyptian influence in Black Africa, it was possible to identify Egyptian elements in the Bamum culture. In itself, the Bamum Empire, like all other so-called semi-Bantu states, is nothing more than a typical Sudanese state, but its structure is still in the process of development and the autochthonous element has not yet been completely assimilated. So much for determining the origin of the Bamum kings.

N'joya as a personality

A description of his personality will not only allow us to get to know his work. It will also help us to understand his creative goals.

Who was N'joya? We know that he died in 1933. However, the year of his birth is uncertain. Despite some conflicting sources, we assume that he was born in 1876. We arrived at this date after evaluating the following sources:

> Justificatory report on the ceremonial return of the skull of Nsangu, Sultan of Bamum, who died in Banso.
> To the
> District Commander of Bamum.
>
> Dear District Commander,
> The account found among the documents of the German officer appears to contradict the facts about Nsangu's reign, because the author states that the Banso told him that this civil war in Bamum took place eight years before the ceremonial return of our king's skull.
>
> However, according to reports received from all sides, and in particular according to the testimonies of survivors of that bloody tragedy, this civil war took place 17 or 18 years before the skull was returned.
>
> My father, who was appointed Sultan of Bamum in 1889, was not yet a teenager at the time. He waited about a year. In the second year of his reign, one of the queens became pregnant. She was the mother of Forifum. But Forifum, born in the third year, was not weaned until the fifth year. At that moment, Gbetnkom, the regent, had to cede power to N'joya, who had come of age, and also returned to Manga, where he spent two years preparing his struggle to usurp the new ruling family. Feeling strong and capable enough, he launched a fierce battle against Sultan Njoya that lasted two years. He was defeated and subjugated thanks to the intervention of the Fulbe delegation led by Umaron, the heir apparent to the Sultan of Banyo.
>
> Finally, in 1933, my father received a visit in Yaoundé from an old vassal of the Sultan of Banyo, who was acting as the latter's special envoy to my father. The Sultan recognised him immediately and asked him in a friendly manner, without hiding his thoughts, whether he had been Umaron's companion when he had come to his aid against the revolutionary Gbetnkom. "Yes, certainly," he replied (I was present), and the conversation between my father and his visitor continued. After some time, the Sultan asked, "Do you remember how many years ago that was?" "Perhaps," was the reply, and he pulled a rather old, small book out of his pocket, made of parchment, worn, with loose pages and dirty. He leafed through it briefly and muttered triumphantly, "Thirty-six years..." and so on.
>
> If we now add 36 years plus 4 years (from the coronation to Forifum's weaning) plus 2 years (Gbetnkom's preparations) plus 2 years (the duration of the war), this gives us 44 years, which we subtract from 1933= 1887.

> If we were to take the report of the German officer at face value, who states that Sultan Nsangu died eight years before the skull was returned, this would mean that Sultan Njoya came of age at nine or ten and was already a father — which would be unnatural. Bamum district, received on 3 August 1944 (Fumban Archives 1944; according to information provided by Alfred Schmitt)

Let us understand "puberty" or "maturity" to mean the age at which N'joya was capable of fathering children. It appears that in Bamumland, one was considered to have reached the age of majority when one could prove one's ability to procreate. This still leaves us without any information about N'joya's year of birth, but the somewhat confusing chronology evident in the letter, which is of little use to us here, can still serve as a point of reference in the following. Let us note for the time being that N'joya was not yet of mature age when he ascended the throne.

In the Book of the Bamum Kings, N'joya is quoted as saying:

> You crowned me king when I was still young. I was seventeen years old. You nourished me until I had grown to maturity. You are like my father. I need not fear you. And you need not fear me either. The help I want to bring you shall not cease until God calls me. (Martin 1950:42).

One senses that behind these words stood a man who died with the conviction that he had received his power directly from God. But it is appropriate to read on:

> I was appointed king when I was still a minor, at the age of nineteen. The Pamom raised me. The Pamom are my fathers. I need not fear them, and they need not fear me. The help I want to bring to my fathers is endless; it will cease when God calls me. (Martin 1950:133)

N'joya has obviously repeated his train of thought several times. But apart from the same rhetorical device (at the end of the list regarding the abolition of laws), it is incoherent. At least the two passages in the book are not linked and hardly complement each other.

Alfred Schmitt from Munich makes a very important observation in his study on the Mum script:

> But in the original, as I was able to ascertain from photocopies, the first number was originally *i-vüi* = nine. Only later was this crossed out and the number 17 written above it, and in the second place, which incidentally has almost exactly the same wording as the first, there is also *i-vüi* = nine. If Nzinzie, from whose transcription Martin translated, wrote 19 instead, he either misread or changed it arbitrarily. It therefore seems to have been a widely held view that Nzoya was nine years old when his father died. If this death

> really took place in 1889, Nzoya must have been born in 1880. This corresponds to the time that can be deduced from the age information mentioned above. (Schmitt:21a).

Schmitt is an expert on the Mum script. His comments on the unjustified deletions and corrections therefore carry particular weight. However, the author makes the mistake of basing his conclusions on every question of dating solely on his area of expertise, the script. For him, the script is the linchpin of N'joya's work. N'joya is therefore mainly regarded as the founder of a script. This view has become traditional since the arrival of Europeans in Bamum. Although it is thanks to this view that N'joya's reputation reached Europe in the first place, it is nevertheless regrettable that interest in his other works has remained minimal to this day. This is understandable, as the script is a sign of high culture for those interested (who were not always researchers). But for a member of the middle class, who did not yet appreciate the significance of writing, N'joya was more than just a pictographer or ideographer. The political aspect interested the Bamum more, for whom N'joya was first and foremost the king who was able to free his people's traditions from outdated ideas and call on the Fulbe for help. In the eyes of the Europeans, these abilities were dangerous from the outset. Since Schmitt did not appreciate N'joya's personality as a whole, but only considered his writings, his work seems too one-sided for our task.

Dugast takes the opposite view, as Schmitt himself shows in the footnotes to his book on Bamum writing:

> Ms Dugast assumes that the writing was created around 1896, noting that Nzoya would have been 29 years old at that time. This is because he would have been 66 years old when he died in 1933. However, Nzoya cannot have been born before 1880. This can be deduced from the estimates of his age made by the first Europeans who came into contact with him. Göhring, in his first report from Fumban, dated 13 May 1906, notes about the king that 'he is still young, perhaps 26 years old', and the 'Deutsches Kolonialblatt' 17 (1906) also states p. 354: 'King Nyoya (I) is said to be 26 years old'. Nzoya himself did not know his exact age. Ms Rein-Wuhrmann reports that she asked him about his age shortly after she arrived in Fumban (on 10 November 1911), and he replied: 'I think I am 34 years old'. When she asked him the same question a few years later, shortly before she left the country (captured by British troops on 2 December 1915), his answer was: 'I think I am 31 years old'. According to the first piece of information, he must have been born

> two to three years after 1880. The correct age is probably somewhere in the middle. (Schmitt:21).

So much for Schmitt's comments.

However, he also draws on some information provided by Dugast, whose sources state that N'joya was no more than 9 to 12 years old when his father N'sangu died (Dugast 1950, A:3). It should also be noted here that Dugast, too, sees N'joya as important only in his writings.

Two dates stand out from Schmitt's observations: 1880 and 1889. "If this death really took place in 1889, Nzoya must have been born in 1880." These nine years come either from Dugast's informants or from the number 9, which was discussed by Schmitt himself. However, this was the coronation of N'joya according to the Book of the Bamum Kings. The following events and dates are important for us: the birth of N'joya, the death of his father, his entry into public life, his seizure of power and finally the civil war. N'joya's entry into public life should not be understood as his assumption of power. Nor was he crowned on the day of his father's death, even if it may be considered a rule according to Bamum tradition that the new king undergoes the coronation ceremony at the deathbed of his father and predecessor. Other secondary information, such as the period in which the Mum script was created, can confirm the accuracy of the most important dates.

Schmitt places N'joya's birth in the year 1880 and accuses him of not knowing his own age exactly, according to Rein-Wuhrmann's reports. Certainly, N'joya did not know his exact age according to Western concepts. But this should not be seen as the essential point in Rein-Wuhrmann's report. Otherwise, one could conclude that he had a poor memory. We do not believe that this is the case here. When N'joya wanted to tell some visitors his age, he had to translate the Bamum concept of age, where each major season, i.e. approximately six months, counts as a year. A 12-month year in the Western calendar therefore means two years for the Bamum. In the Mum language, the term "season" is also used for the concept of "year". When N'joya stated in

1911 that he was 34 years old, he did not mean 17. And in 1915, 31 did not mean fifteen and a half. — But let's stick with 31 years.

Rein-Wuhrmann was one of the confidants of the palace in Fumban. N'joya had entrusted her with a number of his children, and her reports often mention the king's joviality. He knew how to joke. They were friends.

> Having lived in his country and in his residence for seven years, knowing N'joya very well and counting him among my friends, I would like to tell you what I know about him (Rein-Wuhrmann 1949:17).

Why shouldn't it be one of N'joya's jokes? It was enough that the king remembered having already told the lady his age, so he replied that the question of his age remained unanswered. Incidentally, one must assume that N'joya often reacted in this way. He must have got into trouble with the colonial authorities and any curious foreigners who wanted to make fun of the Negro king. Rein-Wuhrmann attests to the following:

> The Europeans, all of them without exception, made a big mistake in their treatment of His Majesty! The resident, the merchant and, most of all, the missionary, because he was closest to him and needed the king's help for his work. They flattered the black chief. They spoke kindly to him, gave him gifts and pampered him. As he is very sensitive, he perceived the weaknesses of his white friends and began to think little of them, to deceive and despise them. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1925:151).

One would therefore have to be able to describe the scene and analyse the situation in order to know why N'joya stated that he was thirty-one years old in 1915 instead of the expected thirty-eight. The number 34 is not a coincidence, as another traveller mentions it in a work in connection with N'joya's army, which was disbanded in 1911.

> "Njoya is about thirty-four years old." (Vollbehr 1912:95).

This man belonged to the inner circle of the royal Bamum family because he had painted them.

In his overview of Bamum history, Vollbehr states that all his information comes from the king. It is therefore reasonable to assume that N'joya was 34 years old in 1911, even though

Schmitt assumes he was between 34 and 31, which would make 1902 the year of creation of the Bamum script.

The age of 26 for N'joya in 1906, quoted in the "Deutsches Kolonialblatt", may have been taken from the assumptions of Pastor Göhring, the first missionary in Bamum country, who also gives his age as 26 for 1906.

Assuming that N'joya was 34 years old in 1911, his year of birth would be 1877. However, we previously gave the years 1876 to 1933 as his lifetime. This basically only means a difference of a few months. Whether N'joya was born in January 1877 or in December of the previous year does not change the solution to the problem. A difference of a few months is possible in any date. However, in order to be able to make a more precise distinction between N'joya's pre-colonial work and that which can only be explained by the presence of white people, we will assume the year 1876 in the course of our investigation, which seems more reasonable to us than 1877. If one assumes that the invention of writing was a pre-colonial event, as Dugast does and as is consistent with some events in N'joya's childhood reported by Rein-Wuhrmann, it becomes easier to understand that N'joya cannot have been born later than 1876.

> He ascended to his fathers' throne at the age of six. A civil war broke out because of him, which lasted two years and wiped out the strongest men in the country. Nschoya's mother, who initially ruled on behalf of the child, combined all the selfishness and cruelty of paganism, but cherished her son with an idolatrous love. This gave her the cunning and strength to hold on to the throne. At the age of fifteen, the young king took over the government. He had been made mature and serious by fear for his life and property, and his innate goodness soon caused his subjects to love and revere him. Thus the people lived peacefully under the new leadership, remaining within the tribal boundaries and feeling no desire for the riches of other peoples. Nschoja never seems to have launched a war of aggression, but he did repel neighbours who coveted the fertile river valleys of his country and the riches of his capital. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1925:150).

We are gradually uncovering the life of N'joya, to whom Rein-Wuhrmann attributes very personal characteristics, so that it is now possible to gain an overview of his work and personality. According to their information, N'joya ascended the throne at the age of six. The number six does not refer to N'joya's age at the time of his father's death, nor to his age at the time of his accession

to power, but perhaps only to the date of his coronation, which may have taken place long after his father's death. (After N'sangu's death, the Bamum had hoped to recover his remains from the Banso in order to crown the new king according to custom.).

> The king had been loved, and the four-year-old prince was hardly known, but the king's wife, Njapndunke, was known, and many wanted nothing to do with her ... There were about forty sons of King Nsangu, already grown up, who were known and could take over the government immediately, so that the dreaded rule of Njapndunke could be avoided. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1949:18).

There is a misunderstanding that needs to be cleared up: it was not when N'joya was four years old, upon the death of his father, that the civil war unleashed by Gbetnkom, one of the "three fathers," took place, but much later, probably when N'joya acceded to power. N'japndunke, who in Rein-Wuhrmann's eyes is the perfect embodiment of paganism, is not the cause of the war. According to this chronology, which places the start of the civil war so soon after N'sangus' death, it is difficult to understand how N'japndunke had time to exercise her cruel power, which is supposed to have led to the two-year civil war. Moreover, during the reign of his mother and Minister Gbetnkom, N'joya lived in the countryside with a relative, probably a maternal uncle (Rein-Wuhrmann 1949:19).

After this period in hiding, N'joya was consecrated, not by embracing his father's head on his deathbed, but next to his remains, which had been recovered from the Banso. Until he came of age, his mother N'japndunke ruled with the help of Gbetnkom. It is possible that she was cruel during her reign, but the civil war can be explained differently:

> Sangou took power and was very warlike. He was killed in a war he had waged against the Banso, and Njoya took his place. But he was still too young and had a tutor (Njifofon) named Nji-Njoya, who ruled the country and was very popular. After Nji-Njoya's resignation, Njoya, jealous of the prestige he enjoyed, wanted to kill him, but this unleashed a civil war in which Nji-Njoya won most of the supporters. Beside himself, Njoya called on the Fulbe for help. Since then, the men have worn the *bubugewand* and the women the *pagne* (toga-like cloths). Njoya is the founder of the Bamum alphabet. (Fumban Archives:132).

Gbetnkom, who is called Nji-Njoya here — undoubtedly in analogy to N'joya and because of the role he had to play as educator to the young prince — appears here as the cause of

the civil war. This is an acceptable connection, expressing N'joya's desire to free himself from his mother's yoke and take his first independent steps. To do this, he had to get rid of the influential minister, who was accustomed to ruling.

We now understand that it must have been N'joya, who had come of age in the meantime, who called on the Fulbe for help, which is not known from any other source. As an expression of gratitude, he gave gifts to the Sultan of Banyo, and his mother did the same.

N'ji-Ma-Yuom Mfoombaam Monkula'Shun N'joya, son of N'sangu, the 15th ruler of the Bamum and (as the only son, Na N'jabndunke, born Njimoonkuop, from the royal Bamum family, wife of King N'guwuo and, after his death, wife of N'sangus, was born in 1876. He was barely four years old when[1] his father, fell in battle against the Banso, leaving him as heir to the throne of the Bamum kings. However, N'joya did not enter public life until he was nine years old, after being hidden by a maternal uncle. He must have been crowned at the same time (1885), over the remains of his father, which had been recovered from the Banso.

> When Njoya was about fifteen years old, he was declared of age and ascended the throne of his fathers. The whole people rejoiced over the young king, for he was good-natured, friendly and affable, and not at all cruel, proud and aloof like his mother. She now kept herself in the background, but still tried to exert her influence. Sometimes she succeeded, but most of the time the new king went his own way. Especially when Njabndunke had devised a cruel punishment for a disobedient slave, Njoya defied her orders. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1949:19).

It must be remembered that similar behaviour applied to all those who held office during the young king's minority. They were accustomed to giving orders, but not to obeying them. The result was civil war.

During his fifteenth year (1890), N'joya is said to have taken power. However, Gbetnkom N'do'mbue preferred to put a prince of his own liking on the throne in N'joya's place: Paam sa'. That is why civil war broke out in the same year. N'joya was horrified to see that his opponent

[1] In a handwritten note written after the publication of the short biography of N'joya, Rein-Wuhrmann writes in "Der Wanderer von Land zu Land" (1943) that N'joea must have been two to four years old when his father N'sangu died.

had the bravest Bamum warriors on his side. He broke with the tradition that had hitherto kept the influence of Islam at bay. He called on the Fulbe from Banyo to help him against the rebellious minister. The Sultan of Banyo did not take long to respond, as he hoped to gain not only a friend, but also a brother and follower of the Prophet. After two years of fratricidal war, the rebel was defeated.

N'joya spent the next four years reorganising his state, demonstrating what he had learned from his Muslim ally. He introduced an alphabet (1896), which he improved in 1900, before the arrival of the Europeans (1902), and perfected by 1916. By outwitting his intolerant subjects, he spared them further bloodshed by preventing resistance to the European troops. Initially, it was German troops whose sympathy he more or less won in this way. He cooperated with the foreigners and sought access to their way of life and outlook. By adapting to European methods, he sought to gain advantages for his country. For example, he wanted to establish his own army based on the European model. But he soon saw his power limited by the colonisers. In 1915, the whole of Europe was at war and the white colonisers withdrew from Africa. British troops expelled German personnel from the Bamum country (2 December 1915). During the absence of the white colonisers, N'joya worked to strengthen the social system. He designed a religion for his people. He built a European-style palace according to his own plans and with the help of local craftsmen. This imitation can be explained by N'joya's desire to save his homeland from defeat by adapting to the foreigners.

The war had barely ended when the Europeans reappeared in Bamum. The French replaced the Germans. N'joya had been on quite good terms with the latter. That was enough for the French authorities to see him as an enemy. Until 1931, there was one disagreement after another, then N'joya was sent into exile. He died mysteriously in 1933, far from his homeland.

So who was N'joya? Let's return to our question. In each of her books, Rein-Wuhrmann devotes a chapter to his personality, speaking of his subtlety and attributing the most extraordinary qualities to him.

> When I first saw him on the day after my arrival in Fumban on 10 November 1911, he introduced himself with the words: 'Me be N'joya! 'I am N'joya!' He spoke the pidgin English that can be heard throughout Africa very well, and in the beginning, until I knew a little Bamum, we always conversed in this language. It is neither beautiful nor intelligent, but very practical, which is why it has become widespread. I once asked the king why he hadn't learned German, and he replied with a subtle smile: 'I know one word, which I always hear from government officials when they are angry or when they are amazed by something. Then they always say: 'Donnawettal'. King N'joya was a very likeable black man, and one can say that he was a king through and through, both in his appearance and in his behaviour. He was very tall and stately. He usually wore dark blue house clothes and, when he left the palace, he also wore a turban. On festive days, he dressed entirely in white, which suited him very well, as his skin was dark and looked particularly striking in the light-coloured robe. N'joya was very clean and had such refined manners that one often wondered where he had acquired them, coming as he did from the hinterland of Cameroon and being a descendant of such cruel pagan princes. He always spoke softly, even when he was angry and passing harsh judgement on a criminal. I never once saw him lose his composure in anger. He always maintained his dignity and remained king at all times, at least in the eyes of his people. Even by pagan standards, he was a mild ruler and did not approve of the cruelty of his ancestors and his mother. Even as a very young king, when he had barely come to power, he often opposed her when she wanted to treat her own slaves cruelly. But she was a hard and unyielding woman, and although she loved her son very much, she did not let him talk her out of anything and did as she pleased. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1948:57).

One can imagine the impression N'joya made on every stranger. He combined his very direct manner with a majestic tone that immediately captivated Rein-Wuhrmann, so that she later tried again and again to relive the moment of her first encounter with the king. She describes his chivalry towards women, but also his irony in the face of the not always very representative representatives of European governments.

N'joya admired the French language. However, he only heard it after encountering German, which he did not find very appealing. Numerous French syllables can be found in the secret language he invented for his court.

N'joya was a unique personality, a perfect king, an exception in the "hinterland" of Cameroon. But the juxtaposition of "heathens" and "fine manners" shows how subjective the

judgement is. The Europeans tried to import "fine manners". But N'joya had formed an opinion about them that was anything but flattering for the intermediaries.

> You had to address the king in the third person, and after every answer you gave him, you had to add '*Mbiere Mfon*!', which we can translate as 'Your Royal Majesty'. I never said the latter, but when I understood the language well enough to realise how to speak to the king, I did the same and asked, 'Does the king not have court today?' or 'Will the king be visiting the girls' school again soon?' He certainly liked it when I spoke to him like that, because the Europeans always called him 'you'. But why should I not pay him the honour he deserved? One day, I noticed that he was also speaking to me in the third person, and from then on he always did so, and we were always very polite to each other. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1946:62).

N'joya, who presumably wanted to build bridges between his people and the colonial authorities, appears here caught between the two ways of behaving that he experienced himself. He only respected those who respected him, and these, such as Mrs Rein-Wuhrmann, belonged to his close circle. It can also be said that N'joya's work, his reforms, arose both from his interaction with his subordinates and with the Europeans. But did he want to incorporate the methods of the latter, as he understood them, in order to oppose the Europeans more effectively, or out of admiration, in order to get closer to them? Well, why get closer? We will see him at the end of his life, empowered, defeated, the best proof of his resistance.

> Njoya was also very tactful, and many Europeans could have learned from him in this respect. Once, when I visited the king with one of our missionaries after Sunday service, we happened to arrive at a court session. To the left of the king stood the judges, and in front of him, about ten steps away from his seat, stood a couple, the defendants. My companion asked the king what the two had done. Njoya hesitated for a moment, then said, 'Nassa, it's such an ugly thing that I'd rather not say it in front of Miss Wuhrmann'.
>
> When he was at his summer residence, he often sent us live fish, because there were none in Fumban, but Mantum, his summer residence, was located at the confluence of two large rivers. If the king had sent us fish, the porters had to leave Mantum at sunset and then arrived at our house at about three or four in the morning. One morning, when I entered the dining room, I saw a container with live fish standing next to my chair. 'They are for you,' said the missionary's wife, 'the king sent them to you, but he expressly forbade the porters to knock on your door, which is why they had to knock on my husband's door'. That was Njoya. That's why it hurt him when the white people didn't treat him well. A European had once given him some stable chains for his cows, but the cows had died and the chains hung unused in the stable. The European would have liked to have them back for his cattle, but he didn't want to ask the king, because he wasn't on very good terms with him at the time. Rather tactlessly, he broke open the locked stable door and took the chains. Afterwards, Njoya said to me very sadly: 'We would never do

> such a thing, and even though we are only black, we know that such behaviour is not proper.' (Rein-Wuhrmann 1948:63).

However, despite all admiration for N'joya's character, it must be noted that the descriptions that portray him as "unique in the hinterland of Cameroon" are only valid in the context of an era in which racial theories and their prejudices were prevalent. N'joya did not fall from the sky into his kingdom, and if he behaved in a certain way, it was because it was customary throughout the country. Therefore, his personal manner can only interest us insofar as it is reflected in his work.

THE WORK OF N'JOYA

As already mentioned, N'joya's work cannot be separated from his personality. But this unity can only be fully understood when one emphasises one aspect of N'joya in particular: he was a diplomatic king. If this last Bamum king had not faced all the emerging problems during his reign, his works would have lacked the profile that makes him appear as an extraordinary personality. He was a witness to two eras and mastered the transition from one to the other. He recognised the absolute necessity of reforms that consisted of adapting the old conditions to the new possibilities.

The position of a Bamum king is not easily comparable to that of an absolute monarch of the European type. In order to maintain social balance, the constitution of the Bamum country provided for three ministers or "king's fathers" who were responsible for maintaining permanent contact between the king and the people and who, together with the king, formed the executive branch. The queen mother had the rank of viceroy. During a trial, eleven judges also stood to the left of the king. They deliberated on the verdict and communicated their decision to the king, who then pronounced the judgement.

The chamberlain and the "N'shut-nshut", the king's messengers, were also of great importance in the empire. The latter, who were actually subordinate to the chamberlain, wore two leopard claws attached to the left side of their foreheads, which allowed them free access

everywhere. They were also a kind of interpreter, intermediaries between the king and the accused, who were not allowed to address the king directly during a trial.

Together with the chamberlain, they ensured that the palace had no shortage of clothing, money or food. Six chefs in the king's service prepared meals for the eight hundred guests invited each day, all of whom were more or less in the king's service. This number was quickly reached when all the servants were included, such as the palm wine carriers, the gatekeepers and the court guards, who were constantly sent on missions to subjects scattered throughout the country. As N'joya came to the throne at a very young age, he had to prove himself as king very quickly. His first real undertaking was the destruction of Gbetnkom, who instigated the civil war. N'joya called on the Fulbe for help.

What reputation did the Fulbe have among the Bamum at that time? They were known as northern neighbours who lived in the plains of Adamawa. They were Muslims. Since their presence in the north had been known, their desire to penetrate further south was also clear. More than once they had reached the walls of Fumban and, as they had the advantage of being a horsemen's people, they were only repelled with great difficulty. In the legends and oral traditions of the Bamum, they were portrayed as hereditary enemies.

N'joya therefore had to break with that tradition in order to call on the Fulbe. He sent countless gifts to the Lamido who was to come to his aid. The latter could neither refuse the invitation nor the gifts, which came from a people whom his fathers had long coveted. He had only two choices: either to actively support the royal family or to use this opportunity to destroy it. In the latter case, however, he would have risked that the Bamum, faced with an external enemy, would unite for a common goal: the salvation of their homeland.

Had N'joya foreseen this when he decided to make the call? In any case, it was not a rash undertaking. For N'joya must have considered carefully what was at stake for him, namely that he, the young man, would become unpopular with his people. And that would have been enough

to deprive him of all influence. It is claimed that the Bamum would never have forgiven him for opening the gates to someone who had been known throughout his life as a Muslim conqueror. However, this seems to be more legend than reality and could only be regarded as fact if the Bamum themselves had not recognised the effectiveness of this action. They report, however, that N'joya had no other choice. Gbetnkom's soldiers had surrounded Fumban and hunger was spreading among the king's loyalists in the city. N'joya saw the number of his men dwindling. Some defected to the enemy camp to avoid dying of exhaustion, while others were captured in the fields outside the city when they tried to fetch provisions. There was little hope of breaking through the blockade on their own.

The king announced his decision: "I will call on the Fulbe for help." His people refused, but the king insisted.

> I will let the Fulbe come. When the Fulbe come, they will defeat Gbetnkom, replied the people, but then they will turn against the king and defeat him. (Martin 1952:35).

For a Bamum, it was enough to remember the historical facts.

It would be interesting to know under what conditions — apart from the gifts with which N'joya literally showered his allies — this alliance between the king of the Bamum and the Lamido of Banyo came about. The report on the events surrounding the liberation of Fumban indicates that the Fulbe prince received some compensation, at least part of the spoils taken from their common enemy.

> Afterwards, the Pa-re wanted to take the prisoners they had taken in Mangas with them. They came with them through Fumban. But in Mamban, they were recognised by the Pamom. 'They are our brothers,' they said, and freed them from the hands of the Pa-re.
>
> When the king heard of this, he had the guilty Pamom arrested and returned the prisoners to the Pa-re. Ten of the guilty were sentenced to death on the king's orders. He had to act in this way because otherwise the Pa-re would have started a war against him. The Pamom would certainly have been defeated, for they had no weapons left, many were still searching for Gbetnkom's partisans, others were searching for their relatives, and finally, the Pa-re had proven their bravery in the battle of Mangaa: the Pamom were greatly afraid of them. (Martin 1952:39).

This section shows the treaty, which unfortunately is not quoted in full anywhere, nor are the conditions proposed by the Fulbe mentioned anywhere. N'joya seems to have soon shown himself to be very energetic towards his subjects.

> When the Pa-re were in Mangaa, more Pa-re came to their aid, accompanied by some Hausa. But when they arrived in Nzimom, the inhabitants killed some of them. When the king heard this, he became angry. 'Do you call a dog to beat it?' he said. 'Did I not call the Pa-re to my aid?' And he sent the chief of his servants to arrest the Panzi. There were twenty-ten of their own people." The chief had one Panzi killed in Nzimom and brought the thirty others before the king. The king of the Pa-re said, 'These are the murderers of some of your people, kill them too'. 'This is what you shall say to the king of the Pa-re,' said Nzuoya to his messengers, 'and you yourselves shall begin to kill them, so that the king may see that I do not approve of their crime'.
>
> The king of the Pa-re was very pleased with the message. Nzuoya's servants began to kill the guilty men, but the king of the Pa-re stopped them, saying he did not want to see them killed. He sent some servants who, together with Nzuoya's servants, killed the murderers. (Martin 1952:38-39).

However, N'joya was also a peace-loving king, which he demonstrated particularly when the Europeans arrived in Bamum.

> The Pamom said to the king, 'We want to fight the white men.' 'No,' he replied, 'the white men are my friends.' So the white men settled in the land of the black men.
>
> All the kings who wanted to resist the white men were defeated. 'Pamom,' said the king, 'you see, if I had acted rashly, the white men would have killed you. Do you see?' 'You are right, King Nzuoya,' replied the Pamom, 'no one can contradict you, your wisdom is greater than all of ours.' (Martin 1952:41).

The events have remained legendary and have nothing to do with the sympathy N'joya felt for the white people, whom he did not even know!

> When he had already taken office, a jealous neighbour threatened him with a new war... And then the white people came, on 6 July 1902, First Lieutenant Sandrock and Captain Ramsey. The people wanted to fight the Europeans, but Njoya prevented them from doing so by means of a ruse. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1948:56).

The envious neighbour was none other than the Fulbe who had helped N'joya free himself from Gbetnkom and was now turning against his former ally. It is understandable that the Bamum never forgave their king for asking the Fulbe to interfere in the affairs of their state. They kept a close eye on Fumban, and whenever a similar event occurred, his people accused him of having brought about this situation.

If we stick to the sequence of events as recorded in the Book of the Bamum Kings, the Fulbe planned an attack on Bamum territory on the eve of the arrival of the Europeans. Rein-Wuhrmann, who places the civil war at the beginning of N'joya's reign, also places the Fulbe attack at this time, although it only came after the conflicts that N'joya had to endure before the arrival of the Europeans. One might wonder whether N'joya, in full preparation for the Fulbe attack, seeing himself suddenly facing two enemies at once, did not see in the first to arrive, the white man, as the saviour who could free him from the eternal oppressor of the Bamum land.

It is sometimes said that N'joya only had to take advantage of circumstances to make his decisions. But when you consider that he took the same risk in every case, you have to admit that he owes the success of his ventures entirely to himself.

We should add that dreams play a certain role both in the arrival of the white men and in the creation of writing. In The Book of the Bamum Kings, the arrival of the white men is mentioned a second time in a section that could be called "the crowning glory of N'joya's work." One can rightly detect a somewhat mythological tone in it.

> One day, the white men appeared in the land. The Pamom said to themselves, 'We want to wage war against them!' 'No,' said Nzuoya, 'for I have seen in a dream that the white men have done nothing to the Pamom. If the Pamom wage war against them, it will be the end of their race and mine. Only a few Pamom will survive. That will not be good.' He, Nzuoya, took their arrows, bows and guns from their hands. The Pamom obeyed and did not resist the white people when they arrived. He, Nzuoya, helped the Pamom and they kept the peace. (Martin 1952:134).

The vague term "white men" used by the author of the story confirms the allegorical meaning of this passage about the dream. N'joya could not foresee the behaviour of the white men in the Bamum country. He had to curse them when they took power from his hands. The Book of the Bamum Kings was written in the course of events. The tone of this passage shows that it was not written during N'joya's exile.

N'joya's diplomatic role comes into its own in his position as mediator between his people and the foreign authorities. He had to assert himself as a traditional king to one side, while to the

other he was the person in charge. Since he could not divide himself to satisfy both sides, he remained misunderstood in both camps.

> But the Pamom feared the white people. What could be done to get on well with them? He, Nzuoya, said, 'I will observe them to learn about their way of life.' He travelled to Gbuya and Kamalu (Buea and Duala). On his return, he shared his observations of the white people with the Pamom.
>
> He, Nzuoya, said to the Pamom: 'When the soldiers come to the market and take things, when they plunder villages, when they beat people for no reason, do not be angry. When the white men snatch what you have in your hands, when they destroy something of yours, or when they reproach me, Nzuoya, do not be angry, Pamom, leave it to me, Nzuoya, to take care of the order of dealing with the white men'. Thus Nzuoya helped the Pamom and they kept the peace. (Martin 1952:134).

The Bamum were afraid of the white people. And N'joya, like his subordinates, had no choice but to submit to life under the occupation of people whose behaviour left much to be desired. This is where N'joya's role as an advocate and pacifist begins.

N'joya, whose people represented the Bamum tradition, must have very quickly understood the European mentality, for which no taboo exists. And the desire to bring peace to his people led him to profane certain rites and objects of his people. He was prepared to destroy, in a sense, the structure of Bamum tradition that he had previously helped to shape.

N'joya's role as a mediator is evident in even his smallest innovations. And whatever the nature of his investigations into the ways of white people and their methods, they were reflected in his work, and the result revealed two characters, two approaches. He brought about a process of acculturation.

Thus, the creations that the Book of the Bamum Kings attributes to N'joya are merely the consequences of historical development.

> Once upon a time, the Bamum could neither read nor write. But he, Nzuoya, invented symbols, helped the Pamom, and they became yaa tuete lerewa (people who write) (Martin 1952:135).

Only the symbols of N'joya's script are original, but the reason that inspired N'joya to invent it was a reaction to his observations N'joya . He realised that his people lacked a script

like other peoples had, and gave them one. He considered literacy to be universally valuable since he had encountered it among the Hausa and Fulbe.

> Once upon a time, the Pamom could not weave. But he, Nzuoya, helped them and taught them the art of weaving (Martin 1952:135).

It was only with the arrival of the Fulbe under N'joya's rule that Muslim clothing became common among the Bamum, and with it the art of weaving. N'joya designed his own embroidery ornaments.

> Once upon a time, the Pamom could not smelt iron ore. But he, Nzuoya, helped them and taught them how to smelt ore. (Martin 1952:135).

For a long time, N'joya envied Fobungo, king of the Babungo, his neighbour, who demonstrated a very precise knowledge of iron smelting techniques. This industry was previously unknown to the Bamum. N'joya must have acquired the secret, undoubtedly in exchange for other knowledge that he kept secret.

> Once upon a time, the Pamom could not clothe themselves or ride horses. But he, Nzuoya, helped them, and they began to ride and dress themselves in shirts and trousers. (Martin 1952:135).

The Bamum finally adopted the horse only with the intervention of the Fulbe during the civil war, i.e. under N'joya's rule. At the same time, they also adopted the clothing referred to here.

> Once upon a time, the Pamom could not make white fabric black. But he, Nzuoya, helped them and they began to dye white fabric black. (Martin 1952:135).

Here, dyeing must be regarded as an industry, a consequence of the use of fabric.

> Once upon a time, the Pamom could not make bricks or build walls. But he, Nzuoya, helped them and showed them how to make bricks, and they began to build huts. He increased their prestige by planting crops on the outskirts of Ripa and building a beautiful house with a corrugated iron roof. (Martin 1952:135).

This is a European influence. The content of this last statement shows a N'joya who sometimes blindly admired what he did not possess and in doing so failed to recognise his own valuable heritage.

The Pamum, for example, were masters of wood carving before the arrival of the white men. But N'joya did not hesitate to replace his ancestors' palace, which had been destroyed by fire, with a multi-storey European building. He was criticised by his people for setting aside tradition. And shortly before 1921, his brothers conspired against him as a sign of their reproach.

> The Pamom thought that they could not avenge the death of their relatives, their fathers and their king, whose heads remained in the land of Nso'. But he, Nzuoya, avenged the dead by defeating the Nso'. Captain Grared[1] presented the king with a medal and said that the king was brave, as were the Pamom. Some time later, the emperor had the governor Epomayo[2] present me, Nzuoya, with a medal and congratulated me warmly.
>
> The Pamom were satisfied that the king had avenged those who had fallen in battle in the land of Nso' and expressed their satisfaction to the Germans for the medals, as well as for their work and all the good they had done for them. (Martin 1952:135).

N'joya is not wrong to attribute these significant achievements to himself. Even if not all of these were exclusively his own doing, he nevertheless used all his diplomatic skills to bring them to fruition.

But it is fair to say that the German captain, in connection with a war of revenge that was of no concern to the German authorities, cannot have been quoted in vain. Why did the Bamum receive medals from the Germans? Probably the opposite of what was reported happened. N'joya received his father's head from the hands of the Germans with great gratitude. He had in some way favoured the war against the Banso, which led to their subjugation and the return of the skull. But during the war he remained only an observer; the Germans led it alone and determined the terms of peace. The support that N'joya is said to have given, either through people or by providing equipment, was rewarded with medals by the white men. One has to admit this assumption, because the Bamum were the last to doubt the warlike qualities of the Banso.

[1] Meaning: Glauning
[2] should read: Ebermeier

N'joya as a reformer

In an attempt to outline the various areas in which N'joya was active, we will now examine the reforms he implemented in his environment with regard to the laws and customs of the Bamum tradition. This aspect of N'joya is particularly significant. It proves that N'joya thought little of living in a dead past and wanted to draw a line between it and himself. He recognised the necessity of this since he and the Bamum people were in danger of not surviving the foreign invasions. N'joya saved the throne by calling on the Fulbe. He saw the white people coming and settling in his country. He witnessed how foreign products infiltrated the Bamum culture. He had to take a stand on these events. He owed it to himself and his people.

So, in order to keep his subjects united in their way of life, he abolished the cult of the king and preached a moral religion himself. He took advantage of foreign influences and allowed himself to be imbued with the idea of justice in the relationships between himself and his people. He also drafted laws to replace the customs that no longer provided any guarantee in the country, laws for the Bamum people and for himself, N'joya, King of the Bamum.

N'joya was aware that a new phase in the history of the Bamum had begun. He therefore introduced changes to the history books that were intended to guide future Bamum kings. The reforms he laid down constitute the most important part of his work:

(p. 231).

> The new laws that King Nzuaya prepared
> 1. I, Nzuaya, king of the Pamom, have changed these things in the land of the Pamom to remove fear from the people. If any man still observes what has been abolished, he shall receive twenty-five lashes and be put in prison for a month, for God does not accept this, it is finished.
> 2. He, Nzuoya, says that the servant who remains with a princess will not die.
> He, Nzuoya, says that the servant who stays with a prostitute shall not die.
> 3. He, Nzuoya, says that he who strikes his wife so that she miscarries shall not die.
> 4. He, Nzuoya, says that the man who goes to give gifts in a foreign country will not die.
> 5. He, Nzuoya, says that theft will not result in the death of the guilty party.
> 6. He, Nzuoya, says that the defamer of the king would not be condemned to death.
> 7. He, Nzuoya, says that the inhabitants of Foumban would not die because they had travelled too often to the countryside.

8. He, Nzuoya, says that anyone who ate the king's goat would not die.
(p. 232).

9. He, Nzuoya, says that the man who harvested wine himself in the king's palm grove to drink it would not die.
10. He, Nzuoya, says that the man who received a lot of medicine would not die.
11. He, Nzuoya, says that the friend of the one who deserved capital punishment would not die with the guilty man.
12. He, Nzuoya, says that if, upon the death of a prince, the diviner is consulted and he designates the guilty party, the latter must not die.

He, Nzuoya, says that if, upon the death of a royal woman, the diviner is consulted and he designates the guilty party, the latter must not die.
13. He, Nzuoya, says that if a man established in a place is expelled to make way for a prince and that prince dies, the expelled man cannot be condemned to death.
14. He, Nzuoya, says that if a *ngaa-fon* dies without the cause of death being known, the people around him cannot be condemned to death.
15. He, Nzuoya, says that if an important man was ill and someone, after consulting the diviner, claimed that he would not die, if he did die, this should not result in the death of the person who consulted the diviner.
16. He, Nzuoya, says that whoever consults the spider will not die.
17. He, Nzuoya, said that anyone who saw *yu nzu* unexpectedly would not be condemned to death.

He, Nzuoya, said that princes should not kill a stranger when they sang *nguri*.

He, Nzuoya, said that one would not die because one would have placed a cloth on one's bed.

He, Nzuoya, said that we would not die if we went to trade
(p. 233).

in a foreign country without the king's permission.
18. He, Nzuoya, said that the dead can be buried in a shroud.
19. He, Nzuoya, says that if someone dies in the countryside, they can be buried there; it is not necessary to transport the body to Foumban.
20. He, Nzuoya, says that if the *nkom nda* of a *nzi* dies without paying tribute to his master, he may be buried. His heir will pay the tribute.
21. He, Nzuoya, says that if *a nzi* of *mutngu* dies and his people are unable to receive mutngu, he must be buried. Mutngu will come when he can be received.
22. He, Nzuoya, says that if a *ru si* woman dies without a replacement having been given, she must be buried. Her replacement will be given later.
23. He, Nzuoya, says that to bury someone, it is not necessary to wait for a gravedigger. Anyone can fulfil this role.
24. He, Nzuoya, says that a man who has been murdered may be buried, and a complaint will be made afterwards.
25. He, Nzuoya, says that if someone whose master is in Foumban dies in the countryside, he must be buried where he died and can be exhumed later to be transported to Foumban.
26. He, Nzuoya, says that the Pamom must wage war with justice.
27. He, Nzuoya, says that when someone dies, one should not cover oneself
(p. 234).

with earth.

28. He, Nzuoya, says that if a man quarrels with another believing himself to be in the right, he must not injure his opponent before lodging a complaint; he must only inform the king of the subject of the quarrel.

29. He, Nzuoya, said that one may wear any clothing, even if it was not given by him.

30. He, Nzuoya, says that one may eat from a metal dish.

31. He, Nzuoya, says that people may smoke in a pipe made of cast metal.

32. He, Nzuoya, the king, says that he must place people at the river crossings in order to collect a toll.

33. He, Nzuoya, says that all Pamom women may wear bead earrings.

He, Nzuoya, says that all Pamom women may wear copper rings.

34. He, Nzuoya, says that one may enter the palace with one's hair uncovered.

35. He, Nzuoya, says that one may protect oneself with an umbrella.

36. He, Nzuoya, says that if a *nzi* dies and the mutngu goes to his lamentations, one must give only fifteen goats, fifteen chickens, prepare pen and cook a goat.

(p.235).

37. He, Nzuoya, says that if a *nzi* who has *nguri* dies, and *nguri* goes to the lamentations, fifteen goats and fifteen chickens will be given, pen will be prepared, and a goat will be cooked.

38. He, Nzuoya, says that if a twin dies and *maa mpu'* goes to the lamentations one will give a hen, a goat, prepare pen, cook a goat, and give three thousand six hundred cowrie shells.

39. He, Nzuoya, says that if a *nzi dies* and *mbansie*, *kpe'fon*, *mbolu* go to the lamentations, 'pen' must be prepared, a goat cooked, two jars of oil and three thousand five hundred cowries given.

40. He, Nzuoya, said that if someone becomes one of the chiefs of the house of *Mutngu*, he must not stop the little children to sell them and to "eat" the money.

41. He, Nzuoya, says that the same man must not keep watch on the palace twice in a row in the house of *Mutngu*.

42. He, Nzuoya, says that *taangu* must retire with ten servants whom their parents can redeem.

43. He, Nzuoya, says that *taafon* must retire with five servants whom their parents can redeem.

(p. 236).

44. He, Nzuoya, says that *taa* Mfanton must retire with three servants.

He, Nzuoya, says that *mansut nkuo'nkuo'* must retire with two servants each whom their parents can redeem.

45. He, Nzuoya, says that no one must give the ordeal drink in the village.

46. He, Nzuoya, says that if someone dies and people come to mourn, they must not destroy the banana trees or cut down the trees in his village.

47. He, Nzuoya, says that if someone dies and his parents come to mourn, they must not attach mourning signs onto his wives, nor sprinkle them with embers mixed with chilli, nor with nettle leaves. Nor must they beat them.

48. He, Nzuoya, says that pots should no longer be made and called *têt vut* of the gods, because there is only one God.

49. He, Nzuoya, says that if anyone strikes his foot in front of the door of *mbaam lu*, he must not come and tell the king.

50. He, Nzuoya, says that the Pamom may sell the grubs from raffia palms at the market.

51. He, Nzuoya, says that the Pamom may sell *Mbit fe'* at the market.

52. He, Nzuoya, says that the Pamom can sell kola nuts at the market.

(p. 237).

53. He, Nzuoya, says that the Pamom can sell *mbii nguom* at the market.

54. He, Nzuoya, says that the Pamom can sell honey at the market.

55. He, Nzuoya, says that the Pamom can sell multicoloured bags at the market.

56. He, Nzuoya, says that the Pamom can sell *mfiya'* termites at the market.

57. He, Nzuoya, says that the Pamom can sell unrefined palm oil (*nzuu ngwot*) at the market.

58. He, Nzuoya, says that the Pamom can sell *yen* yams at the market.

59. He, Nzuoya, says that people can use spears decorated with copper wire.

60. He, Nzuoya, says that people can use copper spears.

61. He, Nzuoya, says that the people can use copper knives.

62. He, Nzuoya, says that people can eat from a mortar with feet.

63. He, Nzuoya, says that ordinary women can wear ivory bracelets.

(p. 238).

64. He, Nzuoya, says that people can make shoelaces from cloth.

65. He, Nzuoya, says that people can sell large bananas at the market.

66. He, Nzuoya, says that people can drink from a horn whose mouth is decorated with metal.

67. He, Nzuoya, says that one can pass through the courtyard of the royal women with a chair with a backrest.

68. He, Nzuoya, says that you can enter the courtyard of the royal women with an umbrella.

69. He, Nzuoya, says that you can pass through the courtyard of the royal women with leaves of *suom*.

70. He, Nzuoya, says that people can pass through the courtyard of the royal women with cotton cloth.

71. He, Nzuoya, says that one could lie down on a bed whose feet were decorated with images of a spider

72. He, Nzuoya, said that one could lie on a bed whose feet were decorated with the image of a snake.

73. He, Nzuoya, said that people could wear a hairstyle decorated with the image of a snake.

74. He, Nzuoya, said that people could wear a hairstyle decorated with the image of the chameleon.

75. He, Nzuoya, says that when the king goes on a journey, if the *funfut* see a bed in front of him, they must not destroy it.

(p. 239).

76. He, Nzuoya, says that anyone who encounters the king by chance on the trail must not flee, and the servants must not strike him.

77. He, Nzuoya, says that people may pass through the courtyard of the royal women with something fixed to the end of a spear.

78. He, Nzuoya, says that if anyone finds something that does not belong to him, he may not take it.

79. He, Nzuoya, has made eighty-five articles.

These are the words that King Nzuoya spoke to the Pamom when he ruled over them. He said to the Pamom: 'I was appointed king when I was still a minor, aged nineteen. It was the Pamom who raised me. The Pamom are like my fathers. I cannot fear them, and they must not fear me. The help I want to give my fathers is boundless; it will end when God calls me.' (Martin 1952: 231-239).

The reforms that N'joya wants to implement are of a legal or moral nature. But while he removed certain outdated laws in order to ensure that the more important ones were followed

more strictly, we must also note the great relief in the penal code, which consisted of a restriction on the previously frequent use of the death penalty.

At the same time, however, the cult tends to decline, mainly as a result of the abolition of certain taboos. For example, the spider oracle and the royal snake are vulgarised. Secret organisations, which could impose the death penalty for the mere sight of one of the *n'guri* or *n'zu* drums, lost their previous privileges. In addition, slaves gained a place in society by being given the right to approach a woman, even a princess, and undoubtedly also the right to procreate. Until then, they had not been allowed to have children.

All this means a radical change in the social structure of the Bamum country. This raises the question of where these reforms originated. Can we see here the influence of European pressure on Bamum society, which made N'joya feel that the unity of his own family was under threat?

We know that N'joya did not want to divorce his wives under any circumstances. And if his reforms could no longer have a direct influence on the society of his time, N'joya seems to have taken all the more measures for the future, such as using part of his book of Bamum kings to give advice to future kings.

European democratic ideas were largely responsible for the vulgarisation of royal privileges within Bamum society. The liberalism that N'joya had come into contact with through the presence of Europeans in the country made him realise the need for many reforms. From then on, one can speak of democratisation in the sense of liberalism among the Bamum, in whose eyes N'joya had a head start because he himself introduced freedom — a democratic state based on the idea of balance in the social order.

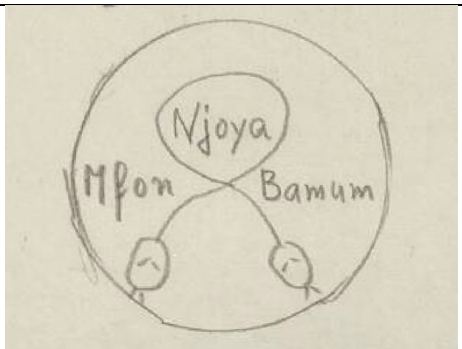
The barriers that separated the inhabitants of Fumban from the world had fallen. Metal and ebony no longer belonged to the king alone and could no longer be used only in his house.

N'joya's reforms also extend to the religious sphere. This is evident in the idea of "*tet vut*", a monotheistic concept in contrast to Bamum polytheism.

N'joya also made changes in his own environment. However, he does not mention them so as not to betray his position towards Bamum tradition.

In 1913, when the Queen Mother died, one of her sisters, the eldest of the family, took her place. She was not up to the role of "second dignitary." As a result, N'joya did not get along with her. When she died, a successor had to be found, a woman from the Queen Mother's family. But the question was not raised. It had become questionable whether a purely representative office was still appropriate at that time, as it had become useless with the arrival of the Europeans and their new methods and principles. Since N'joya, the eldest brother of the reigning king had been regarded as the second most powerful man in the state. He was the king's advisor and mediator between him and the people. In the absence of the king, he conducted the affairs of government, in the manner of a vice-king, a reform that automatically reduced the role of the three Titamfon.

We saw that N'joya granted slaves a new status. Not content with that, he had to determine the position of individuals in society and the relationship between individuals. In doing so, N'joya entered sociological territory. He observed and tried to put his findings into practice. This led him to set up offices for marriage, death and birth registries. The documents were stamped with the royal seal:

two-headed snake Njoya, King		It bore the double-headed snake and the inscription

		of the Pamom.

In doing so, he undoubtedly established a bureaucracy modelled on that of the colonial authorities. The latter were unable to maintain social order, which was no longer supported by tradition.

With the collapse of the traditional social structure, it was a step forward that the consent of the king in the case of marriage, as well as the consent of the partners, now became decisive. The introduction of taxes and witnesses also show a European influence. In his search for a new order that would secure the unity of his people, N'joya could no longer turn back. In this sense, the morals of foreign religions also served him well. He wore a wedding ring and had his wives wear them too.

The position of women seems to have deteriorated in N'joya's social reforms, perhaps because he saw the emancipation of women in the new European order as a threat to the Bamum women. When the colonial authorities distributed N'joya's wives among the slaves, but they all returned to him the next day, partly because they wanted to remain loyal to him and partly because the slaves did not want to touch the king's wives, he considered this a revealing experiment.

N'joya was consistent in that he did not abolish any custom without replacing it with a law or another custom.

The traditional costume of dark blue robes replaced the whitish mud with which people used to rub their bodies as a sign of mourning.

N'joya initiated a revolutionary process in his country that other peoples only achieved through civil wars. The privileges of the highest class, the royal family, are handed over to the masses and each individual is given his place in society.

N'joya as inventor

> But everything I have seen so far in Bamum was mainly his work, and his works and his people bear witness to a wise, progressive, great ruler. (Vollbehr 1912:89).

Rein-Wuhrmann says the same thing: "We will never know everything he invented." And she adds again and again: "His mind was constantly in motion."

Our knowledge of N'joya's life's work is astonishingly limited. His discoveries range from the trivial to the revolutionary. He undoubtedly first became known in this capacity as an inventor, in particular through the development of a writing system. As far as N'joya's creations are concerned, it is necessary to get to the bottom of their motives and influences. They contain a large proportion of foreign, purely historical influences and are related to the individual character traits and psychological peculiarities of their creator.

The Book of the Bamum Kings mentions N'joya's inventions:

> King Nzuoya creates new things: writing and other arts.
> 1. In the past, the Pamom could not write books. But he, Nzuoya, invented written characters and helped the Pamom to become *yaa tuete lerewa* (people who can write).
> 2. In the past, the Pamom could not weave. But he, Nzuoya, helped them and taught them to weave fabrics.
> 3. In the past, the Pamom could not smelt iron ore. But he, Nzuoya, helped them and taught them how to smelt ore.
> 4. In the past, the Pamom did not know how to clothe themselves or ride a horse. But he, Nzuoya, helped them, and they began to ride and clothe themselves with shirts and trousers.
> 5. In the past, the Pamom could not make white fabric black. But he, Nzuoya, helped them, and they began to make white fabric black.
> 6. Previously, the Pamom were unable to make bricks and build walls. However, Nzuoya assisted them and demonstrated how to make bricks, and they began to construct huts. He ensured that they were well respected, planted crops on the outskirts of Ripa, and built a beautiful house with a tin roof. (Martin l952:135).

It seems as if all of N'joya's inventions are summarised on this half page of the Book of the Bamum Kings. This is true insofar as they are, strictly speaking, the most important and original ones, from which others arose. Apart from the inventions mentioned above, he also made other remarkable innovations. For example, the corn mill — made by Kpumie Pinu, N'joya's technician — or tanning, which was brought to the country by N'joya. The printing press was a consequence of his invention of writing, just as dyeing was a consequence of the introduction of weaving in the Bamum country. However, the art of weaving only found its way into N'joya's homeland with the traditional costume of the Hausa people. Every day, 320 weavers sat in the huge workshop that the king had set up in his courtyard. N'joya was both their patron and the person responsible for the weaving patterns. Most of the weaving patterns were his own designs. He also designed the embroidery for his eldest daughter's wedding dress.

When the institution suffered from a shortage of materials during the First World War, N'joya had fabrics made from tree bark again, which had hardly been processed on the European market due to the flourishing European market. The court dancers wore this fabric on festive days. Similarly, they resumed the earlier production of salt (from thirteen different herbs) when imports from Europe were interrupted and the Hausa also stopped bringing it from Chad.

> N'joya made his own dyes in pits in a courtyard of the palace to which no one had access.
>
> The dyeing of fabrics used to be done in the royal farmstead. In his large garden in front of the palace, the king had six dye pits in which the fabrics were placed for weeks. The Bamum people are proud to have invented their own colours, and it must be said that they are beautiful and wash well. There is one blue in particular that turns out dark or light depending on how long the fabric stays in the pit. It is very subtly combined with green or purple. Yellow and red are also used to create cheerful contrasts. Blue, black and purple have one name, namely si. Green is called lilap, yellow mbaket, red pute, white sü. Any other colour mixtures are generally referred to as mfome, which means 'scattered'. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1925:90).

From the six colour pits (the colours were extracted from herbs that were jealously guarded secrets), N'joya was able to obtain countless shades, for which names still had to be found, as Rein-Wuhrmann explains.

Incidentally, the term "creation" used in the Book of the Bamum Kings should not be understood in an absolute sense when referring to N'joya's inventions. Horses and Hausa-style clothing were brought by the Fulbe and are a consequence of their arrival in Bamum country. They cannot be described as creations. Iron casting is an achievement of the Bamum people, thanks to N'joya's government, and was adopted from the Babungo.

Apart from the fact that N'joya made himself the ambassador of the Bamum by working for "their good reputation" — one of the many proofs of his industrious mind — he is also worthy of our interest as an architect.

> As I mentioned, the houses are all built from the leaf ribs of raffia palms. I was lucky enough to witness the transition to a different building material, clay and stone, in Bamum. Between my first and second visits to Fumban, the building that Europeans used to call "the new palace", along with the adjoining women's houses, had been destroyed by fire. The intelligent chief of the Bamum then had the idea of building fireproof houses — he had seen examples of this in some mud houses in the large Hausa colony near Fumban, and also in the houses that the mission was in the process of building from bricks they had fired themselves. So he built houses out of mud and baked stones. The influence of the new building material on the style of the houses is interesting. The floor plan has remained essentially the same, except that the long row of women's houses has been merged into a single long building, but the individual rooms are not connected to each other and each opens to the outside. But what completely changes the external appearance is that the slender wooden posts that used to support the roof have now been transformed into square mud houses of colossal dimensions, 1 1/2 metres in diameter at the bottom and tapering slightly towards the top. Even more surprising is the sight of the interior of the main house. The atrium with a row of thick round columns surrounding the impluvium and a large, imposing columned courtyard at the rear of the building give it a very ancient appearance. Even more peculiar is a large hall whose roof is supported by four square pillars whose enormous diameter seems completely out of proportion to the load they have to bear. The light, old-fashioned thatched roof is strangely constructed with these massive walls and pillars. (Ankermann 1910:301-302).

The constant fires throughout Bamum-Land gave cause for concern. To combat the unrelenting, inevitable destruction, the root cause had to be tackled. The new construction methods introduced by the Europeans seemed less prone to fire. They differed fundamentally from the indigenous constructions only in the building materials used. These had to be changed. This was N'joya's first step towards building reform in Bamum Land. With this achievement, N'joya made a new break between the past and the present.

He also had the missionary Schwarz build the palace of Mantum in European style. This palace served as a model for the construction of the brick building in Fumban after the old palace burned down, which, contrary to Ankermann's opinion in the 1910 Journal of Ethnology, did not need to be completely demolished.

We have a later description of this:

> The entire palace, which is 81 x 60 m wide and trapezoidal in plan, has parallel sides 100 and 150 m long, making it a huge building even by European standards. Inside, it consists of an endless number of cube-shaped buildings and courtyards. Everything is made of raphia sticks, which are connected by nails and lacing made of the same material and covered with unfired clay. This perishable building material has to be renewed almost every five years. The mighty palace is therefore always under construction in parts and has collapsed in places. (Vollbehr 1912: 102).

From a comparison between Ankermann's statement and Vollbehr's description, we conclude that at the time of the former, the old palace still stood, which Vollbehr had not yet seen. Ankermann undoubtedly learned of a partial fire and a fundamental change, one of those that led Vollbehr to say that the palace was undergoing constant repairs. Rein-Wuhrmann provides information about the exact date of the palace fire:

> Even larger and more beautiful than all the grand houses in the country, the royal palace is a veritable labyrinth of houses, corridors and courtyards, inhabited by Nschoya with his highest officials and his favourite women. In the past, the royal house was also built in the Bamum style with many artistically carved posts and columns. It burned down on 8 July 1913. Now, based on his own designs and with his own craftsmen, he has built a semi-European structure that does not immediately appeal to the white guest, but nevertheless commands respect for the inventiveness and entrepreneurial spirit of His Majesty. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1925:71).

This is contradicted by Dugast, who was in Bamum from 1911 until the evacuation of the Germans by the British in 1915. She should therefore have been a witness to the fire.

> Our informants remember that it was during the 1918 flu epidemic, when Lieutenant Clapot was administrator of Foumban, that the topographers resumed their work and surveyed Foumban itself, noting the family concessions inside the moat.
> The plans and drawings of the old palace, which was destroyed shortly afterwards by fire, date from this period. All the surveying work was carried out by Nji Mama. This plan was published by Professor Labouret in Togo-Cameroun. The same plan, kept at the IFAN Centre in Dousla, includes an upper drawing showing the façade of the palace as it was built by Kings Mbuembue and Nsangu. This is the one that Lieutenant Hirtler estimated in 1903 to be 90 metres wide. (Dugast 1950A:71).

There is only a slight difference between Hirtler's estimated length and Vollbehr's specifications. The descriptions we have of the palace from other sources have numerous features in common, so we can assume that they refer to the same palace. However, Dugast's chronology seems doubtful to us, given the conditions under which the new palace in N'joya was built. We must assume that until 1918, when the new palace with European-style floors was completed, N'joya lived in the remains of the old palace, the plans of which he must have been trying to reconstruct at the time. In fact, the new palace was built during the absence of the Europeans, when N'joya wanted to regain control of his country. He was tempted to build solid pillars everywhere to resist new invasions, because during the First World War, the Europeans were busy with other things than colonisation and had left the Bamum land. N'joya wanted to seize the opportunity. After the Europeans left, he set to work with the craftsmen who had helped build the palace in Mantum. Based on his own plans and with the help of his Bamum colleagues, he built a two-storey house. The difficulty in constructing this building with domed windows seems to have been the four pillars on the ground floor, which were intended to support the upper two floors. N'joya solved the problem by having four palm trunks walled in. He also had to find his own solution for the construction of the stairs between the floors. He had them made of wood. Overall, N'joya succeeded in finding a new and personal style for his residence, which was designed according to European models.

N'joya as a military organiser

After N'joya became familiar with a European military organisation for the first time in his country, he decided to set up his own army corps. He had his soldiers trained in Europe and dressed them in European uniforms similar to those of the Imperial German officers. He had these uniforms specially made in Europe.

> In the past, Njoya and his nobles and soldiers wore hussar uniforms with bead epaulettes for a while, and according to stories and photographs I have seen of him and his entourage

> from that time, they must have looked like black monkeys. Now, standing before us in their picturesque Bamum costumes, this could certainly not be said. (Vollbehr 1912:89).

It was a habit of European travellers and even ethnologists to regard everything that non-European peoples imitated or adopted from Europeans as mimicry.

In this particular case, they undoubtedly overlooked N'joya's consideration that the entirety of the military equipment could, under certain circumstances, enhance the performance of his corps. For it is not enough that the uniform itself generally has a psychological effect on men – and N'joya would have known this – he also seems to have assumed that he could unhesitatingly adopt anything from the Whites that could serve him or his people.

Although complete adoption is rarely the case in the acculturation process, it seems to apply in this instance. Of course, it would have been difficult to imagine it any other way. This is because European military equipment was designed in such a way that the clothing was precisely tailored to the weapons, so that one was inconceivable without the other — apart from the fact that all military equipment was entirely fit for purpose. In modern warfare, however, the "picturesque Bamum clothing" was anything but practical or fit for purpose.

The same reasoning probably applies to the bead epaulettes as above: psychological. A reason, incidentally, that most likely applies to the Germans as much as to the Bamum.

Incidentally, N'joya's army did not last long. Shortly before 1911, it was disbanded and the use of firearms was banned for all Bamum.

N'joya, creator of a court language

When one considers that N'joya composed dances and songs in honour of his mother and that, when he set about reforming his writing system, he demonstrated genuine talent as a phonetician, one is no longer surprised by the sophistication of the secret language he created for his court. It seems that this secret language came about with the help of Mrs -Rein-Wuhrmann, who was perhaps N'joya's real confidante — if one simply sticks to the introductions she provides in her

numerous writings. This lady, a Swiss woman whose mother tongue was German, had received a French education and spoke fluent English.

A letter from Rein-Wuhrmann to Dugast can be of great use to us in understanding the creation of this royal language:

> Njoya was very talented at music, and everything that was melodious and harmonious met with his approval. However, he did not learn German, saying that the language was difficult and 'heavy'. He only knew a few words such as 'ja, nein, doch, immer', etc. One day in 1912, he called me to tell me that a Frenchman had just passed through Foumban and that he had visited him. N'joya was impressed by the language this man had spoken and asked me if I knew it too. When I said yes, he asked me to tell him "some beautiful French words." I had a letter from my father in my bag, so I read it to him, and I had to read it two or three times. Njoya listened attentively, and I remember very well how he asked me to repeat certain words that he found beautiful and harmonious. Especially words ending in 'ion', such as plantation, station... The next day, he sent two servants to me and asked me to teach them a few words of French, which I did to please him. These two men came for a whole week to disturb me in my work, and I was forced to tell Njoya to stop sending them to me... Njoya obeyed, but how great was my surprise when he told me, a few weeks later, that he had just invented a new language, a mixture of German, French, English and Mum. And to prove his invention to me, he said: 'Your name, Anna Wuhrmann, is magnificent in this language. You are called Lasisvenère Pistenawaskopus.' (Dugast 1950B:233).

After Delafosse, N'joya sought additional information about the German and English languages. And, with the help of his own language and all those he had some knowledge of, he was now able to form the basis for his secret language. However, one criterion that seems to define this invention leads us to believe that this language is not a work of chance, as Delafosse suggests (1922:18), neither in its formation nor in its composition and use. This criterion is that of music. In fact, musical sound plays such a decisive role that it can be considered the central element. From a semantic point of view, N'joya seems to have had only a very elementary understanding of the structure of a word, its root and its variants, and since he composed his words from syllables of words from different languages that he considered sufficiently sonorous, he was unable to arrive at any precise grammatical principles.

At first, even before he created his secret language, N'joya made a distinction between "harmonious" French and "clumsy" German. This sums up his view of European languages. He

only knew English through so-called Pidgin English. Judging by the impression French made on him when he first heard it, it seems almost certain that it was the idea of music that drove him to create his secret language. And one can rightly speak of it as a pastime, "a pastime that he undoubtedly took seriously" (Dugast 1950B:232).

In this sense, one can even speak of a work of art, of a composition by N'joya, whose sole principle was semantic, namely the establishment of a relationship between the meaning of the word and the sound of the word. Thus, the German word "schwimmen" (to swim), based on its sound elements, now means "sweet" in this new language. The principle therefore seems to be purely speculative in nature and derives solely from N'joya's imagination. Nothing prevents us from saying here that N'joya was an inspired man. This trait is clearly evident in most of his inventions.

One could concede, if necessary, that the closed syllables in the name "Wuhrmann" have been reproduced in vain in "Pistenawaskopus". Nevertheless, this name would remain a very striking example of transposition. Apart from this method, N'joya could have resorted to the use of anagrams, which, however, were not sufficiently misleading, if that was indeed his ultimate goal. Of this language, Shü-Mum, as distinct from the local language, Shü-M'bem, we have nothing more than a few excerpts from the Book of the Bamum Kings and part of the local pharmacopoeia, two works that N'joya wanted to vulgarise, so to speak. The written recording of these works in a secret language, although they contain no esoteric elements, raises the question of what motivated N'joya to invent a secret language. However, these motives may come to light through an analysis of the language. To this end, we will attempt to examine its phonology, lexicography and grammar, i.e. its physical, semantic and grammatical aspects.

The phonology of Shü-Mum, as N'joya named the language he created, is of foreign origin. Above all, Shü-Mum is not a tonal language, which makes it fundamentally different from most African languages. The need for tonality was not decisive, as Shü-Mum is polysyllabic and

thus differs from Shü-M'bem. Without diacritics, this language inevitably remained non-tonal and with considerably less intonation than Shü-M'bem. The musical element thus became essential and developed primarily in the diversity of polysyllabic variants.

Due to incorrect explanations of words borrowed from a wide variety of languages, the orthography of Shü-Mum — initially written in the *a ka u ku* alphabet and, since 1916, in the a *ka u ku mfemfe* alphabet — appears rather confusing and complicated, and often lacks any consistency. A study of the morphology of this language is useful to us in that it allows us to gain an insight into N'joya's thinking.

For some time he stuck to the word order in the Shü-M'bem language, as he did not dare to imitate the structure of languages he hardly knew. But to what extent did he know his own language? Dugast believed that he only had a superficial knowledge of his language (Dugast 1950B:255). It is clear that the plural form of words is not modelled on that of inflected languages or even entirely on that of noun-class languages. Sometimes the plural is not even a variant of the singular, but a completely new word. The plural of "*gen*" (human being), for example, is "*bramsta*". In other cases, N'joya recognised the root of individual words in his mother tongue and tried to adopt it into Shü-Mum, for example when "*amsalomu*" (*pa* or *ba*) represents a plural number, but only from two to four. From five onwards, only the vague term "*pansara*" (*pa* or *ba*), meaning "many", is used.

The question of whether Shü-Mum has a grammar can only be answered in the negative. Since there is no morphology whatsoever, N'joya was unable to establish a logical grammatical system. Since N'joya had no analytical concept of his own language and could therefore only help himself by imitation, he was also unable to establish a grammar for his secret language. Greenberg says the following on this subject:

> Language can be approached in either of two ways: as a system of signals conforming to the rules which constitute its grammar or as a set of culturally transmitted behaviour patterns shared by a group of individuals. (Greenberg, 1957:1).

According to Greenberg's definition, N'joya had to construct a grammar as a system of signals in order to create his language. He did not attempt to convey one system, even approximately, but instead chose words completely arbitrarily. And those words that in all other languages only gain their raison d'être through context, i.e. through syntax, owe their existence in N'joya's language solely to their sound. For example, the personal pronouns have no orthographic, euphonic or etymological similarities, nor do they exhibit any particular coherence. Each of them is formed from additions of different sounds, depending on N'joya's whim. The pronouns in the third case best illustrate this aspect:

ankibor (him, with him).
aririya (his), *lonspin* (hers).
samua (ours), *warlam* (ours).
kopus (her), *susagenik* (hers), *furupin* (theirs).
Contraction of pronouns was not used in this system, but was replaced by new words, as they were only a minor variant in Shü-M'ben:

ndaa — my house: *roska* (in Shü-Mum).
nd'e — his house: *suratu* (in Shü-Mum).
The demonstrative pronoun is completely absent, whereas it is common in Shü-M'ben.

The adjective can be placed both before and after the noun. However, in the 2nd or 3rd case, the complement always comes before the subject, but without any special feature. Shü-M'ben has the same peculiarities.

The conjugation of verbs in Shü-Mum has only a few tenses and is an incomplete counterpart to the conjugation in the Shü-M'ben language, from which only a few elements have been adopted.

Upon closer examination of the Shü-M'ben language, we notice numerous analogies with Shü-Mum. Above all, the plural in Shü-M'ben is formed by adding a prefix and changing the stress. We have already seen that N'joya attempted to reproduce the idea of the prefix (*amsalamü*, *pansara*). However, he did not generally adopt the tonality. Reduplication, which is another form of the plural in Shü-M'ben, is difficult to recognise in Shü-Mum due to the variety of syllables.

In addition, there are certain words in Shü-M'ben which, unlike in Shü-Mum, remain unchanged in the plural. Furthermore, in Shü-M'ben there are certain demonstrative pronouns that do not change.

After this brief overview of the Shü-Mum language, it may seem as if N'joya was unable to use his knowledge of his mother tongue to create a secret language. This may be true if one only considers the imperfections of the Shü-Mum language. However, after a comparative study of the two languages, it becomes obvious that N'joya was aware of the less practical aspects of his mother tongue and wanted to improve them in the language he created.

As already mentioned, there was no compelling reason for a secret script, as the few texts that still exist concern general knowledge anyway. However, it is likely that they were only written down to divert attention from secret writings that never reached the public. In this case, Shü-Mum would indeed have the character of a secret language. The lack of morphology and the difficulty of learning this language were perhaps due to N'joya's desire to make it an esoteric means of communication.

It can be assumed that, by attempting to create a polysyllabic, sonorous language, N'joya was reacting against his monosyllabic mother tongue. On the other hand, N'joya could not help but imitate the only language he knew, albeit superficially, i.e. not systematically.

This Shü-Mum, which has "no traditional or sacred character" (Dugast 1950B:232), enables us to understand N'joya's nature much better. For it is through the analysis of this language — precisely because it reflects the spirit, psyche, knowledge and philosophy of those who have shaped it throughout history — that we gain access to the knowledge of its creator. It is in this language that the intellectual élan of an individual is expressed in an analytical way.

Starting from a phonetic basis, N'joya wanted to create a language whose use would remain limited. Since European languages were also spoken in N'joya's kingdom alongside Shü-

M'ben, and their speakers were only too happy to spread them, the esoteric character that N'joya intended for his language cannot be denied. It must have been one of the tools N'joya used to arm himself against the political forces from outside that threatened to overthrow his regime.

Shu-Mum reveals N'joya's sense of state organisation, in this case through the concept of state secrecy.

The origin of this language must also be derived from the fact that N'joya's neighbouring kings, the kings of Bagam, Bali and Banyo, each had a royal language, but he did not. This may have been another reason that prompted him to create his secret language.

Finally, it should be mentioned that there is only a slight connection between the invention of the Bamum writing system and the creation of the secret language. It might be possible to speak of an influence of the writing system on the analytical phase in the development of a language that was intended to sound harmonious, but no more than that. The two inventions were not necessarily made for each other and had different origins. However, both are the most striking phenomena of N'joya's intellectual creativity.

Another area in which exact science presents a difficulty for N'joya is cartography.

N'joya as a topographer

> As with most of his remarkable and interesting inventions, Ndschoya is also a self-taught topographer. (Struck 1908:206).

Even though topography is directly dependent on the art of writing, it must be admitted that, according to the initial information we have about his achievements, N'joya went it alone on the path to topographical science. He had only the basic material at his disposal: writing.

> According to reports by Ramsay, the Basel missionary, Moisel and others, there is no need to go into this in more detail. But how did the king's topographical records come about? According to an unpublished report by missionary Göhring dated 29 July 1906, Ndschoya had established a new farm and had been away from the city for about eight days working in the fields. When he returned, he brought Göhring these two sheets to show him where

> and how he had laid out the farm. He himself did not attach any significance to this. And when the cartographer Moisel was in Bamum at the end of last year, Ndschoya had him explain to him in detail the method of route recording and cartographic work in his homeland, so that it can also be ruled out that Ndschoya had already learned these things before, for example from Ramsay.
> ... It should be added that Ndschoya's first topographical records did not use basic cartographic aids or schematic representations or figures, but rather constituted a plan and a map, complete with terrain and location symbols, names and explanatory text. (Struck 1908:206).

N'joya's efforts are evident in this first cartographic draft. He shows uncertainty where calculations had to lead to precise results. For example, the information about the scale and magnetic orientation leaves something to be desired. But N'joya overcame these initial difficulties by learning about topographical work from Moisel. His interest in cartography must have led him to a project that seemed essential: designing a map of his own country.

In 1912, N'joya was already aware of the land survey in Bamum. However, he attached little importance to this work carried out by the Germans; in fact, he considered it worthless. If he wanted to remain a judge among his own people – one of the offices he defended against foreigners until his death – he had to be able to settle disputes in his kingdom. These disputes were mostly about land and other property issues, either between him and his neighbours or between his subjects. At the same time, he made himself the guardian of his father's legacy against the greed of foreigners, who had been given free rein through colonialism. A map drawn up by German topographers could therefore not be as detailed and subtle as N'joya wanted for an overview of his country. At the same time, this was a means of acting independently of the colonial authorities, whose land surveys pursued goals other than those the Bamum had in mind. The desired exploitation and strategy were thus countered by the desire to preserve the unity of the country. According to Dugast, N'joya's aim was therefore "to draw up a map of his entire territory" (1950A:69).

In April 1912, N'joya and his companions, most of whom were scribes, set off from Fumban in an easterly direction.

> The servants and the land clearers left first to prepare the ground and the lodgings. Behind them came Njoya, followed by the surveyors who carried out the work. After several days of walking, they reached Mantum, near Mbam, on the fifth day. (Dugast 1950A:69).

Each member of the team had his own specific task, according to his instructions and the equipment at his disposal.

> Each surveyor had a notebook and pencil with him (we saw these notebooks). While walking, each person had to note the appearance of the track, draw its curves, mark flat areas with an arrow whose body was the track itself, the top of a hill with two arrows, note any streams encountered and the direction of their flow, looking for their names, and indicate crossroads and market places. They also had to note down the oil palms, raffia palms, forest galleries, swamps, the boundaries of villages or rural concessions, huts and even the ruins of huts. Finally, using a few watches, the teams had to remember to check the time needed to complete each stage. (Dugast 1950A:69).

This land survey — for which there were informants and experts from village to village — we will summarise here, in accordance with all the records that had to be made, the recording of all details and the description of the ruins that indicate N'joya's intentions.

> The expedition therefore focused on the east, and N'joya came to Mantum.
>
> From there, he headed south and arrived in ten stages at Massagam, the base of the Mbam-Noun confluence triangle. There he stopped and sent a team to explore the confluence region itself, which they only reached after three days of walking. From there, he travelled up the Noun valley, then turned south and west around the mountainous spine of the Mbapit and Nkogam massifs. Teams climbed them. But when they reached the Mbam massif, the expedition stopped at the village of Monyet, among the Pa-Nguren, after thirteen more stages. It was the beginning of the rainy season, and Njoya wanted to return. The expedition reached Foumban in two stages, via the Kpupa-Matapit trail, which it also surveyed. In total, it had covered thirty stages in fifty-two days. Two-thirds of the country had been surveyed. (Dugast 1950A:70).

But then, first there was the sudden death of Queen Mother Njapndunke on 13 June 1913 and the ensuing period of mourning, followed by the events of the World War, which interrupted the work that had begun. The topographers resumed their work surveying Fumban, recording the family estates within the moat and making plans and drawings of the old palace, which burned down shortly afterwards. Finally, an expedition set out for the north, which had not yet been explored. In 1920, the map of the country was completed.

> With the journey completed, the survey of the country was finished. When all the documents had been collated, Nji Mama and his brother Ibrahim Njoya were tasked with drawing and annotating the map. It looks like a large rectangle measuring 96 cm x 78 cm and shows the country entirely within its natural borders between the Mbam massif and the Mvi in the north, the Mbam River to the east, the Noun to the south and west, although in reality it is almost triangular in shape, 120 km high and 63 km at its narrow base in the north. (Dugast 1950A: 71).

Struck concludes on N'joya's topographical work:

> As his work stands, it cannot, of course, replace European records (although I must admit that some so-called 'records' made by this or that white man fall considerably short of N'joya's achievement), but we can at least derive from them an absolutely reliable nomenclature, provided that this is not thwarted by the official orthography, which tends to level everything in a familiar and not entirely unobjectionable manner. (Struck 1908:201).

With this, N'joya solved the main problem facing European cartographers, namely finding a correct, fixed and usable nomenclature.

N'joya was also interested in "statistical geography". Here is just one of the notes he wrote down for the missionary Göhring about his kingdom, the city of Fumban and its population. Transcribed and translated, it reads:

Mfon Pamum li si pua Ndsoya ngu i	King of Bamum Name is Ndśchoya. The city is
pua ingure puen pua ntu Fumban raini puen pua	large. There are many people in Fumban,
ntu Fumban malamri ndsob inkam mon ifeme Ape	In Fumban are 10,000 people and 1,000 men eight (8,000). Furthermore
puen ntu ingwen pe yo te pe pua raini tutun	people in the field are countless, they are very many.
li namfon Panum pua Ndsabndunke	The name of the king's mother of Bamum is Ndschabndunke.
(Struck l908:209)	

Although written very early, long before N'joya used the clock in his surveys, Struck's remarks have not lost their relevance, even though the author makes no secret of his admiration for the king of Bamum.

But just as his interest in geography stems directly from his topographical and cartographical work, it can be said that both fields were first brought to his attention through

writing. They depend practically on pure calligraphy. In fact, mathematical data, such as scale calculations, have been little observed. But despite these shortcomings, it is important for us to recognise the goal pursued by N'joya: the balance of his patriotism, a goal that can be linked to the idea of state building.

THE MUM SCRIPT AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

The question of symbols

> In the past, the Bamum did not know how to write. The script they now use was devised by King Nzuoya: one night, he had a dream. A man appeared before him and said, 'King, take a tablet and draw a hand. Wash what you have drawn and drink it.' The king took the tablet and drew a human hand, as he had been told. Then he handed the tablet to the man, who wrote something on it and gave it back to the king. But there were a large number of people sitting there, all of whom were students. They had paper in their hands, on which they wrote and then passed on to their brothers.
>
> The next day, the king took a tablet and drew a human hand on it. He washed the tablet and drank the water that had been used for washing, just as he had been told in his dream. The king summoned a large number of people and said, "If you draw a lot of different things and give them names, I will make a book that will speak without being heard. "What is that for?" said the people. "Whatever we do, it will not succeed." "If you think carefully, it will succeed," replied the king. "No! It cannot succeed." 'Go and think about it carefully!' Some time later, the king called his people to him and said, 'Well, what have you thought about this book? 'Whatever we do, it will not work. 'Very well, I accept your words. But I will try it myself, and if I do not succeed, I will give it up. Go and draw me a number of different things and then bring me what you have done.' They went away and did as they were told. Then they came to show the king their work. The king had also made a few attempts himself. He called Mama and Adzia to come and help him compare the work of one with the other. The king tried five times, but in vain, to come to a result. The sixth attempt, however, was successful. The script had been found. The king called a large crowd of people and taught them the new letters. The people learned quickly, much to the satisfaction of King Nzuoya. (Martin. 1952:42-43).

From this note on the origin of the Mum script, written by N'joya himself, it is possible to see the significance that the originator himself attached to this discovery. An essential aspect is the supernatural element, within which the origin and value of this writing belong to the didactic realm, namely the dream. This also contains the problem of representing this silent language.

The dream thus merges the origin, the drawing of the hand with the pictorial representation, and the presence of the pupils finally points to the didactic intention. The elements that establish the meaning of the script are so aptly contained in the symbolism of its origin that it seems reasonable to regard this dream — at least in part — as a conscious one.

The idea of giving his people a written language did not suddenly come to N'joya overnight. He had been preparing for it since childhood, and it was the problem of representation that had to be solved. He stuck to this by prolonging his dream into the following day, summoning "his people" and ordering them to draw "a lot of different things". However, one discovery remained the sole preserve of N'joya, namely that a hand, when drawn like a hand, means "hand" and is read as "hand". Schmitt regards this tendency towards the mystical as a general character trait. With regard to the idea of dreams, he refers to the Vai script of the West Africans, which owes its origin to a dream in 1830.

> Of course, in both cases, the dream can be explained as the after-effect of thoughts that had already crossed the inventors' minds during the day. However, the fact that these thoughts are now brought back to life in a dream and take on a new form has a special meaning. Something as supernatural and mysterious as writing for peoples without a written language would have been unattainable without divine assistance, and probably also impermissible without divine permission. Both were granted through the dream, for we may safely assume that the inventors saw a message from higher powers in the dream. (Schmitt, Bamum:23).

The explanation that Schmitt attempts to give for this dream remains fundamentally subjective. Assessing the driving forces behind certain events in the ethnological field in this way from the outset can be described here, in Radcliffe-Brown's sense, as "pseudo-historical".

Schmitt does not specify to what extent dreams should be regarded as instruments of divine inspiration. Moreover, with regard to dreams as divine inspiration, he resorts to generalisations that deny peoples "without writing" any independent creation of such. However, the emergence of the Cherokee script (1820) and the Alaska script (1900), both around the time of the emergence of the Vai script (1834) and the Bamum script (1896), were not the result of dreams. However, the origin of the Alaska script is often interpreted as coming from divine

powers. After all, given that dreams play a role in two more recent African scripts, we cannot limit our considerations to the African context by recalling the African tendency towards the "mystical", which allowed Momoru Doalu Bukere (Vai) and N'joya (Bamum) to explain the origin of their scripts as a dream experience.

Although the origin of the Bamum script gives rise to so much controversy, we are dealing with a historical event that is accessible to memory. N'joya himself is a contemporary. Therefore, a study of his psychological behaviour is not impossible. This is precisely the aim of Dugast's repeated efforts in her book (The Mystical Writing of N'joya), in which she attempts to explain the origin, the foundation of the script and other creations of N'joya through the person and character of their creator.

> He probably thought about it for quite a long time. We will see later that this man, once interested in something new introduced by others in the country, always ended up feeling that he could do the same and that he too should possess this novelty on his own initiative. So it is not surprising to learn from him that, having often thought about this question of writing, one day the final impulse to create one was given to him by a dream. (Dugast 1950A:3).

Dugast does not go any further in her interpretation of the dream. She does not seek any mystical meaning, as Schmitt does in relation to peoples without writing.

> The conviction that supernatural powers are necessary for the undertaking is also revealed in another trait. On the command of the dream, the king draws a hand on a wooden tablet. Because this image belongs in a script – albeit one that has yet to be created – it already contains some of the magical power of writing. This power passes into the king's body when he drinks the water with which he has washed off the sign. The king is now filled with magical power and thus prepared for the task that would otherwise be beyond human capabilities.
>
> And indeed, no sooner has he tasted the magic potion than the spirit comes over him and shows him the path he must follow. It is the same path that the inventors of writing regularly try to follow first: one must draw pictures of things, then one will be able to write with these pictures. The only thing that Nzoya had over other inventors of writing was that he could get his people to do the work of designing the pictures for him. But when the people came to him with their pictures, he was disappointed: 'It was not enough for him.' This means that he had to realise that these pictures were not yet sufficient to solve the task of recording the wording of a text. (Schmitt, Bamum:23-24).

What this 'dream cult' could be compared to is also not stated. Schmitt proceeds from the assumed principle that writing is a 'supernatural and mysterious thing' for peoples who do not

possess it. This assertion naturally leads to the interplay of supernatural forces revealed through dreams. He must therefore continue his speculations by seeing the first signs in the development of dreams. But the origin of signs in writing can be explained in another way. Basically, there is no people on earth who did not know writing, albeit at different stages of development. In his study "On the Origin of Writing," Meinhof already cites representation in art as an element that can be regarded in a certain sense as a precursor to writing. The fact that a carved lion represents a lion is a process that leads to the act of consciousness that means expressing oneself through writing. According to Meinhof, the decorative motifs that have the greatest chance of survival are those that have either a "magical" or "religious" content.

Knowledge of writing in Africa did not remain at this preliminary stage. Black Africans generally cultivated a symbolic writing system based on proverbs. Meinhof calls it "proverb writing".

According to a study by R.E. Denett, (1906), the depiction of the double bell meant the following to the Congolese: "Let everyone know that the double bell may only be rung upon the death of a prince and by a prince." The depiction of the four royal drums means: "The drums are only heard at the death of a great prince and not on other occasions." These two examples, which Denett recorded among many others in the Congo, are strongly reminiscent of the cult of the Bamum kings.

The Ewe also use a conventional language to symbolise their proverbs. This system is so well developed that it already meets the requirements of correspondence.

If Meinhof is to be believed, the stages of writing as practised by Africans are already bordering on actual writing, in which signs represent concepts.

N'joya allowed his writing to go through this entire series of developments, from sign writing to analytical syllabic writing. In about twenty years, he gave it the form that took other

peoples centuries to perfect. Also it is impossible that N'joya would have resorted to a writing system that had been known to his people in the past.

Schmitt limits his definition to writing from the outset, possibly in order to remain faithful to his previous theories.

> The word 'writing' can be used in a narrower and broader sense. In the broader sense, the word 'writing' also includes makeshift attempts at communication or memory aids. Means of such 'writing' in the broader sense are primarily simple drawings that are freely invented for the needs of the moment. Occasionally, a method is found that has already been organised into a certain system and has a limited number of conventionally established signs at its disposal. But even then, the effectiveness of such 'writing' in the broader sense does not go beyond indicating the approximate content of what is meant. Writing in the narrower sense, on the other hand, is a method of recording a fixed text in its exact wording on a writing surface so that every reader can find it there in exactly the same wording at any time and has the possibility of converting it back into spoken language from the images and strokes. Only this is writing in the true sense. Writing of this kind is the writing of all contemporary civilised peoples and all the great writing systems of antiquity. (Schmitt, Bamum:1-2).

Schmitt fails to recognise the direct influence of artistic representation on writing, but the fact that a Chinese poet is equally a painterly-representational artist indicates that the fields of writing and the representational arts are related in such a way that the term "artless drawings", when it occurs or is attached to one of the two fields, immediately negates the other. Thus, there has never been a script in which the signs relating to a language were "artless". On the other hand, the signs used for this purpose cannot solely serve the "needs of the moment" — they must become conventional in order to be transmittable.

Schmitt wishes to distinguish between "approximate content" and "exact wording". He separates the two terms in order to avoid the conclusion that one leads to the other, so that an organic development can take place within the realm of writing itself. Hence the difficulty in distinguishing between the sentence that leads to writing (pre) and that of becoming conscious (inter) or of the finally fixed written text. In our view, this is a question that, in the process of realisation, concerns consciousness or unconsciousness. It is precisely a matter of knowing whether one is aware of the process of this means of communication or not.

If one does not start from this principle, then far more is implyied than that people who have mastered the art of writing will not be recognised as literate. According to this definition, the Chinese people would also be considered "illiterate" and would not be classed as among the literate peoples of the world. We will expand on this idea in the course of our investigation, because it is sufficient for a people to develop a script corresponding to their own language or a particular mentality and mode of expression (proverbial script). Such a script can only be explained by certain circumstances. Jensen also says in an introduction to "The History of Writing in the Past and Present" that the image that writing conveys to us of a language can only never be very accurate.

An explanation given by Schmitt when he emphasises that "it was not enough for him" deserves comment. He sees merit in the fact that the inventor asked his people, or more precisely his soldiers, to find symbols for his writing. N'joya's dissatisfaction with this experience is the only explanation for his indignation. Thus Schmitt says in a vicious circle: N'joya's merit is no less great, and it is clear from the fact that he allowed his people to participate in the discovery how much he knew about the significance of writing. This script was not intended for mere court use, like the secret language for which the script could have been devised. N'joya reserved the right to modify the script for his secret communications, which we will discuss later. In any case, N'joya's dissatisfaction showed how he had set himself a goal. This is the real merit of N'joya.

Hans Jensen sees object writing as the preliminary stage of writing. However, the real preliminary stage is based on drawing and less on the more or less random arrangement of signs. The representation of a goal or consciousness lies in his definition of actual writing, which occurs as soon as "the two characteristics of drawing and the work of communication are present" (Jensen 1958:34).

Both Jensen and Schmitt include the idea of the transitory and temporary in their conception. The instrument, in relation to the goal, determines the temporary nature. Jensen draws

a parallel between the development of Egyptian writing and Bamum writing, which he considers identical. He therefore makes the peculiarities of Bamum writing no less clear.

> If, as Delafosse believed, simple consonant signs were also present in the modern script alongside the syllable signs – which would be the highest stage of script development – then I agree with Friedrich that this is not the case. For example, if the word for 'marriage' is written lam with three signs, this should not be understood to mean that the three signs l+a+m mean 'marriage', but rather to be resolved as follows: la + a + m̥ (m̥ is a sonant, understood as a syllable-forming m). The same applies to a word such as kukup 'lizard', which is to be understood as ku + ku + pu. This also explains why, according to the old view, there are four signs for different syllable signs beginning with f (fa, fe, fo, fu). (Jensen 1958:204).

Jensen decides the question too quickly. If N'joya had to tackle the problem of writing in relation to his language, what would have prevented him from going as far as he deemed necessary for his solution?

For example, he started with the problem of representing words, then moved on to tone, in order to achieve an ever greater simplification of his script, with special features such as those cited by Jensen. Faced with the problem of tonality, the most difficult aspect of Nego-African languages, he embarked on an adventure from which he emerged very honourably, using a single sign to vary the different tones, as we shall see when we look at the various alphabets. These difficulties of tonal languages can be solved in writing and by means of signs adapted to them.

One cannot deny N'joya's efforts, even if one were to deny him the privilege of having developed his writing system to the highest degree of perfection ever achieved.

The frequent use of proverbs, for which the art of writing is appropriate, corresponds to the value of proverbs in Black African countries, on which drum language is also based. The difficulty N'joya faced when he wanted to express tone in his writing was reversed here, expressed in stereotypical ideas such as proverbs.

However, the uniqueness of N'joya's discovery remains untouched in the sense that it has been protected for as long as possible from external influences that sometimes attach themselves

to the peculiarities of a culture as anachronisms. For this very reason, we can only define the script and the entire work correctly if we take N'joya's own conception as our starting point.

On the question of origin

According to Dugast's chronology, this script was created in 1895 or 1896. However, Schmitt insists on the second half of 1902 (the first Europeans arrived in Fumban on 6 July 1902) or 1903, if not 1904, in order to emphasise the decisive significance of the European conquest of the Bamum country for the origin of this script.

> All this shows that the Bamum script was created at the earliest in the second half of 1902, but probably not until 1903 or even 1904. It therefore did not have a very long history behind it when it came to the attention of the missionary Göhring at the beginning of his work in 1906. (Schmitt, Bamum:21).

Schmitt bases his argument on two different points of view: he first draws on written sources, such as a publication by the missionary Göhring in the Evangelischer Heidenbote in 1907. This states that N'joya only decided to write a text when he saw that the Europeans also had one. Another document from the Fumban archives, undoubtedly written in French by a Bamum, as Schmitt says, and therefore probably some time after the First World War, also leads him to conclude that N'joya did not make his invention until the arrival of the white man. But although Schmitt takes this document into account, he does not accept the reporter's claims at face value.

In any case, it should be pointed out that our informants may well have been mistaken in considering the decisive influences that the Mum script underwent in the following period to be original features. Thus, in 1906, when Göhring arrived, the script was in its third stage. The missionary published this third alphabet in the Evangelischer Heidenbote, not the first, which was pantographic.

> It would have been natural for the young Ndschoya to learn modern Arabic script, as written by many of the Hausa traders, from them. However, his pride prevented him from doing so, especially since he had ascended to the chieftain's throne himself after his father's death. He did not want to be regarded as a pupil of foreign peddlers who had

> come to the village. At the same time, however, as an intelligent man, he felt that his ignorance of writing was a shortcoming. But he was able to console himself with the fact that the art of writing was a special feature of the Hausa people. But when he saw the Europeans, who had meanwhile advanced to Fumban, practising the art of reading and writing, he felt surpassed on all sides, which deeply wounded his chieftain's pride. He did not want to adopt the Hausa script because he found the Hausa themselves repulsive and because it seemed incredible to him that the European script could also be used to write the Bamum language, seemed incredible to him. So he came up with the ingenious idea of creating his own script. He gave each of his soldiers words with the order to invent a special sign for each monosyllabic word and as many signs for multisyllabic words as the word had syllables. He carefully checked the drawings that came in, simplifying or multiplying them as he saw fit. The result was a complete Bamum script, a new sign writing system reminiscent of the hieroglyphs of the ancient Egyptians or the brushwork of the Chinese. (Göhring 1907:142).

We can understand some things if we take a historical approach and outline the situation in Fumban at that time. The Protestant missionaries clearly show how much they feared the Hausa, and even more so Islam. And they were careful, undoubtedly so as not to discourage missionary activities in the European motherland, not to overemphasise the popularity that the Arab religion and its advocates had already gained in the black world. This biased description is polemical against the Hausa and cannot therefore be of decisive importance in solving our problem. N'joya's attitude towards the Hausa can only be explained in political and religious terms. N'joya cannot have treated these pioneers of Islam with such contempt, since they included those who had consolidated his throne, namely the Fulbe. Any historical error may therefore stem from the fact that our informants sometimes refuse to take into account the exchange of goods between the Bamum and the Fulbe since the latter put an end to the civil war in Bamum. On that occasion, N'joya not only recruited brides who brought Hamitic blood into his court. The Bamum also became acquainted with horsemanship and many other ways of life and cultural activities. Apart from the remarks about the contempt that the missionaries, and not N'joya, had to show towards the Hausa, we must also clarify some inaccurate remarks in this report by the Evangelical Heidenbote.

They insist that N'joya did not want to be considered a student of the Hausa and that he himself felt that his lack of literacy was a sign of ignorance. Based on such arguments, one must

ask why N'joya, when he felt this deficiency in relation to the Hausa, did not decide to acquire writing like the other skills he learned during the march of the allied Fulbe through Fumban. Moreover, if the idea of developing a script came from the first white people he encountered, we are left wondering why N'joya did not adopt the European script directly, even though there is not the slightest trace of its influence. Göhring believes that such an adoption seemed incredible to him — whereas the influence of Arabic script is clear, for example in the direction of reading, which N'joya ruled out as the only possibility.

Even with the first alphabet, it is worth noting N'joya's instructions regarding the direction in which his script was to be read.

> Can we account for the direction in which this first alphabet should be read? In this regard, the most striking line is that of the numbers: the symbol for l is the upper sign, and 10 is the lower sign. It is also remarkable that the twenty-third vertical line is not completed at the bottom. It was therefore clearly drawn vertically.
>
> Based on these two concordant remarks, our informants explain that Njoya's main concern was to assert his freedom as a creator of a new script by prohibiting anyone from writing in the same way as the Hausa traders who came to the country and only knew Arabic script. Under no circumstances did he want to appear to be influenced by foreigners. He therefore gave orders that the signs should be written in any direction as long as it was not in the Hausa direction. It was therefore only permitted to write vertically from left to right, or even... from bottom to top. So when, later on, we see the first texts — or the following tables — written from left to right, we should not believe that this was influenced by Europe: Njoya did not want to be indebted to any foreigner for such a suggestion. It was just a happy coincidence. (Dugast 1950A:7).

However, we must note that N'joya, when he completely ignored the existence of the European script, was not turning against Europeans as such, as he did against the Hausa peddlers.

Schmitt bases his argument on another element that he considers historical. After establishing N'joya's year of birth and the year of his accession to the throne in his chronology, he concludes:

> In the early days of his reign, which in truth was initially still the reign of his mother Nzapndunke, the young king had other things to think about than creating a script. His first task was to assert his rule. (Schmitt, Bamum: 20).

Schmitt links the year in which the script was created to the arrival of white settlers. However, the assumption of such a coincidence is only permissible within a chronology that, like

Schmitt's dating, is based on the creation of the script. Incidentally, most of the arguments put forward by Schmitt only serve to support our argument.

In fact, after the Fulbe withdrew, N'joya did not hesitate long before constructing a script, among other new acquisitions. However, the Fulbe not only brought improved military methods to the country, but also the Koran, which introduced N'joya to Islam and the Arabic script.

We saw that the missionary Göhring had a vested interest in dismissing the possibility of Islamic influence in the Bamum country. Because of this man's scheming attitude, we should be wary of exaggerating the role he played in N'joya's life.

We accept as most likely the date for the origin of the script proposed by Dugast and her informants. All other dates are merely risky suggestions.

> All informants agree that the invention of this script took place shortly after the Gbetnkom revolt and the end of the civil war, i.e. around 1895 or 1896. (Dugast 1950A: 4).

One must also caution against assuming an originally European influence. For example, L.W.G. Malcolm and Sir H.H. Jonston sought to recognise European trademarks found on packaging in some of the characters of the first alphabet. Such assumptions would lead us to conclusions that can only be reached through the aforementioned ethnocentric way of thinking. It also means denying all of N'joya's efforts in creating and developing the script.

A quote from Crawford will serve as a conclusion to this debate on the dating of N'joya's writing:

> The main interest of Njoya's work lies in the fact that it could appear to be an independent invention if we only knew about its historical and special archaeological existence. What other parallels could an archaeologist of the future find if he wanted to dig further for one of Njoya's documents? At most, he would see a few similarities that would soon prove to be coincidences. For the parallel writings could not be old for Cameroon, either in terms of time or space. It would indeed be interesting to find such matches with other writings when examining the script. For then we would know that there were definite matches, but no borrowings. (Crawford 1935:442).

It remains our task to proceed from the historical and archaeological material.

The significance of writing

Writing led to a series of inventions and undertakings that were either associated with it or dependent on it. Some of these were technical in nature, insofar as they arose from attempts to put writing into practice, while others were ideological in nature, taking the form of theories or books.

In the technical field, N'joya wanted to give his discovery the importance it deserved by producing printed letters. This was in 1913, at the time of the "a ka u ku" alphabet, whose letters were to be converted for this purpose. N'joya presented his idea to his inventive technician Monliper (Kpumie Pinu). He initially thought of small, wood-carved letters. However, he was not satisfied with the result. In order to create a durable process, he decided to forge them.

> He then took some wax and, using very fine wooden stylets at the end of a square wax stick, he carved a raised sign: it was a *u*. Having coated the whole thing with special clay, he cast a small copper character, which he then carefully chiselled. The result was good, and Njoya could hope to one day have his own printing press. (Dugast 1950A:29).

Soon the entire alphabet was cast, including the punctuation marks, the diacritical sign "*nzəmli*" and the accent "*Kə'ndon*". They were given the name "*mi truk*" (from print) = "the printed names".

The letters were inserted into a printing press invented by the technician. Unfortunately, the year 1920, when this printing press was ready for operation, coincided with the administrative period of Lieutenant Prestat. This administrative official, who was considered a declared enemy of N'joya, did everything in his power to prevent such an enterprise, which would naturally have brought N'joya further prestige. Dugast gives a very personal interpretation of the facts, avoiding from the outset to mention the name of the administrative official in question and saying little about the exact cause of N'joya's anger, which she attributes to the melting down of the printing equipment. In fact, Prestat would very well have demanded or enforced the abandonment of a printing team at the court of Fumban. Why else, one wonders, did the printing operation suffer

the royal wrath, while N'joya had to negotiate differences of opinion with Prestat that were much worse in the eyes of the Bamum (see Martin 1952:257).

> At that moment, unfortunately, the representative of the French administration in Foumban began a campaign against Njoya that soon bore fruit. Soon Njoya was so disappointed that he ordered Monliper to remove the printing press from the palace workshops and take it to his home, because he no longer wanted to see what he had created. After some time, with the troubles continuing, Njoya, in a fit of rage, went to Monliper's house, took all the printing type and had it melted down. Thus was ruined the seven years of work of this extraordinary craftsman, who was nearing the completion of his life's work and saw it destroyed. He is now a white-bearded man and weeps as he tells you this tragic story. (Dugast 1950A:29).

Every discovery brings with it the material of which it is composed and which characterises it. The tool serves ethnologists in tracing the origins of new achievements. In this way, other elements, such as printing, entered N'joya's circle of thought as soon as European influence made itself felt. This was discussed in the chapter on the alphabet "*a ka u ku*", whose letters were the first to be cast. Assuming that an influence never acts alone but is usually accompanied by a series of other elements that characterise it, one of the specific aspects of the art of writing must be pointed out here, namely the associated

tools associated with it.

> On wooden tablets and prepared bark, they inscribed with charcoal and ink extracted from a vine, first the names of kings, or even a single word to note an event. (Dugast 1950A:8).

The tool he used at the beginning was the one he had seen in his prophetic dream: charcoal. And the one that was frequently used in his country, tree bark, from which clothing was made before weaving became known. N'joya also discovered colours. The ink obtained from lianas may have developed from this.

The establishment of the printing press can be described as a crystallisation point, in that from this point onwards, the script underwent minimal changes and was finally disseminated. This explains the similarity between the alphabets "*a ka u ku*" and "*mfemfe*". A simplification may have seemed necessary, to facilitate the production of printed letters. This explains the emergence of "*mfemfe*", which, however, was never printed.

The planning of a library is another achievement that accompanied the discovery of writing. When N'joya made his discovery, the idea of a library arose naturally, especially as the first texts that were written soon took on a secret character. Only initiates were allowed to enter the house where the first writings were kept (Dugast 1950A:8).

As soon as N'joya had collected enough pages to make books, he had them bound in leather and hung them inside a specially equipped hut, as Rein-Wuhrmann describes:

> "And," said the king laughing, "I got up immediately and did what the man in the dream told me to do, and then I invented the royal script with my nobles, which you know. Now I have had the entire history of my ancestors written down. I want to show you my 'book house'. With these words, he stood up again, led the way and took me into a rather large room, which was beautifully panelled with palm ribs. Beautiful bags made of red-tanned sheepskin hung on long nails all over the walls. They were artistically embroidered and had many leather tassels. Each bag contained a part of the history of the country, written on loose sheets in the royal script. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1948:53).

In the ideological realm, we encounter N'joya's dogmatic thinking in his various writings. The purely didactic side of the work is evident in N'joya's attempts to open schools and to train teachers who were to go to the provinces. He invited neighbouring kings to participate in this new form of communication, which was to be shared by all. In this way, he brought about the aforementioned process of diffusion.

> We saw that in 1912, Njoya invited foreign students to come and learn writing at his school in Foumban. Indeed, from that time onwards, when the '*a ka u ka*' alphabet had reached the syllabic and even phonemic stage, he felt he had established a convenient system and opened a series of schools throughout the country, called '*nda lerawa*' = or 'house of the book'. A number of these are marked on the map. The first teachers were naturally chosen from among the first pupils. There were even female teachers. These schools were scattered throughout the villages, some of them very far from Foumban. After a few years, there were forty-seven of them. In 1916, Laponte was appointed director and inspector of education. His deputy was Inapeson Njifenzu. It was thought that at that time about six hundred people used writing normally. From 1920 onwards, these schools were closed and teaching continued only sporadically. Even today, the informants with whom we continued our investigation read Njoya's script fluently and use it among themselves as naturally as we use our own, because it seems to them as perfect and as well suited to their language as it is possible for it to be. (Dugast 1950A:100).

This is how Dugast describes the fate that befell N'joya's work.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BAMUM WRITING

This development can be divided into seven stages, which most authors list according to the major letters of the Latin alphabet from A to G. We will use the same numbering system. However, there are groups or variants of sections between F and G. These special forms Fv and Gv (F + small v [v variants] and G + small v) were introduced for N'joya's secret services. By discussing the individual alphabets, we will also be able to determine the date.

The main date is the discovery of the first alphabet, which we have set at 1896 in accordance with Dugast, who, however, assumes 1918 instead of 1916 for the dating of the last alphabet. This is in fact the date of the variant Gv, which was of course created later than the seventh stage itself.

A - The First Alphabet - 1896

This alphabet, called *Lewa* (book), which has 510 characters, is purely pantographic and ideographic (the representation of the object or idea, as far as the field of agreement is concerned) and is strongly reminiscent of content writing due to the use that has been made of it since its discovery. The Bamum actually used this first script as a mnemonic device to record the first results they obtained about the history of their kings. They succeeded in creating this "memento" by simply juxtaposing words. They were unable to form actual sentences, as Dugast confirms.

> At that time, they only used it to write separate words, without forming sentences. It was then, they explained to us, that they conducted their first research into their history with King Njoya. (Dugast 1950A:8).

The material accompanying the discovery of this script shows us its true origin. And to better understand its significance, we will examine a few words by pointing out what they represent:

18 characters denote the great men of the country,

16 characters denote animal names,

11 signs denote body parts,

17 signs refer to food and agricultural products,

11 characters denote household items.

We note that the expressions refer to objects and phenomena of everyday life among the Bamum. We can therefore say that the influence of foreign elements in the origin and creation of the Bamum script was at least very minor, even if we assume an Arabic influence in the writing medium.

The eighteen characters dedicated to the great men of the country speak for the feudal regime. This is the only political system known to the Bamum.

It is noteworthy that homonyms are distinguished by the sign *nz m-li* (literally: after the name, i.e. before the name), which is placed before one of the two words and, in the Bamum conception, denotes the more noble word (cf. Dugast 1950A:7).

Jensen understands ideographic writing as follows:

> Ideographic writing does not seek to reproduce a particular subject, be it a person, an animal, an object or a landscape, as faithfully as possible, but rather to represent connections, events or complexes of ideas. (Jensen 1958:39).

This definition makes it understandable that some objects, such as salt, which was a rare commodity in this country, had to be given their own sign. Everything that could alienate Bamum imagination or appeal to their sensitivity is represented symbolically by the sign. It therefore has its share of "luxury" according to Schmitt. That is why this alphabet still has the appearance of a draft.

B – The Second Alphabet – 1899 (or the first transformation).

With this alphabet, or "*M'bima*," consisting of 437 characters, we are now fully trained in the Bamum writing system. Bamum themselves also seem to be acquiring a better understanding of writing. The subjective aspect of the first alphabet is gradually disappearing. The characters that have been omitted are those that we said Bamum still used as a direct means

of everyday expression. In fact, this alphabet requires less space for the country's dignitaries, for animal names and body parts, and for household items.

The study of this script becomes easier and can be better compared to Chinese script, in which the word is regarded as a concept regardless of its sound form. Bamum script and Chinese script, as word-sign scripts, are formed from language. Chinese, like the Mum language, is composed of monosyllabic words.

Schmitt explains the similarity between these two scripts.

> This means that for writing systems that have become historically significant, the path to a text-based writing system was much shorter and simpler in languages such as Chinese or Sumerian than in languages of a different structure. The word sign, which is so much easier to find than the anonymous sound sign, was sufficient to arrive at an efficient text writing system. In the Chinese language, the prerequisites for the creation of a writing system were almost exactly the same as in the Bamum language. (Schmitt, Bamum:43).

The prerequisite for the formation of a script, which is the subject of this article and which has the same characteristics in the Mum language as in Chinese script, is above all the monosyllabic nature of the word.

> The range of variation is therefore not particularly wide (although it is wider than in the Beijing dialect of Chinese), and most of the syllables that are possible according to the rules of the language have to be divided into several words, so to speak. There is therefore hardly a word in the Bamum language for which another or very similar word cannot easily be found that could be used to indicate its meaning in a rebus. Often, several words are available for this purpose. (Schmitt, Bamum:32).

After analysing two more recent scripts, namely the Cherokee script and the Alaska script, whose corresponding languages do not follow the same monosyllabic rules, Schmitt highlights the advantages of Mum.

> In the Bamum language, on the other hand, there has been no systematically developed syllable inventory up to the final stage. According to our concepts, this does represent a syllabic script. For the Bamum themselves, however, even then the signs were, with a few exceptions, basically signs for words. Due to the structure of their language, the Bamum had simply not needed to go beyond word signs to arrive at a text script. As soon as the idea of rebus writing was added to a limited set of word signs, the task was solved without the need for further searching or even a completely new approach. (Schmitt, Bamum:42).

For N'joya, it was a matter of getting to know the structure and elements of his language, which also has the advantage of Chinese in that it has no inflection and is therefore better suited to pictographic or logographic writing. According to Schmitt, N'joya's discovery was not the syllable, but the rebus system, which is the simplest, perhaps the most perfect form of language with an elementary structure.

Schmitt distinguishes between the concept of a syllable and that of a monosyllabic word. The former is a sound that has no meaning in itself. The latter, as in the case of Mum, is a sound that conveys meaning.

N'joya was therefore not looking for the anonymous syllable, "that is, a syllable that is only a sound but no longer has any meaning" (Schmitt, Bamum:39), but rather for the word "in its concept, regardless of its pronunciation" (Friedrich 1954:319).

However, the fact that the Bamum give significant importance to the spelling of names, which are mostly multisyllabic, proves that they have not overlooked the problem of anonymous syllables, which plays an important role in all languages.

With regard to pictograms such as *ngap* – antelope, also standing for the phonetically identical abstract *ngap* – week, *li* – eye, also *li* – name, *pe* – kola nut, also *pe* – loyalty, and so on, Friedrich says:

> The representation of a word that cannot be depicted figuratively by a phonetically identical or similar word that can be depicted figuratively was therefore used very early on in the Bamum script, probably from the beginning, as the first stage of a phonetic script.
>
> While this is still a case of replacing one word with another in terms of sound (although, given the largely monosyllabic nature of the Bamum language, words and syllables are often identical), the spelling of names, whose written representation has played an important role from the outset according to local experts (Dugast: 8), goes one step further: the usually multisyllabic names were broken down into their syllabic components, which was not difficult given the simple phonetic structure of the language with its regular alternation of consonants and vowels, and each syllable was expressed by a special sign:
> *Mbuəmbuəmbuə - mbua, N ǧ oya= nǧo-ya* (Dugast:8), *Tangu Fifen= ta-ngu-fi-fe, Nǧi Mama= nǧi-ma-ma* (Dugast:19), and so on. Presumably, these syllable signs are also word signs in the writing of names, but have been reduced to pure syllable signs within the writing of names. Finally, the syllabic rendering of multisyllabic words has also been applied to individual appellatives since the beginning of the development. The

> multisyllabic numerals *samba* (=) seven, *faam* (=) eight, *kovii* (=) nine, and *koyom* (=) ten are already written with two signs in the preserved writing tablet of the first stage of writing (Dugast:6), and the equally disyllabic numerals *ikpa* (=) four and *item* (=) five have only one sign each in this writing tablet, but in the writing sample in Fig. 1 (from the second stage of writing), they are also expressed by two characters, *i-kpa* and *i-ten*, and the first character i, which is common to both, is originally the word sign for *i*=he. (Friedrich 1954:319-320).

From the second to the sixth, the most decisive stage, only very slight development can be observed. Friedrich provides a general formula that is characteristic of all alphabets up to the fifth:

> As far as the few writing samples allow for judgement, the script appears to be a mixture of partly unpoetic, partly phonetic word writing and (for names and some characters) syllabic writing in its second to fourth stages, appearing fairly evenly distributed. It is very similar in its fifth stage with 205 characters, but a certain difference is already emerging here. (Friedrich 1954:321).

But in between there is the third alphabet, which can be regarded as a supplement to the second.

C - The Third Alphabet - 1902 (or the second transformation).

The third alphabet, named after the first four characters "*nyi nyi nsa mso*"", has 381 characters and coincides chronologically with the arrival of the Europeans — on 6 July 1902, First Lieutenant Ramsay and Second Lieutenant Sandrock appeared in Fumban with seventeen men (porters and soldiers).

This alphabet is an addition to the previous one, i.e. one of the results achieved by N'joya, who was constantly searching for a "convenient script" (Dugast 1950A:15). The two alphabets are so similar that several linguists cannot agree on whether some of the characters belong to B or C and vice versa. To characterise stage C, Dugast uses an example that, according to Schmitt, still belongs to B:

> But it is likely that the older stages of writing are not yet separated by sharp divisions, but rather that one gradually merges into the other. In that case, the older inventories would only be regarded as a record of a state of affairs at a particular moment in time. This idea is suggested by what we can observe in stage C, which for the first time provides us with a large number of documents, thereby enabling us to make a judgement independent of

> the statements of African witnesses. The documents show us that during period C, a slow and barely noticeable development towards stage D took place. Only then, i.e. for the first time during the transition from D to E, did a further development in the form of individual major reforms become apparent. (Schmitt, Bamum:109).

We have extensive correspondence between N'joya and his mother N'japndunke from this alphabet, which was collected by the missionary Göhring and published in the "Evangelischer Heidenbote" (1907) immediately after his arrival in Fumban, as well as a large part of the book of the Bamum kings.

D - The Fourth Alphabet - 1907 (or the third transformation).

The "rii nyi msa msu", just like the third alphabet, should be regarded as an addition rather than a new stage of development. It contains the same characteristics as the alphabets analysed by Friedrich and Schmitt, which we have listed above. Always completely absorbed by the idea of simplifying his work, N'joya reduced the number of characters in his latest alphabet to 295.

The influence of Europe on N'joya in terms of his discovery is not yet apparent. The fact that he remained outside the sphere of influence of the Latin alphabet until this point is proof of his determination to remain independent of external influences and to ensure the consistency of his invention.

> The King of Bamum, as his writing shows, was not well versed in European calligraphy, but he had seen European and Arabic scripts, as mentioned above. This is evident from the fact that he is familiar with the Seal of Solomon, which is so common in Arabic talismans. He uses it for the number 100. The left-to-right direction of his writing can also be attributed to European influence. The method of writing is entirely derived from the African way of drawing. Most of the syllables represent an image that expresses the mostly monosyllabic name of the object in question. (Meinhof 1911:9).

This brings us back to the problem of origin. It is questionable whether N'joya, if he had remained free of other influences, would have arrived at completely independent results. But for his exegetes, it is only a matter of finding the slightest clue reminiscent of a known script in order to assert dependencies.

Not that we are convinced of the monogenesis of the Bamum script, but the arguments most authors use to prove the influence exerted on N'joya are so astonishingly subjective that it is not difficult to show that these authors contradict themselves rather than convince their readers. Meinhof sees the simple fact that this script can be written from left to right as evidence of influence. This raises the question of whether the direction in which a script is read plays a fundamental role in its appearance. In the case of the Bamum script, however, all directions are permitted without distinction, except for the direction from right to left, which is the direction of Arabic script. The parallel drawn by Meinhof is therefore insufficient to prove a European influence on the direction of the script. The typeface is more decisive. And according to Meinhof himself, this preserves its original character. Delafosse even sets the arrival of the first Europeans at 1899 and the discovery at 1900, all the better to convince us of the possibility of paternity in the case of the Mum script. If, on the other hand, we place the arrival of the spreaders of Islam chronologically before the discovery of the first alphabet, we cannot deny that N'joya came across Arabic books and that he may have reacted against a possible influence.

> It has often been thought that Missionary Göhring had a great influence on King Njoya in persuading him to simplify the alphabet. For our part, however, the sheer volume of texts that existed before the arrival of the Basel mission in Foumban does not allow us to believe in this influence. It is quite obvious that the two men, who maintained daily contact for years, must have discussed this frequently, and it is certain that Göhring was interested in this from the moment he arrived, as he quickly sent a copy of the alphabet to Basel. However, it should be noted that he never mentioned anywhere that he had helped Njoya to eliminate unnecessary signs. We have also seen that Njoya, without the influence of any European, had arrived at the fundamental discovery of the concept of the anonymous syllable, and that this led to the idea of simplification, which he began to implement before Göhring. It is surely more equitable to give Njoya and his collaborators the credit for this development. (Dugast 1950A:21).

Ultimately, the influences during the creation and development of the script remain problematic. We can safely assume that the direction of the Arabic script had a negative influence, which means that we are not dealing with pure monogenesis. An argument based on the parallel directions of the Mum script and the Latin script is not valid.

E – The Fifth Alphabet – 1908 (or the fourth transformation).

This alphabet, called "*rii nyi m/wʔ mɛn*", has 205 characters. Although N'joya wants to simplify the alphabet, he adds new characters or retains those with "the same phonetic sound but different tonality" (Dugast 1950A:23).

It is precisely in this alphabet that N'joya tackles the problem of tonality. According to Friedrich, it is composed of "unphonetic word signs such as rie = saying" and "syllabically written names 'ye-u-pas'..."

> What is new, however, is that *n-e-n-* "so" and *a-pua'-lo'-o* = "after that" also appear broken down into syllables. Since I know nothing about the etymology and possible composition of these adverbs, it is impossible to say whether the pure syllabary of the sixth and seventh stages of writing is already in preparation. (Friedrich 1954:321).

Although Friedrich is cautious in his reasoning, the fifth alphabet can be described as a precursor to the following alphabets, which further developed word division.

N'joya shows that this way of chanting words was suddenly perceived as the speaking of syllables. He begins, so to speak, to investigate the etymology, so that in words such as the adverbs *n-e-ra* and *a-pua'-lo'o*, the verbal component comes to the fore.

In the realm of simple phonemes, this meant that signs of the same use but different tonality were added to the alphabet.

Even though N'joya did not achieve successful results, this attempt brought innovation to the field of "sound" language, which is a problem for all Bantu languages.

It should also be noted that the words in this alphabet, like those in the previous one, are arranged in pairs, in accordance with N'joya's teaching method, which consisted of mechanically repeating a group of signs or words.

A biblical story has been written in this alphabet.

F - The sixth alphabet - 1911 (or the fifth transformation).

This alphabet, called "*a ka u ku*", solves the problem of tonality that N'joya had already addressed in the previous alphabet.

After experimenting with "*rii m/wˀ mɛn*", N'joya seems to have abandoned the special feature of Black African languages, namely sound. He turns his attention to the syllable and thus finally solves the fundamental problem that he had only touched upon previously.

From this alphabet onwards, which now consists of only eighty characters including the first ten characters of the numbering system, the European influence becomes noticeable. This alphabet also represents a real step towards a purely alphabetic script. Instead of reproducing the sounds with different words, N'joya finally avoids the difficulty:

With the eighty characters of this alphabet, he creates the possibility of transcribing 160 basic phonetic sounds by means of a simple additional accent. This procedure makes the monosyllable easy to form a simple syllable and allows combinations similar to those found in an elastic alphabetical script.

Dugast lists the characters of this alphabet as follows:

56 characters for monosyllabic words or phonemes.
1 character for a simple phoneme.
6 characters for the vowels a, u, e, ɔ, i and wii (or ü).
15 characters for syllabic phonemes.
2 symbols for the affixes pa and ket.
1 sign for k 'nd n and the sign for n m-li.
The sign for "m", which Dugast calls a "simple phonème", has only the meaning of "yes" according to Schmitt. (Schmitt, Bamum :118).

This alphabet will be discussed in more detail in the following stage, from which it cannot be separated. Here are only the most important points that concern both alphabets F and G.

G - The Seventh Alphabet - 1916 (or the sixth transformation).

The new "*a ka u ku*" or "*mfemfe*" (new) is an abbreviation of the previous alphabet. It deserves its name *nkuonkuo* = small (lower case letters) because of its relationship to "*a ka u ku*", also called *ngutngurə* = large (upper case letters). Only the numbers undergo a significant change in the conversion, a true "modernisation" (Dugast 1950A:30).

According to Delafosse, these last two alphabets are syllabic scripts, but because they contain different symbols for certain consonants, they could be called consonantal. For example, there are three symbols for b, four for f, eight for k and five for l. In reality, however, they are syllables, as in la, le, li, lo, lu, and so on. They are therefore signs for syllables. Fumban is rendered as Fu-o-mb n. We are not dealing with consonants, as Delafosse claims, but with syllables. By retaining the m in *lam* (marriage) or the m and n in *mfon* (king) not as consonants but rather as vowels, N'joya returns to the origin of the semi-vocalic sound of the Negro-African languages.

Mfon is therefore spelled m-fu-o-n, and lam = la-a-m. Similarly, the word *pit* (war) would be spelled pi-ti if the t were not silent. *Pip* = perseverance, courage, is spelled pi-pu if the p is not silent as in *ndap*.

According to Jensen, this could be considered the most developed alphabet in existence, if Friedrich had not approached the question from a different angle:

> 80 characters consisting of simple, non-semi-pictorial strokes. All word characters have been eliminated, and only syllable characters remain. For example, whereas previously there were unphonetic word characters for the words *mfon* "king" and yet "make", these are now represented by the elements *m-fu-o-n* and *yu-e-p, nə* "to" in *nao*, and so on. And the name Ndschoja, originally *ngô-ya*, now consists of a whole number of signs instead of one or a few, and above all, the vowel relationship seems rather cumbersome and pleonastic, but the total number of signs is significantly lower, and the pronunciation of words is expressed much better. (Friedrich 1954: 321-322).

N'joya cannot be blamed for having taken the development of his alphabet so far. And before we assume that he developed it to the point of pleonasm, we should ask ourselves what place it occupies in the overall discovery. Better still, since we can now be convinced of a European influence, we must ask to what extent this influence has shaped the work.

> Then, throughout our study, our informant spontaneously remarked several times that, at the time of Sultan Njoya's death, the writing had not yet reached the degree of perfection it would have achieved a few years later, had he lived. He was still thinking about it, he told us, and the sultan would have found many more transformations and improvements to his system.
> It is true that the difficulty we encounter in recognising the use of certain signs, such as the different r's 's ɛ' 's n and mɛn, proves that the system was not yet perfect. Many points

> would have been clarified – and probably simplified – if death had not interrupted the work of elaboration that was constantly progressing in the mind of Sultan Njoya. (Dugast 1950A:27).

If we do not pay too much attention to the formal requirements of the two individual syllables quoted by Dugast, and bear in mind that the tone can be changed simply by placing accents, it becomes clear that even in the seventh stage of his alphabet, N'joya had not yet reached a conclusion. If we want to arrive at an overall assessment, we must not lose sight of this fact. In fact, it was not without reason that Jensen's combination of consonants and syllables in the Bamum alphabet led him to conclude that this alphabet had reached the outer limits of the history of writing. Unfortunately, however, the author does not fully develop this argument, leaving the field open to Friedrich. He cites as an example a script that emerged at the same time as the Bamum, the Alaska script, which was introduced by an Eskimo named Neck.

> The spelling of the final stage may seem awkward to us and perhaps even a deterioration of the older syllabary. However, it can be explained by Neck's habit of quietly repeating the words as he wrote, not in separate pieces, but in continuous strokes. In any case, Neck's writing was easy for the Eskimos to learn, perhaps because of these syllables, which are well suited to slow speech. And the strange spelling also harmonises with the fact, already mentioned, that Neck never perceived individual sounds, especially consonants, as such, however close they actually came to them, but that for him the smallest sound unit was the syllable, into which alone he broke down larger complexes. (Friedrich 1954:405).

The question that arises here is why Neck, after trying to develop his writing in various ways – including pictographic writing – used the system of slow diction to reach a stage in his writing system that is surprisingly similar to the sixth and seventh stages of Bamum writing. Faced with such a phenomenon, one cannot accept Friedrich's explanation that Neck understood his writing in this way because he had the habit of silently repeating the syllables as he wrote.

> Another point that strikes us is the confusion caused by both Neck and N'joya, who did not take consonants into account as such. For these wise inventors, the syllable had the highest value.
>
> For the Bamum script, one can now deduce a corresponding syllabic habit. In any case, both inventors of the script seem completely incapable of dividing words into clear syllables in the way we do, but their syllabic division retains something vague and unclear. (Friedrich 1954:328).

By way of comparison, Friedrich reports that a Japanese person says Be-ro-ri-n for Berlin and ra-i-pu-ci-hi for Leipzig. (Friedrich 1954:324). This author therefore tends to generalise the two phenomena and turn them into a general rule. If such a rule extends to general language usage, it is even less applicable in our case, because we are dealing here with the realm of writing and not that of speech. We are dealing with two scripts of different origins which, at least at a given time, were under similar influences and led to the same result. However, it could be that this is a special stage which we will have to examine more closely.

> At the stage of pure syllabary, Bamum script and Alaska script again show remarkable similarities. Both scripts are, in our opinion, strangely pleonastic in two respects: 1) Although already contained in a syllabary, a vowel is usually indicated again by adding the corresponding vowel sign. Thus, the syllable na is written na-a, mi mi-i and yu yu-u in both scripts.
>
> 2) Intervocalic consonants are written twice, as the final sign of the preceding syllable and again in the following syllable sign. This spelling is very characteristic of the Alaska script, but is also present in the Bamum script due to its predominantly monosyllabic structure.
>
> Both writing conventions seem awkward to us, who have been educated in the alphabet. They are used in the Alaska script because of Neck's habit of speaking the words slowly and continuously while writing.
>
> Another similarity between the two writing systems is the fact that the consonant, especially the plosive, is not perceived by the creator of the writing system as a single sound, but at most as a syllable..." (Friedrich 1954:327).

Friedrich's attempt to explain the phenomena of the Bamum script and the Alaska script by simple habits seems overly subjective. Although the habits in question can be explained in various ways, it would be tantamount to disregarding science at all costs to refuse to draw valid conclusions despite identical data and analogous results.

> To summarise, both scripts were created as logographic scripts based on preliminary stages of content, very quickly adopted phonetic substitutes and, with varying degrees of intensity and perfection, formed the beginnings of a syllabary. Then, in both cases, there is a sharp break due to European influence. This leads to the elimination of pictorial word signs and the emergence of a stroke-based syllabary, which suggests that syllable division was not clearly understood. Neither of them crossed the line into pure alphabetic writing. (Friedrich l954:328).

For comparative script research, it would be very important to follow the development of the two scripts in parallel if effective conclusions could be drawn from this. Friedrich's argument is therefore quite plausible, but the conclusions he draws seem insufficient. He even believes in the monogenesis of alphabetic writing. In connection with this study, we must therefore conclude that the European influence on the Mum script and the Alaska script was a welcome one, since in both cases it had to lead to the same results after helping the two scripts to move beyond the syllabic stage towards a cursive tendency.

> And thus Neck's script also supports the view, which the author of these lines has always held, that a letter script does not fall ready-made from the sky, but has emerged only once in the entire history of writing, and under the very special circumstances of Egyptian writing. Sethe's view that syllabic writing is a "dead end" from which there is no path to pure alphabetic writing also seems to be confirmed to some extent by Neck's writing. (Friedrich 1954:405).

With the sixth and seventh stages, N'joya found himself at a dead end. But at the end of this dead end seems to have been the alphabet, since N'joya got that far. And is this not precisely where we should look for the pleonastic system that the Alaska script had also arrived at?

> Neck's late writing is peculiarly pleonastic... (Friedrich 1954:401).

The same force that seems to have driven the Bamum script has led the Alaska script to this pleonastic stage (we would call it the "analytical" stage), following the dual influence of the Latin letters since the stage of syllabic writing.

> In the further history of writing, we then see certain developmental trends emerge. First and foremost, the law of least resistance prevails, according to which every change must normally proceed in the direction from the difficult to the easier, from the complicated to the simple. Furthermore, in accordance with general cultural development, we find a certain adaptation of form to the increasing intellectuality of content. (Jensen 1958:16).

This development of writing towards simplification suddenly seems paradoxical when we consider Jensen's words quoted above: "...this would be the highest stage of development of writing...", because we know that the Mum script referred to here never reached its highest stage of simplification. Nevertheless, it can be said that it reached an extraordinarily advanced stage of development. Similarly, the analytical element is more developed than the synthetic, with one developing from the other through degeneration.

The fact is that writing could only attain the synthetic form, which was ideal in the eyes of N'joya and Neck, and could only be inspired by the alphabetic writing system once it had overcome the analytical, operational and therefore pleonastic stage. This pleonastic stage can be regarded as a preliminary stage of letter writing, the overcoming of which required a great deal of time and intensive study on the part of the two inventors. With letter writing as a model, syllabic writing really only had one obstacle to overcome, without there being any question of a dead end.

Instead of offering an interpretation in the manner of Friedrich, we will attempt to resolve the dilemma by considering the phenomenon of pleonasm as an analytical moment before moving on to the synthetic moment, or literal writing.

> It must therefore be admitted that the image that writing conveys to us of a language can only ever be very relatively accurate as long as we lack the control provided by the living, spoken language. (Jensen 1958:15).

N'joya, like Neck, were more concerned with exploring the actual value of the syllable during this interim stage than with believing that they had reached the end of their invention. It was enough for them to break down the syllable into a consonant and a vowel. And there they stood, in this moment of confusion about the elements of the vowel, before they had found the relatively suitable sign for translating their discovery.

Incidentally, it is not surprising that the Bamum script appears to exhibit higher qualities in this analytical state and its components. Nevertheless, N'joya was well aware that he was only halfway through his discovery. Perhaps before his death, he had revealed the object of his intellectual endeavour to his closest associates so that they would one day confide in Dugast that "the script had not attained the degree of perfection at the death of the Sultan Njoya that it would have achieved a few years later if he had still been alive". (Dugast 1950A:27).

Finally, it must also be noted that the development of N'joya's discovery spanned only twenty years. In such a short period of time, it could not have reached its completed state.

N'joya and Neck had not yet reached the simplified stage that is implied here by the idea of practical condition, the expression of which, without wishing to designate the highest degree of development, is the alphabet. And although he had learned the Latin letters without, as Meinhof is convinced (Meinhof 1911:9), having studied their system sufficiently, perhaps without even wanting to, N'joya stamped his work with his personality by not trying to accelerate the normal course of his discovery in order to move directly to the alphabetical stage. His work would have contained a myriad of obvious gaps that would have given the impression of plagiarism from European cultures.

THE BOOK OF THE BAMUM KINGS
or

History and Customs of the Bamum[1]

by N'joya, King of the Bamum

[1] Correct:ly "Libonar" or "Liponar" = children of one mother

In the eleventh year, in the month of *wupugu*, on the nineteenth day, a *nkafut*[1]

The History of the Bamum

Here is the history of the kings who came from Rifum:

"In the past, the Bamum lived in Rifum. They did not know the word of God" (Martin 1952:22).

Thus begins the Book of the History of the Bamum, which was compiled under the direction of King N'joya until 1933. He died that year and was the inventor of the script that was used at various times since 1911 to record the customs and history of the Bamum.

One is immediately struck by the direct reference to the "Word of God" and wonders to what extent the Bamum people at that time had any concept of the Word of God and whether this expression should not simply be seen as the influence of evangelisation by the missionaries, especially since certain authors claim that missionary Göhring (who will be mentioned later) was the originator of this story of the Bamum, as he is said to have played an important role with the king.

> Although he (N'joya) did not wish in his heart that the Germans should take possession of his country, he approached them in order to familiarise himself with their methods, to gain, as it were, a little of their power, their knowledge and their wealth. We may also assume that he accepted Göhring's proposal to write the history of his country without hesitation. For this work would not only make him famous, but could also be a means of applying and spreading the script he had invented and of appearing as 'ngaa raanə, as a scholar, in the eyes of his subjects. (Martin 1952:9).

Is it a *conditio sine qua non* that N'joya, in writing down the history and traditions of his people, was following a need to earn their admiration? In fact, such work could have no external value, but it did have an internal value, because this tradition already existed before N'joya set out to exploit it. The most important aspect was the invention of a written language. What could

[1] Monday

N'joya have written before he drew up a civil code (marriage law), which was, admittedly, influenced by European law? One tunes an instrument to a melody one already knows before playing new melodies. And the word that floated on N'joya's lips and that he wanted to write down was that of oral tradition. We know that N'joya eagerly sought written texts for his archives:

> When I wanted to lie down after dinner, which I now do regularly (at least most of the time), four, yes four, royal scribes sent by His Majesty came to write a letter to you in my room! The manuscript was made in duplicate because a copy of it is going to the royal archives. (Rein-Wuhrmann, from a letter to her father dated 18 February 1912).

One comes to the conclusion that the history of the Bamum was the first subject to be dealt with in the new script.

According to a personal comment by Rein-Wuhrmann, N'joya said to her: "In the past, traditions were passed down by word of mouth. From father to son. Now you have to write it down." This may mean that N'joya was very concerned with this oral tradition, but especially that he was worried because this history was in danger of being lost and disappearing completely with the onset of colonialism in a country where Bamum customs were increasingly fading into the background.

N'joya's understanding of history is also complemented by his "classical sense", i.e. where the author himself appears as a witness. N'joya was not content merely to write down the traditions of the Bamum people, but also wanted to give an account of the innovations in his country and list the names of those government officials who had played a certain role. However, one must lament the inaccuracy of the data, as well as the lack of objective assessment, as we shall see.

After this brief analysis, which we have conducted, so to speak, in passing, the word "Rifum" regains its meaning, as in the first sentence, where the origin of the Bamum is explained. A kind of balance is established for the whole: "Rifum is three days' march from Fumban" (Martin 1952:22). Here we recognise the Bamum logic in the way of defining something briefly

and concisely. One does not calculate using cardinal directions, but rather the effort required to travel the distance between Fumban and the old Rifum.

From there, the theory of descent is dealt with at a rapid pace. And the ancestor N'share is portrayed in a clever myth and endowed with a cunning that the Bamum also recognise in themselves. And yet the image that is created of him is truly unflattering.

> N'share was very small, he had a big belly, his eyes flashed like those of a leopard. He was very clever in war. He was black and had short legs. Although he was very brave, he could not run fast. He liked to dance and drank a lot of palm wine. He was very charitable. (Martin 1952:24).

After his murder, N'guopu, a woman, succeeded him to the throne.

A series of seven kings who shared N'guopu's way of thinking is listed: "...but did nothing and lived off what Nsa're had achieved." (Martin 1952:24) and among them N'gulure is also mentioned. The latter was succeeded by Kuotu, whose reign was "good and peaceful" (Martin 1952:25) and who only defeated the *patum* (the foreigners). But

> the following happened during his reign: one of his nephews, Mfon Mfa'ngaam, inherited his mother and thus became the king's brother. He committed adultery with ninety of the king's wives," the adulterer came to the palace and King Kuo'tu fell victim to him. King Mfa'ngaam caused the death of King Kuo'tu. (Martin 1952:25).

Among the Bamum, a nephew enjoys the greatest privileges. He is entitled to take whatever he wants in his uncle's house.

"I will establish the borders of my empire with blood and black iron. War is my business. If you draw the borders of a country with your mouth, they will blur again," (Martin 1952:26) said M'buembue, son and successor of Kuotu, upon his accession to the throne. The role of M'buembue was decisive, not only because he wanted to enlarge the country, but also because under his rule the Fulbe took Fumban by storm.

With this king, the Bamum have a "knightly epic" in which the genius of war suddenly emerged with the digging of the city moat. It still surrounds the city today and helped repel the

Fulbe during their third attempt to beseige it. The trophies that consolidated M'buembue's empire are estimated to number more than fifty.

Many elements of Muslim culture penetrated the life of the Bamum at that time, especially the horse, which was seen for the first time and whose speed had prompted the digging of the city moat.

M'buembue, this king of "giant" stature, was to fall victim to a nervous disorder that led him to madness and death. His appearance has already been described in the chapter on "the origin of the Bamum kings".

Gbetnkom, M'buembues' son and successor, "loved long rides" on the previously unknown horses. When he wanted to find out why his father's wives and possessions had been given to the servants, he was murdered by them. His son M'bienkue, who was beaten against a tree with his feet, thus fell victim to the logic of the Bamum, who believed that the young king would not have attributed his father's death to chance. A slave named N'guwuo succeeded to the throne. Although the picture painted of him in N'joya's book is quite flattering, he killed no fewer than seventy of the empire's great men because they had called him a slave.

> He was a good king. He ruled the country with wisdom, better than if he had belonged to the royal family... (Martin 1952:32).

N'sangu N'gungure, the nephew of M'buembue, overthrew N'guwuo, the slave descendant who, forced to flee, asked his own nephew to cut his throat with his dagger.

N'sangu revived the tradition that required a Bamum king to also be a conqueror. The Bamum say that he was a good warrior, an exceptionally handsome man with somewhat feminine features, but quick-tempered.

As an outward sign of his deeds, N'sangu had a new palace built on the site of the palace of M'buembue, which had been destroyed by the slave king during his interregnum on the pretext that, since he was not of noble birth, he could not live in the palace of a king. He had built his palace in M'ziyuom, on the site of the village of Nziikam (Martin 1952:33).

In the story of N'joya, we encounter the conflict with the slaves again when the colonial authorities wanted to force him to give up many of his wives to slaves.

After several victories, the warlike genius N'sangus was to meet a catastrophic end in a dispute between the Bamum and the Banso, brought about by the defeat of Puekam by the Banso and N'sangus' desire for revenge. During this war, N'sangu was killed, even though every warrior who killed a king was punished as "guilty" by his own king. He had to be bound and covered with ashes before being questioned by his king: "You killed my brother. Why did you not bring him back alive?" The condemned man subsequently escaped the death that threatened him (he was locked in a hut, which was then set on fire), "but the guilty man fled before taking part in the *Ngu* dance. He should not rejoice alone in having brought down the enemy king, for how could a single man kill an elephant? He had to find seven others for the dance. The king gave all eight numerous gifts" (Martin 1952:34).

This ceremony is probably somewhat formalistic. In essence, a simple warrior who attacks the person of a king, even if he is an enemy, is doomed to death, because kings are brothers. He would have killed a close relative of his king, so to speak. But the problem is resolved in the symbolism of "how could a single man kill an elephant?" The elephant is the king. The king is also attributed with the power of the lion. Nevertheless, "if the enemy king was captured alive, the king congratulated the warrior who had achieved this" (Martin 1952:34). It was then merely an act that highlighted the untouchable nature of the king. When the king dies, only initiates are allowed to see his body, just as the earth in which kings are buried may only be entered by the same initiates. These include the "three fathers" of the king (Titamfon) and the reigning king.

The fate of a king who surrendered or submitted without a fight was no worse than that of a captured king. In the latter case, he received some of his wives and his captured sons, while a king who surrendered had to recognise the victorious king as his suzerain. He no longer had the right to decide on the life or death of his subjects, but at least he had to keep his suzerain informed

about it. Neither he nor his people could be called slaves. He merely gave two elephant tusks to his lord and ate (kept) the rest. He had the right to eat leopards, th buffalo and other game that belonged by right to the Pamom king. He gave two of his daughters to his conqueror. If there were serious disagreements between him and his subordinates or offences against the laws of Pamom — which usually resulted in death — he was deposed" (Martin 1952:36).

This section, which reflects the idea of the divine in the Bamum kings, does not concern the Bamum kings themselves so much as the foreign kings whom the Bamum had subjugated throughout their history. The author of the book thus establishes the legal status of the forty-eight principalities that had already been subjugated by M'buembue in order to expand the borders of the empire.

King N'joya

The story of N'joya begins dramatically: still immature, he must fight enemies who want to remove him from the throne in his youth. "Some of the elders said: 'let us kill King Nzuoya and put another prince in his place!' When Nzuoya heard this, he had them killed" (Martin 1952:34).

After a description of the reforms that N'joya had carried out, which are cited to make N'joya appear somewhat more human after the deliberate crimes through which he destroyed his enemies, there follows, after a brief account of one of the improvements in the fate of the slaves, "And I, Nzuoya have decided that every slave may have a lover," — an overview of the civil war that would determine the fate of the child N'joya.

N'joya recalls that he called on the Fulbe for help and credits their assistance with the victory over the rebellious minister Gbetnkom. The reason why he called on them for help and showered them with gifts is obvious: food supplies were running out, undoubtedly due to a strategic move by the enemy outside Fumban. He therefore decided to contact the Fulbe. Eventually, he managed to convince his subjects of the necessity of this step.

The manner in which the defeated Gbetnkom was treated gives a good insight into the role played by the people in the administration of justice through the eleven judges of the kingdom. Although these eleven judges are not mentioned in the text, it can be assumed that they radically represented the interests of the people. It should also be added that these judges, with the support of the king and the very harsh laws, were always of one mind.

A certain tendency to exaggerate, which is evident in the very detailed list of gifts to the Fulbe, has no significance other than stylistic. The joy of storytelling and glorification gives way to a certain lightness that we often encounter during reading, especially where we stop expecting objectivity. In N'joya, one senses a desire to glorify himself, to justify himself in the eyes of his people, or simply in those of his readers.

"With what the queen gave, the gifts to the king of the Pa're are countless; they would exceed the value of a thousand men." However, the closing sentence, which estimates the amount of the sacrifices or the degree of gratitude, is followed by a brief explanation: "That the Pa're were very brave in war. When they arrived in Mangaa, a single horse rushed at Mangaa and all the other horses followed it. And in a short time, the Mangaa were defeated. Many of them, three thousand two hundred, were killed."

This remark about the Fulbe strategy, which is undoubtedly significant, shows, among other things, what the Bamum were able to learn from the Fulbe.

"Do you call a dog to beat it?" is a sentence that could serve as an introduction to N'joya's judicial system. He uttered it when the Fulbe he had called to his aid were ambushed.

The phrase "If King Nzuoya had not acted in this way..." recurs repeatedly to justify N'joya, who often had to take measures against the will of his people. And from time to time, one encounters the opinion of the Bamum: "The Pamom do not believe that the Yaam are good warriors. Did they not say, 'We have lost the way!' How can the way of war be lost?"

Although the chronology of this history book recorded by the Bamum cannot be taken at face value, some surprising details cannot be overlooked. After mentioning the role played by guns during the civil war and two months later in the war of N'zindu of N'kufen, both chronologically placed before the first appearance of the white man, it must therefore be assumed that guns were already known to the Fulbe and the N'ku Fu of Bafussam, the immediate neighbours of the Bamum, before the arrival of the first white man. But it was only after these two wars that the Bamum mentioned owning guns, alongside bows and arrows.

With the arrival of the white people soon afterwards, N'joya had to take special care to maintain his prestige in the eyes of his subjects. He did this by cleverly immunising them against the white people. "You are right, Nzuoya," said the Pamom, "no one can contradict you, your wisdom is greater than all of ours."

A second synoptic account lists the deeds performed by N'joya: "Thus Nzuoya contributed to the happiness of the Pamom" (Martin 1952:42) after the arrival of the white men had passed without incident. However, they did not stop instilling fear in the Bamum. "I will go to them," said N'joya, "to learn about their way of life." Is this the key to N'joya's genius? What is certain is that N'joya then visited Buea and Duala. "On his return, it was said that he spoke the language of the white men" (Martin 1952:43). This language was probably Pidgin English, the only European language N'joya knew.

Little is known about the trophies he brought back from Buea and Duala. But he introduced the Bamum to the way of life of the white people. One thing we know for sure is in this passage: "When the riflemen come to the market and take something or mistreat you, don't get angry, he told them. Leave it to me to deal with the white people!" The not-so-polite behaviour of the simple colonial soldiers was well known.

In this book of his history, N'joya is also credited with the discovery of writing and the introduction of weaving. Before N'joya, iron, horsemanship and cloth clothing were unknown to the Bamum.

In the paragraph following this list, N'joya takes credit for the victory over the Banso, even though he only participated in the war as an observer and left the fighting and the recapture of the skull of N'sangue, his father, to the German allies.

This is followed by anecdotes that complete the description of some of the kings. They repeat sayings and speak of reforms and secondary introductions that reveal a side of these rulers' personalities that had been kept secret in the respective chapters of their life stories. For example, M'buembue introduced a new decree concerning twins. Until then, they had been sold and now became the property of the king. But besides that, the warlike king was cruel, and most of the prisoners of war in his country were killed.

King Gbetnkom also organised orgies. He is portrayed as sometimes sadistic, sometimes gentle.

N'guwuo, the slave king, was haunted by his origins and unable to free himself from his resentment.

This seems to mark a break with the tradition of the Bamum kings, in which the monarch was the centre around which everything revolved. N'guwuo had nothing royal about him except the absolutism he demonstrated at the very beginning of his reign by eliminating those who had killed the royal family — he, the descendant of slaves. N'guwuo took special care to ensure that the royal descendants received their inheritance.

N'sangu took over the reign with the aim of restoring the royal tradition. To do this, he needed a well-developed strategy. N'guwuo had distributed the royal wives among the dignitaries — he himself did not want to take them, as he considered himself a slave throughout his life. In analogy to the suicide of the slaves, N'sangu seems to have imposed a duty of general suicide on

the royal wives in the event of his death. However, he later changed this order: his companions were to belong to his successor if he was his son. Otherwise, they were to kill themselves. However, this change did not prevail. Seventy women took their own lives when he died, even though no stranger took over the succession.

This general suicide of the king's wives does not seem to have been customary before N'guwuo, even though N'guwuo was otherwise endeavouring to revive the laws proclaimed since N'share.

> What did Nsa're say when he sat on the seven stones of Nzimom, what did he say to the kom?" asked Nsa'ngu. Can a nzi destroy a king's village, or can a king destroy a *nzi*'s village? Can a *ngaa nzü* destroy the village of a *nzi*, or can a *nzi* destroy the village of a *ngaa nzü*? Why was my uncle's village destroyed? When you become a successor, do you marry the old women first or the young ones? Why did you take my uncle's wives? (Martin 1952:52).

And he had to decide:

> The Pamom have assured me that I am a descendant of Mbuembue, not a slave like Nguwuo. Well then, the laws proclaimed on the seven stones at Nzimom shall be reinstated, but you cannot remain with the king, since you took the king's wives (Martin 1952:53).

The Njis responsible committed suicide. But one of them, an uncle of the king, refused. "The case was difficult: can a king kill his uncle?" (Martin 1952:53). He was hanged at night by several members of the royal family. The cause of death was given as pneumonia. In context, the position of the king's uncle is entirely justified, as the Bamum are emphatically matrilineal.

The Book of the Queen Mothers bears the inscription "How they must behave", with the moralistic emphasis that is evident throughout this work.

Ne Kup would have liked Sa', the stronger of her husband N'gapna's two sons, to succeed him as king. However, the king had designated N'gulure as his heir. The latter immediately eliminated his brother and curtailed the power of the queen mother. Perhaps this is the origin of

the law that sentences to death a brother of the reigning king born of the same mother. Ne Yenu hid the women destined for her son, King Kuotu, for too long.

Ne Mandu, who initially refused to become queen mother under the rule of N'gulure, her husband's successor, became queen mother under his grandson after she married N'gulure's successor, King Kuotu, in her second marriage. She was also the mother of M'buembue.

Ne Mfa'ngam was an advisor to her son Gbetnkom and shared his fate when he was murdered.

Ne N'gungure, "the mother of King Nsa'ngu, called Set-fon by the people, was actually named Ngungure. She was the daughter of King Mbuembue, and Ngutane was her mother. She ascended the Bamum throne and abdicated in favour of the late King Nsa'ngu" (Martin 1952:72).

Fearing that his mother would give birth to a brother for him, N'sangu had numerous friends of his mother killed one after the other — and a queen who has given birth to a king cannot take another man if she does not want to reduce her power. Set-fon, like her son N'sangu, had the right to choose his successor. And thanks to his mother N'japndunke, who was of royal blood, the man whom Set-fon called Nzi Ma Yuom Mfoombaam, but whom N'sangu called N'joya because the name Mfoombaam appeared among the enemies they had fought, became N'sangu's successor. N'joya was the last sovereign to exercise real rule over the Bamum.

During her reign, N'japndunke exercised the offices of a king, above all the main task of a Bamum king: that of judge. As queen mother, she also had to raise women for her son. She brought him one hundred and forty. The Bamum recognised masculine qualities in this woman. In times of war, or to defend the interests of her beloved son, she did not shy away from spilling blood with her own hands. She recognised the Fulbe prince as her own son, and when he came to N'joya's aid and put an end to the civil war raging among the Bamum, she sent him countless gifts. Yamuguat, one of her servants, had to convey the following words to him: "You are my

child, take off your clothes so that Yamuguet can see your body and come back and report to me" (Martin 1952:76).

On another occasion, a European trader, seduced by her fresh beauty, dared to speak gallant words to her. N'japndunke angrily demanded that the authorities expel the man immediately. She died in splendour after twenty-one years as queen mother and was buried by her son.

Only during the reign of the slave king N'guwuo was there no queen mother. Otherwise, however, her absence was unthinkable. Upon her death, a half-sister had to take her place, without necessarily inheriting the property, but she was free to give everything to the king, her son. Sometimes, as in the case of N'japndunke, the queen mother was allowed to have more personal property, estates and outbuildings than the king.

Customs of the Bamum

"How kings and nobles feared God"

This book has no political background, because, as the "author" says at the end, one can always find something in the way a government is run with which one disagrees. But God made kings, "his messengers, and they have their place at the head of men" (Martin 1952:79).

Consequently, the Ten Commandments of God are listed here in biblical order. One can therefore gauge the significance they had in N'joya's imagination. For him, moral values were a means of teaching honesty and consolidating his power. With his religious ideas, N'joya opens up a new perspective on the traditional rule of the Bamum kings. But in his commentary on the Ten Commandments, N'joya invokes the forces of nature and literally touches on superstition when he says, for example, that "the wild beast is inflamed with anger" against the sinner who takes another man's wife. The interpretation is N'joya's, who adapts it to the royal history.

> Begin to see how in our country King Gbetnkom seized the throne that belonged to Muntapmbea by force. Nguwuo killed him in a violent coup and seized the kingship. The

> late King Nsa'ngu, in turn, killed him in a violent coup, and he too, Nsa'ngu, fell by violence. (Martin 1952:80).

We can see that N'joya was sufficiently knowledgeable about the Christian religion and wanted to instil it in his people so that they could be better governed.

"Funeral of Pamom Kings and the Marriages of Slaves and Royal Women"

> This chapter opens with the following remark: A Pamom king is never beheaded to preserve his skull, as other peoples do. The king is buried with his head. (Martin 1952:81).

This was in contrast to the custom of the Bamileke, who beheaded their kings.

He was carefully wrapped in *Mfuet*, his feet and knees covered with *tankut*. A bead necklace was hung around his neck, a *Mgbamgba* chain made of copper, and bracelets made of ebony. His chin wore an artificial beard made of beads, and his head wore a cap made of beads. In addition, a figure made of beads adorned the chair on which the deceased was seated, with his feet resting on a leopard skin. Two small bells (*Nkuem*) and two bells, *N'guri* and *M'bansie*, were placed in the pit, one on the left and one on the right. A knife in a sheath was also placed on the left, and on the right a bag containing a *Ndun* horn and ten spears. One hand holds the knife *Nzaa* with two small bells and pieces of Mbuat. The *N'guon*, a calabash with wine and one with kola nuts, are placed in front of and behind the deceased, the *Mfon-Mum*. The body of the deceased is wrapped in *Makpi-nso'*, *Ntie suo* and other fabrics so that it does not touch the ground.

The ceremony proceeds as follows: an elephant's tusk is split over the head of the corpse, a long anointed stone and *Nduatngu* leaves cover half of the coffin. Then the stone is covered with *Mbupuat* leaves and *Ngu* feathers, and only then is the grave finally filled in.

Between the stone and the ivory tip — to the side of which an iron bar with two rings or handcuffs is attached — lies a sheep's head. Finally, *yaa* fruits are arranged around the grave. The dead king carries *the Pa-ngu* = the "bag of the country" in his arm.

Two Titamfon were allowed to attend the funeral, along with N'jifonfon, N'jimonsare, N'jitavepua, N'jimonanka, N'jimafiro, N'jiamfaa, and finally two of the old servants of the deceased king and some twins.

This chapter on the burial of the Bamum kings could have been the product of N'joya's imagination, as Martin claims. But we must not forget that the best information on this subject comes from the elders and the Titamfon, who were able to attend the funerals of previous kings. Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that N'joya himself, because of his princely status and his youth, was not allowed to attend the funeral ceremonies on the death of his father, as these were reserved for initiates. He could have mentioned the course of the funeral ceremonies at his mother's funeral, but "that was only the funeral of a queen and not that of a king". Martin's main argument is the fact that N'joya himself was not buried according to these descriptions in his book. But is this argument sufficient? After all, the circumstances surrounding N'joya's disappearance were enough to create a confusing atmosphere.

What is the *Pa-ngu*, the bag that contains the relics of the previous king and is therefore renewed after the accession of each new king? Instead of the finger joints and metacarpal bones of N'sangu's right hand, N'joya carried only his father's forearm. The king carries this bag only on the day of his accession to the throne and at the harvest festival, *N'guon*.

The coronation ceremony is closely related to the death of the previous king. The new king inherits the throne of his fathers at the moment when he holds the head of his predecessor in his hands on his deathbed. The spiritual content of the ceremony reaches its climax with the bath that N'si takes the next day. Now the chapter strikes a moral tone that is familiar to us and makes the book's attitude even more understandable. Here it is the desire of a foreigner for the Bamum throne. The new king must perform the mythical gestures that were performed by the founder of the dynasty, N'share.

"These are the words of the dead" (Martin 1952:85). Thus ends the description of the accession to the throne among the Bamum.

At the end of the chapter on the accession to the throne among the Bamum, the oath "never to change" taken by those women who must remain royal wives is cited as justification before the king. N'joya adds to this chapter a notarised document in which he declares himself guarantor for himself and his son in the relations between himself, his wives and his servants, in order to preserve the dignity of the royal women and to ensure the loyalty of his servants to himself and his descendants. He had 993 servants and 519 wives. Servants here refers to dignitaries, not slaves.

Criminal law

This chapter on the administration of justice among the Bamum actually sheds more light on the social order and class system than on the law, which is its ostensible subject. But in doing so, it reveals its most arbitrary side. According to this, a Bamum who has killed another Bamum can either be convicted or acquitted by paying compensation to the king through one or more persons (if he does not have the means to do so, he can offer his services), or he is officially declared innocent depending on the circumstances. However, the blood-related prince, in the case of the Bamum, the son of the ruling king, cannot be killed if he has committed murder. Nor can a king's wife, as long as she does not bring disadvantage to the royal family or a co-wife. However, it must also be emphasised that a fratricide is not necessarily punishable by death. Is there perhaps a connection here to the person of the king, who must not have brothers of the same mother at any price? Neither brothers nor half-brothers are taboo.

A robber can only be killed on the orders of the king. Only the king can punish an adulterer.

If two great N'ji go to war, they must compensate the king with thirty people and thirty sheep if the battle claims many human lives.

The poison ordeal can also play an important role in the Bamum court system when it comes to finding the guilty party. While the king personifies justice and receives his reward in the form of fines, the poison ordeal stands in stark contrast to this.

§ 36-42

The king also accepts blood money as compensation. If a servant hangs himself, his master must compensate the king with a slave, because he is to blame for the suicide. A very characteristic sentence in chapter 38 is: "Are not all the people of the land the king's?"

According to Bamum law, the monarch can therefore increase the state's wealth with the help of fines without compromising himself through tax abuse.

From injury to an eye to the upbringing of children, parents are fully responsible if their children suffer harm as a result of neglectful parenting. The latter can, for example, cause a girl's brideprice to fall from 100,000 cowries to 20,000.

§43 If the king is insulted, the guilty party will receive numerous blows, be stripped of their possessions and thrown into prison. Defamation of the king is punishable by death.

§44 Any interdict may be converted into a fine payable to the king or, in some cases, to the taangu.

§45 Any dignitary may be removed from office as a result of a simple political error, provided that this does not warrant the death penalty.

"All those born in the land of the Pamom belong to the king." Therefore, it is not permitted to diminish the king's property in any way. The latter grants his protection to the citizen by ensuring that his social law is respected. For example, the Tet n'kuma (mediator, guardian of the king's people) may not marry the daughter of one of these people in order to preserve his integrity — a law created by M'buembue.

§46 A man in debt becomes the property of the king, to the detriment of his creditors.

§47 Arson is punishable by a heavy fine.

The instincts of those involved in concubinage affairs are given free rein, for the king does not condemn them.

§48 The goat is the bail for the convicted person among the Bamum, except for the king's wives and the prince's servants, undoubtedly as a consequence of their dependence.

Royal right:
The prior permission of the king is required for a lamentation. On this occasion, the king, and secondly the Taangu, levies a fee, the amount of which depends on the person and their wealth.

§50 The death of a twin who has "seen Mbansie" is subject to a ceremony during which the king is handed over to the representative of the deceased.

§51 Every female twin who marries is given an adoptive mother from among the king's wives. She can become a servant of the king if she is not honoured.

§52-56 If an uninitiated person sees one of the sacred drums, they must compensate the king, as well as the guardians or the creator of the drum. A levy must also be paid for the use of a drum to lament the death of a N'ji.

§57 "The usurpation of the royal dignity" results in the death of the usurper and his accomplices. His property is destroyed. However, if it is a case of the usurpation of a simple N'ji, this is not the case.

§58-61 Among the Bamum, the king takes a wife free of charge. Anyone who desires a king's wife is liable to death. In the event of adultery, the king's wife faces the same punishment. On the other hand, an outsider must not approach or come into contact with a royal woman.

When it comes to divorce among royal women, the Bamum agree less with the Fulbe than with the Bamileke, but most of all with the tribes whose kings possess the *Nutngu*, especially with the land of the Tikar. In the case of a very young king, the women wait until he is mature.

During this time, they are not allowed to have any relations with other men, as this is punishable by death.

§62 The succession to the Bamum throne was established by N'share. "He decreed that the king must always be chosen from within his family" and must be descended from his father's side. Neither a foreign nephew nor a brother of the sovereign can be the king's successor. This is a very important passage that reaffirms the absolute right of the Rifum dynasty to the throne. The matrilineal tendency, which is confirmed by the position of the nephew in the Bamum family, seems to be losing prestige in the royal family, and is only still valid among the N'ji. However, we must note that each child of the king bears the name of his mother as a second name, preceded by "von". This distinguishes him from his half-brothers.

§63-68 The retirement of a dignitary such as Toegu, N'ji mgbetny toafon or the Manshut is secured by cowrie shell payments from his assistants and the elders. Sons of blacksmiths and carvers cannot become servants in the palace so that these arts do not die out.

The position of twins is reaffirmed at this point. Both cannot become servants at the same time; one remains in "reserve" in case the other dies. This is further proof of N'joya's ingenuity in his concern to keep the arts alive.

§69-73 If there is no male heir, a woman may also be recognised as sovereign. She then becomes Regent Queen Mother, i.e. as soon as her son, whose father must be a descendant of Rifum, comes of age.

§74-82 Having considered adultery and its consequences among royal women, we see that it is punished no less severely when it occurs among the people, as is the case with wife-swapping. Lust is punished with beatings. Once again, N'joya, the moral king, takes a serious stance on adultery in this chapter. He does not fail to call anyone who sets a bad example a fool. Likewise, this chapter reintroduces the poison ordeal, a risky way of proving guilt.

Buffalo, elephants and special leopards may not be eaten if they have been killed without the king's command, otherwise a fine will be imposed. The spoils of a plunder ordered by the king belong to the king.

§83 A chapter that is no less important, but which reveals the unfortunate weakness of this book, namely the lack of order in its composition and ideas, is that of symbolic regulations. The N'ji is entitled to the buffalo's shoulder. The head of every large animal — the seat of wisdom — belongs to the king. The shoulder is undoubtedly a symbol of strength. For it is through the person of the N'ji that the country remains strong. Thus, a N'ji cannot be deposed on account of old age, for if this were to happen, it would be proof that "the country is not strong". However, removal from office is possible if the conduct of a dignitary leaves something to be desired. Only the Bamum King cannot be removed from office, unlike those of the Yet of the Tikar Kingdoms.

§84 This is followed by a list of court officials in hierarchical order. The three N'jifonfon, the "fathers of the king", command the Komshunshut. The Manshut, the chancellor, commands the N'shut-nshut, the court servants.

§85-98 In this "book on the administration of justice," the king is equated with the judiciary. Acting against the judiciary is therefore an act against the king.

Private law

Marriage can be contracted in two different ways among the Bamum. There is 1) marriage *ru-śi*, by contract. A woman who is sterile or dies childless must be replaced, although she has numerous privileges if she is of noble descent. 2) Marriage *tun-nten*, the taking of a woman in exchange for compensation.

Mgba is a community for mutual assistance, whose leader is the *Mfo mgba*. A law prevents inequality in the contributions of the "partners". This community, in which honour plays a major role, does not allow usury; on the contrary, the writer even condemns usury emphatically.

It is also customary to give a "sheep on loan for breeding". This applies for four years, after which the sheep is returned to the owner with four lambs. In addition, the owner is paid a sum for the manure and the ropes. The law also takes into account strokes of fate. For example, the borrower does not have to replace the sheep if they are lost in a war, "because one never flees with sheep".

If a blacksmith does not complete the metalwork entrusted to him, he cannot be punished. "Does not the king's metal also come into the blacksmith's hut?" Apart from this and the right of inheritance, however, this craft does not seem to have any privileges.

Customary law shows how far the customs of the Bamum could be extended. No mound of earth could be sold without the king's permission, and no Bamum could set out on a journey without informing the king.

With the establishment of the Mutngu, a kind of rural police force was created to monitor property boundaries and settle boundary disputes between neighbours.

§100 The nephew inherits from his deceased uncle whatever he likes among the latter's possessions.

§101 The proceeds from fines and taxes are distributed among the Bamum and servants. This remark shows that the beneficiaries are in the service of the king.

So far, this "Book of Jurisdiction" shows that the king exercises justice, that he represents it, that the judgments are intended solely to secure power, but that the Bamum jurisdiction, despite a gain in precision, is subject to arbitrariness through archaic means such as the poison ordeal.

§103-106 These passages once again demonstrate the absolutism of the Bamum kings. N'joya begins by repeating the moralistic tone we are already familiar with: "God created the rich, the poor, the king, and the noble. If you are small, do not despise the great; bow down and greet them." The writer avoids pointing out that before God, the great also have a duty to grant

the small the necessary protection. This is followed by a remark that "the king can have any man's servant beaten, for all the inhabitants of the land are servants of the king."

N'joya observes God's word insofar as it serves his purposes and preserves the customs of the Bamum. In section 105, for example, he demands obedience that borders on superstition.

> If you are a servant, do everything your Lord commands you; you have no power to change your Lord's commands. If your Lord commands you to die with him today, do so. If anyone disobeys his Lord, he is free to do as he pleases. It is his business. If your Lord commands you to convey a message, you must convey it as your Lord has said. Do not add your own words to his words. When you convey a message from your Lord, do not deceive yourself, and do not forget anything he has commanded you.
>
> If anyone does not obey his father or mother, and the king is called, the guilty party is put in prison and given twenty-five lashes. For disobedience is a bad thing, which God does not want. (Martin 1952:122).

Sometimes N'joya betrays himself when he confuses his own goals with religious duties: without a doubt, it is a weakness not to convey a message correctly, but it is not necessarily disobedience. Here, N'joya confuses the concepts of ability and willingness.

§107 The chapter on the nomination of a new king shows the capriciousness with which the new king's court was assembled. Those who happened to be at one of the city gates shortly after the death of a king were appointed servants of the successor. Or, if they were unmarried women, they were taken as his wives.

§108 The king demands taxes from the N'ji. The N'ji, in turn, demand them from their subordinates...

§109-113 These are some concluding remarks on the preceding chapters about the Rufi, the fine for throwing lots, and finally about the death of a N'jifonfon. This is followed by the laws that N'joya abolished.

§114-120 N'joya mainly rejected laws that imposed the death penalty and those whose usefulness left much to be desired, such as: "A man from Fumban went to the countryside too often. He died," or "No one shall sell bananas in large quantities."

One might wonder whether metal, which until then had not been approved for everyday use, had a special meaning, similarly representations of snakes, spiders and chameleons.

§115-125 N'joya justifies the abolition of some laws, thereby freeing the Bamum from "living in fear." The chapter is a recapitulation of the previous one, but in the sense in which N'joya understood the reforms. The sovereign tone gives the abolition the character of a solemn ceremony.

This is followed by an eulogy to N'joya for what he has done for the Bamum, his victory over Gbetnkom in the civil war, the advice he gave the Bamum when the white men arrived, and his inventions, which have benefited the Bamum. His reforms were intended to make it easier for the Bamum to observe the laws — better is worth more than more — and "so that the Bamum might be happy".

A prayer concludes this section of the book on the customs of the Bamum and leads on to the history of foreign kings:

> We ask God to send us the Holy Spirit, to bless all things that the whole world has accepted because of Mahamadu, the prophet of God. Amen!
>
> This prayer shows the mixture and confusion that prevails in religious thinking of N'joya. It reflects, in a sense, the spirit in which his "religious book" was written.

"History of Foreign Kings"

This part of the book, which concerns foreign kings, is only valuable insofar as the moralistic king N'joya was able to draw benefit from it. While the first part of the history of the Bamum appears to be a simple account in which N'joya's personal thoughts and tendencies are strongly evident, the second part of the book takes on the character of pure fiction, in which N'joya comments on his chosen subject. This commentary draws its norms from N'joya 's philosophy of life. He sets out his political views. In fact, this includes his confrontation with the various colonial authorities. Even the individual administrators are mentioned.

At the same time, N'joya observes the historical point of view that he himself had adopted: that history is inseparable from the physical and geographical environment. His position is also clearly evident from a socio-religious point of view.

> The king shall not take wives from the Pa're, unless they are given to him by an mfon Pa're. If the king wishes to marry, he shall take a wife from the Bamum, for religion (nga Nyi-nyi) is not strong in the hearts of Pa're women. It is not good for a king to marry a woman who cheats on her husband or one who goes around with a marksman, for once she is the wife of a king, she may tempt the other king's wives to be like her.
>
> If another king gives the king a wife, he may accept her.
>
> The king should erect a fence around his women's quarters, and this fence should have only one exit. If the king does not do this, endless palaver will arise.
>
> These are things I have seen with my own eyes. They are true. It is also the law of Mohammed. Everything I have just reported, I have seen with my own eyes. It happened when Lieutenant Prestat was here. For this reason, I give this advice to the future kings of Pamom.
>
> I, Nzuoya... (Martin 1952:246).

This book ends with a completely new aspect that proves to us that N'joya was only able to finish his book in exile in Yaoundé. This means that N'joya finally came to understand that his kingdom belonged to the larger colonial political complex of Cameroon. In fact, his simple Bamum empire no longer seems to be enough for him. His benchmark is Cameroon when he says:

> The king of the Bamum, Nzuoya, has built a palace in Bamumland. This palace surpasses all the buildings in Cameroon. There is no other house like it in the whole of Cameroon; it is a building with forty-one rooms. (Martin 1952:258).

In his language, he was no longer "King N'joya," but "King of the Bamum, N'joya." Although he now belonged to a larger complex, his world, even his authority, had shrunk, so that he felt it necessary to emphasise that he was King of the Bamum. A rather melancholic undertone that probably applies to all Bamum, whose history was, in a sense, the history of N'joya.

THE RELIGIOUS BOOK

N'joya not only had the Bible transcribed into the various Bamum scripts. He also wrote a book containing his own religious thoughts. These thoughts have the same origin as the book: both are closely linked to the history of the Bamum.

Until 1916, the year the Protestant missionaries were captured, the apostles of Islam were housed outside Fumban. They were forbidden from entering the city illegally. The mythical status of the inhabitants of the north in Bamum customs alone makes this fact easier to understand. Rein-Wuhrmann also discusses these customs in the form of proverbs in a chapter she calls "Paganism":

> If lightning strikes a tree or a banana tree, you must not take anything from it, otherwise you will die. Lightning comes from the land of the people who live in the north. If a Bamum buys something from a northern resident and does not pay, the latter returns to his country and warms the lightning, which then comes and kills the Bamum man. Therefore, if someone buys something from a northern resident, he must pay for it immediately. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1949:136).

The position that the bearer of Islam occupies in Bamum mythology is not only due to the wars that the kings of Fumban waged against the invaders from the north, but also to the role that they played as merchants in the country. In 1902, the first European government representatives arrived in Fumban, followed by the first missionaries in 1906. N'joya showed equal benevolence towards both.[1] Nevertheless, we should note that N'joya's penchant for diplomacy and his interest in religions were aimed at preserving political freedom. N'joya would not have been so dismissive of Islam if he had not seen it as a threat to his prestige, since he had to turn to it as soon as Christianity offered him no security.

Rein-Wuhrmann has sometimes emphasised the superficiality of Islam in Bamum-Land, which became apparent as soon as the religion began to take root.

> But Njoya was now completely devoted to Islam and forced everyone who belonged to him to adopt this religion. Every woman had a place of prayer in front of her house, sprinkled with fine gravel, and when I once asked a king's wife what this place was for, she shrugged her shoulders and said: 'I don't really know myself, we have to take off our jewellery three times a day, wash ourselves and bow down on this place so many times.' (Rein-Wuhrmann 1949:71).

This superficiality was also found among the Bamum, who were considered Christians.

[1] We refer here to the chapter dealing with N'joya as a diplomat, where his reserved behaviour towards white people has already been explained in connection with the mediating role that N'joya had to play between his people and the foreigners.

> Of the thirty baptised royal women, only five came, and they were very unhappy that they had to leave the dance and go to church... Now we just want to sing a song and pray quickly, and then we want to go back to the hall. With that, they began to dance in the chapel. (Rein-Wuhrmann, letter to his parents, 28 January 1912).

This raises a question that is equally relevant for the African peoples beyond the borders of the Kingdom of Bamum: what security did the Christian religion or even Islam have to offer the Bamum? What characterised these two religions in their eyes? The same question applies to why N'joya welcomed the Christians with open arms when they came to his country.

First, we must highlight a fact that is no longer a secret to historians of colonisation. This is the dependence of the missions and missionaries on the local authorities, not to mention a kind of solidarity between the ideologies of the preachers and those of the colonisers. Did N'joya understand this when he showed himself as helpful to the missionaries as he did to those who came to erect the first pillars of colonialism in his country?

> The king had promised the mission not only school buildings, but also pupils, and in this respect he really set the best example for his people, for he sent almost all his own children to the mission school. Perhaps he did so out of ambition, but certainly because he wanted his children to 'eat the wisdom of the Europeans'. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1949:75).

This passage makes it clear that N'joya's willingness to help can be interpreted in different ways. If one sticks to the concessions made by Rein-Wuhrmann in the course of her observations, one may assume that she was hardly very mistaken about the purely political goals that N'joya pursued with his actions. But alongside the ruler's purely diplomatic actions, the reactions of the people are also evident.

> The prisoners now come to church every Sunday. Ndzoya arranged this himself, and we are very grateful to him for that... (Rein-Wuhrmann, letter to her parents, 18 May 1912).

It is certainly in the interest of a state that order is maintained with the help of morality. However, if N'joya felt only indifference towards Christianity and was insensitive to its teachings, he would not have been able to see in it the possibility of salvation for evildoers. The ruler's attitude is even better explained by the fact that he always wanted what was best for his people.

The author's strong personality and his desire to achieve social balance were therefore the guiding principles behind the writing of this religious book.

> At the time of the World War in 1914, British troops entered Foumban on 2 December 1915. The German missionaries left the country. As soon as the mission ceased its activities, Muslim propagandists attempted to exert their influence on Njoya. But their efforts were also met with opposition due to the widespread practice of polygamy. Whichever way Njoya turned, he could not reconcile his religious needs with the customs he held dear. (Dugast 1950A:66).

Polygamy must be seen as a matter of prestige that N'joya could not give up overnight without jeopardising his position.

Let us simply note that this religious book, written in 1917 in the absence of European missionaries, corresponds to the period during which N'joya wanted to consolidate his kingdom in order to be able to resist the Europeans if they returned. N'joya may have been interested in Islam shortly before writing his book in order to improve his knowledge of this religion. It may well be that he, who had not shown much interest in Islam until then, wanted to perfect his ideas in order to better conceive his book. This consists of a mixture of the Protestant Bible and the Koran. N'joya said that he wanted to select what he considered to be the best of both books. 'Yi li nda lerawa pua' nuet nkwete' is the title of this book. It means 'The name of this book is sought and achieved'.

> This is the book of King Njoya of the Bamum, who chose the word of God in the book of Malum and the word of God contained in the book of the Whites, which he brought together to fear God in all truth.
>
> If anyone reads this book, let him put into practice what it contains, and the things of the kingdom of God will not overcome him (that is, they will not seem difficult to him), evil will not overcome him, nor will the Muslim prayer (the Muslim prayer will not seem difficult to him).
>
> When we hear about the things of God that happened to people in the past (that is, to the ancient patriarchs) and when preachers preach them to the people, we linger on wanting to imitate the people of the past. But they are dead, and the events that happened to them are past. Then we neglect to pray for forgiveness of our own sins, which alone can bring us into the kingdom of God. (Dugast 1950A:67).

This advice, given to the reader as an introduction, sums up N'joya's intentions. Above all, he is under no illusions from the outset about the mixture of the two foreign teachings. In fact,

he identifies the bearers of the different teachings with the content of the corresponding books. The fact that he speaks of the book of the white people as well as that of the Malum indicates that he was unable to make a definitive choice between the two teachings. He chose from both. By attributing relative value to both Islam and Christianity, he secured for himself a devastating weapon against his political enemies and an opportunity to apply this idea of almost universal value, which is that a people of the same faith can be better governed. "Cuius regio eius religio". N'joya was so aware of this that he did not shy away from torturing those of his own people who did not want to follow him once he had converted to Islam. This conversion only took place when N'joya saw that his work was being sabotaged by the French colonial authorities. He reacted in some way against a world that had become suspicious in his eyes, against the European world and its institutions.

N'joya did not convert to Islam for the benefits that this religion offered him, quite apart from the fact that he did so only in a very superficial way. The reason for this was probably his appointment as sultan. Islam has now become the state religion, replacing the religion that N'joya had envisaged.

> After the Germans withdrew, Fumban was without any European government for a while. The English troops continued eastward, pursuing the retreating enemy, and since there were no Europeans left in the city of Fumban, it was not immediately occupied by the English. The king now wanted to restore the former conditions that had prevailed before the European takeover, because he had lost too many rights to the Europeans. One of the main features of the 'old order' was that Christians were to return to paganism and participate in all pagan customs. Because this was not easy to achieve, strong pressure was exerted on the Christians, which eventually escalated into outright persecution.[1]

N'joya had made his choice in 1910 when he began writing his religious book and made his religious ideas known. He was waiting for an opportunity to put them into practice. That opportunity came with the war, which reinforced his suspicions about Europe's intentions. This resulted in the ban on foreign religions. Christianity and Islam were affected in the same way.

[1] No source given.

> Christianity is good for women because it teaches them fidelity and purity, but for us men, Islam is better because it allows us to have many wives and do whatever else we want. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1949:11a).

Opinions about the two religions were therefore very divided. And it is understandable why N'joya allowed his wives to wear wedding rings without ever showing much conviction for Christianity, even though he sometimes wanted people to believe this through his actions, such as at the beginning of the mission in Fumban, when he was still interested in Christianity.

> In the middle of the city, on the market square in front of the royal court, Nschoja built a beautiful church in the Bamum style, and every Sunday he sat regularly in the place reserved for him. However, other influences were not far away. Paganism, rooted in the country since time immemorial, tempted the king, who seemed to be wavering, with sorcery and temptation. Islam was still dangerous. The more Nschoja learned about Christianity, the more he became convinced that it was divine truth. But it demanded too much from the rich pagan: his wives, his medicines and magic, and many traditional customs. The king therefore always kept to a middle course of his own choosing and, in this matter too, carried both burdens on his shoulders. He was soon on good terms with the missionaries and soon became involved in some kind of grisly sorcery. This indecisive nature was exploited by the Hausa traders, every one of whom, as they travelled through the country, was a convinced missionary for Mohammed's teachings. As long as German missionaries were in the country, the Mohammedans dared only approach the king in secret, but after our departure they had an easy game: they slandered Christianity, its messengers and its innate followers, and painted a glowing picture for the king of the bliss of Mohammed's disciples. Islam left the king everything he had possessed as a pagan, and even gave him a number of magical charms in the form of amulets to protect humans and animals from evil. Now he is a Muslim, and most of his wives have also converted to Islam. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1949:154).

This description of the religions in Fumban gives us an idea of the struggle that the representatives of Islam and Christianity must have endured. Rein-Wuhrmann, however, speaks mainly of the rivalry between the two religions and fails to point out that this indecision had something positive about it for N'joya. It left space for him to create a new religion that was intended to strengthen the state again and was thus perhaps the cause of the persecutions, whereas Islam had nothing to do with it. For the adoption of one of the two religions would also mean the dissolution of Bamum society. One, Christianity, diminished the prestige of men in society by opposing polygamy, while the other, Islam, no longer gave women any advantages.

N'joya's religion, which was conceived as a conglomerate of Islam and Christianity in addition to traditional animism, actually contained everything it needed to succeed.

N'joya had also refused to allow a Catholic mission to be established in his country. In this way, he spared his people the confusion and rivalry between Catholic and Protestant teachings, thus taking a decision that had often not been taken either by those who brought European ideologies or by the representatives of the colonised peoples.

> We would have loved to settle in Fumban, especially because the Bamum were such an important tribe... The attempt to settle failed due to the resistance of the great chief, who, although friendly and amiable, categorically forbade the settlement. (Emonts 1927:332).

But gradually, with the return of the Allies to Fumban in 1917 and the final settlement of the French in 1919, N'joya watched with resentment as Europe and its ideologies re-established themselves in the country. This time, it happened in a spirit of revenge on the part of the French, who were determined to erase all traces of the Germans and sideline their supporters. At that time, N'joya converted to Islam, which not only allowed him to practise animism, but also guaranteed the preservation of the feudal system.

THE BOOK OF MEDICINE AND MEDICINES

This is a work with the inscription: "*Pu lewa fu nzut fu libok*", which means "Book of Healing Medicines". It contains several books with treatises on various medicinal plants, on obstetrics and corresponding medicines, on the origin of diseases in both men and women, on the interpretation of visions or signs, and finally on dream interpretation. The sixth and last part is a record of the proverbial formulas and spells that accompany the treatments.

The writing of this book broke with an African tradition, as both herbal medicine and knowledge of diseases had previously been "probably one of the most secret sciences in Africa" (Dugast 1950A:67).

N'joya obtained the information necessary for the writing of this book from the fifteen doctors who were exclusively responsible for his well-being, as well as from the fifteen doctors for his wives and forty others who worked throughout the country.

N'joya wanted to propagate in a progressive way those insights of social utility that had previously been kept secret. It is not without reason that Dugast says of this book that it was the most widely read and distributed work of all publications in the Mum language. One might almost assume that N'joya made very precise distinctions between areas of knowledge that were of public benefit and those that were a secret, a matter of state, such as the use of the colours he had discovered and whose exclusive ownership he wanted to preserve.

The European world had suddenly opened up to N'joya. How artificial all customs that did not serve progress must have seemed to him! This is probably the only explanation for the impulse to write this book.

In fact, we encounter here the idea that dominates N'joya's work, which consists of giving meaning and form to his intellectual possessions, a kind of condensation and visualisation of what his ancestors acquired when they discovered the European world — whether to defy it or to equal it. We therefore reject Dugast's hypothesis that Göhring was the initiator of this book. We are now familiar with such hypotheses, which simply cut off the solution to problems and, strangely enough, always attribute them to that pastor, a so-called confidant of N'joya. However, if one is aware of the position of the Protestant mission at that time, which had only been in Fumban for three or four years, i.e. in its infancy, one would hardly think that these warriors of God would have made any particular effort to protect the Bamum from European imperialist ambitions.

> This week, the whole town lived in great fear. The king had suddenly fallen ill last Monday. He had a high fever, a headache and was vomiting. He sent for us immediately, and we were delighted by the trust he placed in the missionaries. (Rein-Wuhrmann, from a letter to her parents, 17 December 1911).

One could speak of a kind of competition between the European medicine practised by the missionaries, which was vigorously opposed by the Queen Mother, and the indigenous

medicine. The success of the latter was therefore predictable, a success that was clearly noticeable even before it began to spread.

This problem prompts us to ask what N'joya's aim was in writing the book. We do not know what this aim was. In any case, N'joya started from a kind of juxtaposition whose sole purpose could have been to reveal the realities of a genuine, indigenous medical science.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF N'JOYA FOR THE CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE BAMUM REGION

Only upon closer examination of N'joya's life and work does the significance of this man for the cultural history of his country become clear. He brought his people to a cultural level comparable to that of an advanced civilisation in essential elements, thus attracting the attention of ethnologists, historians, sociologists and archaeologists. And it was not without reason that some of them were tempted to speak of the Bamum as being of Egyptian origin or influenced by the north.

It can therefore be said that N'joya is one of those people in the history of nations who stand at the turning point of a new era. Historically speaking, N'joya led his people out of a period of darkness, unclear in the memory of its bearers, into a historically significant era, a time of great external influences, driven by conflicts that took place internally or came from outside.

N'joya thus proved himself a worthy king who inherited the dynastic balance from his ancestors but also knew how to adapt it to the circumstances of a new era.

Geographically speaking, under this king, the land of the Bamum gained clearly defined borders in its conflict with an enemy, the white man, who brought about the spiritual division of Africa through colonialism and led more than one black nation to collapse. N'joya was tasked with dealing with this division. He defended himself against foreign influences and anything that could threaten the unity of his country and his people.

It is not without reason that it is believed that of all N'joya's discoveries, the most significant was the invention of writing.

> However, there are limits where language as a means of communication is no longer sufficient, where its spatial and temporal limitations are no longer able to meet the demands of advancing cultural development and where people have had to create another tool capable of overcoming these limitations. This new tool is writing. (Jensen 1958: Introduction).

On the other hand, it suffices to recall the importance that ethnology attaches to writing in order to appreciate the role it has played in the history of peoples. Writing is often regarded as an essential criterion for classifying cultural trends. In ethnology, the terms "illiterate peoples" and "literate or advanced civilisations" are used in contrast to each other in an attempt to differentiate between cultures.

N'joya used writing not only as a mnemonic device to overcome time and space, but also to centre a circle of initiates who were to establish a sphere of cultural influence. N'joya did not attempt to consolidate his country's prestige through military conquests. He undertook truly intellectual campaigns, for example by inviting neighbouring kings to send pupils to be trained as teachers. In less than a decade, the fruits of N'joya's first attempts had become known to the Bagam, among whom the Englishman Malcolm later discovered a script, similar to that of N'joya in its first stage. The Mum script was already well known, as he notes in his introduction: "...to draw the widest possible circles into community efforts, to exchange acquired cultural assets and thereby enable their perfection, for the further education of future generations".

The Mum script thus ushered in a new phase in the cultural history of the Bamum country. It is a true starting point for high culture. Its effects, such as state organisation, formed the various other criteria that belong to the elements of a high culture. There might never have been a Chinese people without the Chinese script, which, as a pictographic writing system, was suited to the conditions of a state with a diversity of languages and races. With writing, N'joya also brought a new way of thinking to his people.

Parallel to developments in the cultural sphere, Jensen believes that writing seems to be striving towards "increasing abstraction", in which form seeks to correspond to the "increasing spirituality of content". Writing seems to have been the most effective tool of cultural assimilation in the Kingdom of Bamum. It opened up a new avenue of cultural exchange, which N'joya exploited, acting as a mediator himself. We emphasised N'joya's role as a diplomat, his position as a mediator between his people and foreign countries. He played the same role in the field of assimilation. He was the dynamic element that drove the acculturation process forward. Whenever he considered it useful or even necessary, he encouraged contact between external influences and Bamum tradition. Thus, bearers of the Koran, and the secular enemies of the Bamum, were first turned out of the capital Fumban. However, when the great civil war broke out, N'joya did not fail to call for aid of those who fought only to help Islam to victory. In doing so, he opened the way for the fanatical followers of this religion. Today, simply wearing the bubu, the Arab robe, is enough to distinguish the Bamum from their neighbours, the Bamileke, whose privileged class has also adopted this custom. Even politically, perhaps simply because of moral compulsion or cultural affinity, the Bamum today tend to look northwards. N'joya never hesitated to introduce innovations that he considered appropriate. Among other things, he had become familiar with the military methods of the Fulbe and, after the arrival of the Germans, studied the European model with the intention of building an army.

N'joya freely allowed the white men access, but he knew what to make of them. He proved this by advising his people to leave it to him to settle all conflicts with the colonial authorities, who had begun to establish themselves in the country both militarily and politically. While the whole of Africa was being undermined by the various systems that came from Europe, N'joya set himself the difficult task of opposing them. In order to better understand the role N'joya played in the conflict with the colonial powers, it is useful to study the various trends in colonial policy that emerged in Africa, as the influences of some of them sometimes came to bear

on a single people one after the other. Thus, following their "wait and see" principle, the English opted for indirect administration of their colonies. They imposed certain restrictions on this policy in order to better apply European concepts of morality. It is not surprising that the methods of such a system remained constant.

The French, abstract in their colonial policy and intent on acting according to the principles of reason rather than diplomacy in the true sense of the word, suffered failure after failure. Until 1908, the Belgians were primarily concerned with the economic returns of their colonial states and were forced to implement reforms after the First World War. They adopted English administrative principles and at the same time attempted to solve the language problem. The German colonial experience ended with the First World War, thus avoiding the saddest chapter of colonisation. The Portuguese, who were initially suspected of promoting slavery in their African colonies, pursued a policy of racial mixing for centuries. The Spanish did not deny their kinship with the talented Portuguese in their colonial policy; they imitated them. The Italians, finally, despite fascism, strove for a humane and balanced colonisation. However, their colonial era was short.

Every country with colonies passed on part of its character or its problems to the colonies. And N'joya was one of those African princes who had to contend with the influences of successive colonisations. First came the Germans with Captain Ramsey and Lieutenant Sandrock, who arrived in Fumban on 6 July 1902. They marked the beginning of German colonisation in the Bamum country. From the outset, it pursued a goal that pioneers such as Passarge had set themselves.

> If any German colony has a future, it is Cameroon. It is the most tropical and humid, and therefore also the most fertile, territory at our disposal. Plantation farming is beginning to flourish, oil and rubber are produced in greater quantities than in any other German colony, and the production of these goods can be significantly increased through rational management and exploitation of the country's rich resources. This can in fact be achieved with astonishingly little means. If only a tenth of the sums spent on East Africa were spent on Cameroon, great things could be achieved. I need only remind you of the infinite vitality of the country. Its countless waterfalls, which are now only lamented because they

> hinder shipping, could be used to supply electrical power at little cost, as they are so close to the coast that they can be reached by large steamers. In an ideal case, the entire Cameroon coast could be supplied with electricity at very low cost. (Passarge 1895:534).

These German principles of colonisation, which had been developed long before the Kingdom of Bamum was conquered and incorporated into the political entity of Cameroon, were to guide colonisation in the land of Bamum. This purely economic objective of German colonisation was one of the reasons for the agreement between N'joya and the German foreign rulers. Passarge abandoned the plan to settle German farmers in Africa, especially in Cameroon, where, as he said, the climate on the coast was unfavourable and where connections with the interior, which had a more favourable climate, were difficult. He continued:

> The colony (Cameroon) can be exploited in three ways: trade, plantation farming and livestock breeding...
> Trade is the most important and profitable industry. We owe the acquisition of the colony to trade, and it deserves detailed discussion. (Passarge 1895:521).

Despite the purely economic objective, he ultimately takes security measures that can be interpreted differently.

> The tasks in South Cameroon are therefore, in brief, as follows:
> 1. Merging coastal and inland trade by creating a safe path accessible to the Hausa and by attracting the Hausa to the coast.
> 2. Securing the Bantu tribes by means of a belt of stations, whose task must be strictly defensive. Behind the belt, the population can then multiply and the economic exploitation of the country can be significantly increased. (Passarge 1895:525).

Not only the Hausa were affected by these plans, but also the Bamum living in the interior of the country. There was even an intention to lay a railway line from the coast to Fumban, which would undoubtedly have meant a decisive change in the economic and cultural situation of the Bamum.

Measures taken to achieve a laudable goal are not always the most fortunate. Although based on the idea of monoculture, German colonisation adopted methods that could be described as "colonialist". N'joya was able to escape them as long as he was not stripped of all his ruling power.

> In the first government before the First World War, he was allowed to keep some of his offices: he still collected all taxes, a certain percentage of which went to him. He provided all the carriers for the government, the mission and the merchants, because at that time there were no railways or cars, and everything that was needed had to be carried 450 km from the coast to Fumban, the large mountain town 1,200 m above sea level. Before the First World War, Nschoya still had the right of jurisdiction. He was not allowed to pass death sentences, and that was a good thing, because the pagans are quick to take a life. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1949:28).

The more N'joya had to offer his services to the various colonial powers and was forced to cooperate with them, the more he regretted their differences of opinion. He had to show the colonial government the utmost discipline, ruling out any suspicion of rebellion. He had to hand over souls to the missionaries, because in theory, Bamum could only convert to Christianity with his consent. And most of the merchants only wanted to exploit him and his people. N'joya had to fight these three groups, which had a particularly negative effect on the soul of the colonised peoples, or work against them through diplomatic channels. It can best be said here that throughout his life, N'joya tried to come to terms with everything that was "foreign". The government authorities were usually the bearers of ideologies or methods designed to curtail the rights of the individuals to whom they were applied, in order to make them useful instruments in the hands of any beneficiary who considered himself part of the diplomatic corps and, as a representative of the colonial power, enjoyed its guarantee of immunity.

One of these beneficiaries, missionaries, were characterised by a strict puritanism and respected no spiritual values other than those they themselves taught.

N'joya limited the number of those who had to actively participate in the missionaries' teachings to his family and his closest subjects, the N'ji. The Bamum, at least, following N'joya's example, were convinced that Christianity was a religion for women, from whom every polygamous man expected fidelity. He was also aware of the missionaries' rather limited authority and had no reason to feel concerned about spiritual corruption. One must be aware of a fact that characterises the behaviour of N'joya: for him, it meant ruling, controlling the minds of his

subjects. This view led him to found a new religion, as he knew what intellectual and moral subjugation the acceptance of a foreign religion could lead to.

The merchant, on the other hand, personified the materialistic principles on which European civilisation is built.

These groups, which seemed to pursue different goals, nevertheless formed a whole. They represented the different aspects of their people's culture. For example, as much as N'joya admired the organisational talent of the Europeans, he despised the personal behaviour that underpinned the successful intrigues and business deals in which the Europeans proved themselves capable.

N'joya wanted to remain the spiritual leader of his country by protecting his people from these groups. To this end, he made use of his position as judge, which enabled him to control relations between the Europeans and his subjects. In this way, he guided his people through this first phase of colonisation in the Bamum country.

During this period, Europe was at war. The First World War affected Fumban as it did elsewhere in Africa, with British and French officers evacuating German personnel in 1916. It was not until the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919 that the fate of the Bamum country was decided. The entire western border region of Cameroon, slightly less than a quarter of the actual country, was awarded to the British. The remaining part, including the Bamum country, fell into French hands.

In many respects, the treaty was not honoured. Cameroon, which had the status of a League of Nations mandate, was governed no differently from the other colonies. Where the Germans had preceded the French, the French additionally reserved the right to "erase the memory of them in the first instance". Rein-Wuhrmann testified to what happened with N'joya in Fumban after the war.

> But he was not doing well at all. The new government was not as well disposed towards him as the old one. He was reproached for having got on so well with the Germans. He

> was stripped of all his rights and had no say in anything anymore. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1949:30).

For N'joya, a king without power was as good as no king at all.

> Once, when he was feeling particularly bad, he sent for me and said, 'Mother, I am going to write to the governor and tell him that he must either give me back the power I used to have or kill me. I said to him, 'Dear King, I know something even better: if the king would give his sad heart to the Saviour, then everything could still turn out well. How happy the king was many years ago when he loved the Saviour'. Then Nschoya shook his head sadly and said, 'No, mother, it's no longer possible. It's too late now.' (Rein-Wuhrmann 1949:30).

This marked the beginning of the decline of the Bamum Empire. N'joya's power, that is, his contact with his people, stood and fell with them. It is understandable that he found it painful to lose them. Religion, which, like any other institution, he believed should serve the state, naturally lost its significance. N'joya saw his people at the mercy of the white man, who, unable to derive any benefit from the monarchy, had to introduce new political institutions. In addition to the colonial authorities, new local authorities were created, which were determined more by the French colonial government than by the constitution of the Bamum. In order to destroy the influence of the king once and for all, the colonial government promoted the independence of the individual small principalities of the Bamum country, thus decentralising traditional power. And since N'joya was exiled in 1931, the French had been trying to install a new ruler who would suit them better, in the hope that N'joya would not regain the throne.

However, the power that N'joya had always wanted to preserve passed into the hands of a simple interpreter, Mose Jeyap, a man of strong character. A letter from this man to Mrs Rein-Wuhrmann, who attributes various qualities to him, characterises him well:

> I have been everything: a teacher at the Basel Mission, head of the royal school, evangelist for the Paris Mission, interpreter for the French government, leader of the craftsmen in Fumban, and a planter on my own account. The best thing is that I am a child of God. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1948:168).

As an interpreter, he had the misfortune of having to work in a position that put him in every conceivable difficult situation between two opposing sides. For his mostly bitter experiences, he was eventually awarded the title of vice-king.

> When Mose Jeyap passed his language exam in Duala with distinction and was already looking forward to returning to his homeland to serve as an evangelist and church leader, the Paris Mission informed him that they wanted him to work as an interpreter for the French government in Fumban. I do not know whether Moses was pleased with his new position. When I returned to Fumban in 1920, he had already settled into his work, but he was not happy. The government official who resided in Fumban at the time may have been a capable civil servant, but he was certainly not a good person, and his native interpreter was morally and humanly far superior to the man who liked to boast that he had been a 'real Parisian street urchin'! Anyone who has not lived in the tropics cannot imagine the life led by many government officials, merchants and planters there, and Mose Jeyap's superior was one of the worst of his kind, so bad that, to the credit of the French government, he was dismissed without notice in 1921. But he had exerted his sinister influence for years, and Mose Jeyap had to translate all his evil, mean and criminal orders, commands and wishes to the people. The French lieutenant particularly hated the king and tormented him so much that Nschoya almost trembled when he heard the name of his tormentor. Mose Jeyap also had to act as interpreter at the royal court, and some of the fear and hatred that Nschoya felt towards the Frenchman stuck to the interpreter! Mose Jeyap also had to participate in the immorality indulged in by the lieutenant, in that he had to negotiate with the girls whom the European claimed for himself, or he had to talk to the husbands whose wives the lieutenant liked and wanted for himself. In order to give a semblance of righteousness to the wickedness he committed in countless cases, Mose Jeyap had to bring the husbands the purchase price they had paid for their wives each time. Of course, these women were always forced to go to the government station, and there were many tears and many sleepless nights in the farmsteads that the Frenchman visited in this way. Who can blame the simple people of central Cameroon for not only fearing and hating the Europeans, but also transferring their fear and hatred to the man who had to translate the lieutenant's wishes and orders to them! The king hated his cousin with all his heart, and the people also considered him almost as powerful and cruel as the Europeans themselves. Anyone who had anything to seek, ask or report to him first turned to Mose Jeyap, and many people who had something to hide and feared punishment sought to bribe the interpreter. However, they never succeeded, and everyone had to give Mose the testimony that he was incorruptible. Although Mose Jeyap had become a very powerful man in his homeland and remained so for many years, he was not happy, neither in his office nor in his family. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1949:155).

Rein-Wuhrmann describes a new type of African ruler in the person of Mose Jeyap, who was a useful tool for the colonial government. Nevertheless, the role played by Mose Jeyap in this second phase of colonisation was by no means insignificant. Without representing the dynamic aspect of acculturation, as we could say of N'joya, he was merely a simple tool for both

sides. In fact, while remaining the indispensable interpreter and translator for the French authorities, he took upon himself all the suffering of his people.

> As long as there was no road leading to the mountain-ringed Negro residence, Fumban was known only to a few Europeans. Strangers rarely came to this large Negro town. But when a road had to be built in 1921 for the visit of the French governor, Fumban soon became a first-class resort for foreigners. Those who had worked themselves tired on the coast or fallen ill there travelled to Fumban to recover in the fresh mountain air. The simple, beautiful 'town hall' made way for a more or less modern hotel, and at certain times of the year the town was teeming with Europeans. Many liked it so much that they bought land and planted coffee plantations. Others opened trading posts and flooded the country with European junk, which displaced the local crafts. No Negro bought the beautiful, hand-forged but soft knives at the market anymore; instead, everyone now bought a pocket knife that could be folded up at a trading post. The beautiful hand-woven and hand-dyed cloths also disappeared from the market. The men began to wear European costumes, and the women wrapped themselves and their children in European cloths of incredibly tasteless designs and colour combinations. More and more, European utensils replaced the women's own beautiful, traditional ones in the women's shelters. Tin cans replaced the beautiful old pumpkin and clay bowls on the heads of women and girls as they went to the springs. Enamel pans were used to hold the food cooked between three stones on the open hearth, and European pipes, baskets and bags replaced the old ones that had been beautiful and sufficient for hundreds of years. This is how the Bamum people saw their beautiful craft die: Mose Jeyap saw it too. And it touched his heart deeply, especially when the blacksmiths, dyers, weavers, leatherworkers, potters and casters came to him and, as the intermediary between the people and the government, complained to him about their plight. Mose discussed the matter with his philanthropic superior and obtained permission to establish a local museum to display everything that could be considered a traditional product. Now all the craftsmen were busy, and there was a flurry of activity everywhere. The most beautiful objects were brought to Moses, publicly exhibited by him, admired by the Europeans, ordered, bought and well paid for. Hardly a white man left Fumban without taking some beautiful object with him, and in many houses in France you can now see pipe bowls, weapons, fabrics, baskets and leather goods, as they used to be found in every Negro hut in Fumban. In this way, Mose saved the local crafts. Although not for the use of his fellow tribesmen, which is a pity, he did provide many craftsmen with a source of income and a livelihood. (Rein-Wuhrmann 1949:160).

In fact, Mose N'Jeyap founded the artists' street with the help of the French administration, which was faced with the task of satisfying the constant stream of tourists coming to Fumban. The profession practised by these craftsmen and artists had been passed down through the families, and the appearance of objects of European origin could have caused a social problem if the craftsmen, threatened by unemployment, had not been drawn into the stream of souvenir-seeking foreigners.

A museum had to be established in conjunction with a craftsmen's union to facilitate purchases and orders. And it was the interpreter's job to make the administration's intentions known or simply to have them carried out, as Mose Jeyap did. But even if the artist was now dependent on commissions from tourists instead of being tied to the court as in the past, most of the motifs, especially those that derived their meaning solely from the veneration of the king, could not be executed without the king's permission. This was sufficient reason for the artist and the man who had to place the order, such as Mose Jeyap, to be considered lifeless in the eyes of the Bamum, as they violated the cult of the king. However, when we speak of vulgarisation, this does not only apply to cult objects, but also to the direction taken by Bamum art with the elaboration of foreign themes imposed by the new patrons.

We have seen how willing N'joya was to find practical solutions to problems, even if he could not avoid violating a taboo.

> King Njoya undoubtedly played a major role in the development of Bamum art. Together with Mose Jejab and several other masters, he is credited with a 'Renaissance of Bamum art'. The contact between paganism, Christianity and Islam during King Njoya's reign had a lasting impact on the art of the Bamum region. In keeping with the close ties between artisans and the royal court, Njoya followed the example of his ancestors, and it was on his initiative that the arts were intensified. It is symptomatic of the overall development of Bamum art that Njoya, under increasing pressure from Christianity and Islam, felt compelled to allow the emblem of the double-headed snake, previously reserved for the king, to be used in secular art. Since then, the motif has appeared on countless decorative and cast pieces, carvings, and so on. The double-headed snake, the Bamum snake, has become the symbol of the Bamum country par excellence. The same applies to the use of spider, chameleon and lizard motifs. Snakes, spiders, lizards and frogs (toads) are the most popular motifs in modern arts and crafts in the Bamum country. Njoya's personal preference for architecture, as evidenced by the construction of the new Sultan's Palace in 1916 according to his own plans on the site of the old burnt-down palace, and Islamic influences were among the reasons for the creation of carved door panels and flat wooden reliefs, which are now among the most striking examples of Bamum craftsmanship and have also been imitated outside Fumbans, for example near Dschang in Bamilekeland. Njoya's conversion to Islam, which came after some hesitation, gave the domestic crafts further opportunities to influence and opened the door to the influx of Arabic elements. Indigo plantations created the conditions for dyed yarns and fabrics, and Njoya's openness to European models and his efforts to imitate them or develop them further in the Bamum spirit contributed to giving Bamum arts and crafts a wealth of new impressions and adapting them to new requirements. The efforts of French authorities in the last few years to create new sales opportunities for Bamum arts and crafts through exhibitions in Duala, Yaoundé, and so on, and through publications and the development of tourism, through

> assistance measures for artisans in procuring materials (wood, cotton, copper, etc.), the establishment of art schools and, last but not least, the organisation of the artists' street in Fumban, naturally had an impact on the further development of Bamum arts and crafts. Whereas in the past the court, or rather the monarchy, acted as patron through its commissions, this role was taken over by commercially and folkloristically oriented tourism when the religious and political conditions for it no longer existed. Tourism became the new 'patron', revealing its taste in a typical tourist and souvenir industry. Old traditions still resonate here and there, but they appear in a new guise. The profanation of arts and crafts and the associated change in function have resulted in a lack of connection between the 'artist' and his 'artwork', and the products of the 'artist', which have come about under a foreign dictat, clearly show signs of decline. The fault lies less with the failure of the artist than with the customer. (Hirschberg 1960:91).

As Hirschberg clearly points out, it is possible to compare the support that N'joya gave to Bamum art with the help that Mose Jeyap provided. Only in this sense can the work of these two multi-talented men in the field of art be understood. When N'joya supported the artisans, he was not yet thinking about the influx of foreign products. However, Mose Jeyap's initiative really kicked in when it became necessary to prevent a looming social drama and the complete disappearance of arts and crafts in the country, as was the case in many other African countries where trade in European products had a disastrous effect on indigenous art when it was not supported from any quarter.

We can add the following findings from our own research to Hirschberg's information: there was no art school in Fumban, as confirmed by a letter from Prince Mama N'sangu N'joya dated 8 January 1960.

Furthermore, there is not just one museum in Fumban. The royal palace has its own museum, which was probably built during N'joya's reign. It mainly contains objects closely associated with the ruling dynasty, ranging from those used by N'share to the armour worn by M'buembue to the latest inventions made by N'joya, such as the corn mill and weaving patterns.

N'joya sensed the onslaught of European industry and preserved the heritage of his ancestors, which today, together with his own work, constitutes the treasure of the royal family of the Bamum. Here, N'joya appears as the true last Bamum king, who came to take stock of the dynastic work that spanned several centuries and encompassed seventeen Bamum kings. He is

also the one who glorified the kingdom of his fathers. In his historical book, he sings its praises. One of N'joya's great achievements, for which he is highly regarded today, is that he protected his people at the moment when they were perishing, along with their culture. It is not surprising that the Bamum still live in the era of King N'joya, whose writing, as Dugast acknowledges, is as familiar in initiated circles as the Latin alphabet is to the people of the European world. The exceptional position enjoyed by the Bamum, namely that of being able to claim their own culture in the twentieth century, would be even more apparent if the Bamum country had not been arbitrarily inserted between the artificial borders of a complex political entity known as Cameroon.

Were it not for this artificial demarcation of borders, which still disfigures the African continent today, the Kingdom of Bamum would appear to be an exception within the political and social problems that threatened Africa in the second half of the twentieth century.

But although these borders were drawn to define the political status of the various contemporary African states, thanks to N'joya's efforts, the Kingdom of Bamum is an exception within the political entity of Cameroon to which it belongs. Thus, between two centuries and across two eras, N'joya created a climate of balance and high culture in this process of acculturation in which the country was irrevocably involved, which can serve as an example for the whole of Africa.

We believe that we have achieved the goal that was set for us. We also made it our task to reveal the origins of N'joya's work, origins that can be explained by the character of the man, his relationship to his environment, and his statements and actions in various situations. The latter task, which was more of an experimental solution than a methodical compilation, led us to point out understandable errors made by certain authors. From there, we touched on the problem of collectivism and what we have referred to here as ethnocentrism, both of which proved to be the result of subjective considerations that these authors attribute to a scientific method.

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{Readers are reminded that this bibliography dates to the 1962 original. Later scholarship has not been included.}

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CURRICULUM VITAE

I was born on 16 October 1936 in Edea near Duala, Cameroon.

After completing primary school in Edea and Duala, I attended secondary school, and occasionally the Collège St. François in Fontenay sous-Bois (Seine), from 1950 to 1954, and the Collège St. Bertin in St. Omer (P.de C.) from 1954 to 1956.

I spent my first year at university from 1956 to 1957 at the Institut Catholique de Paris and the Musée d'Homme (Sorbonne), where I began studying ethnology and sociology. From 1957, I continued these studies at the University of Vienna.

In 1959, I undertook a research trip to Cameroon together with Mr. Univ.Doz.Dr.W.Hirschberg.

During the winter semester of 1959/60, I was a student of Prof. Dr. Baumann at the University of Munich.

After several suggested topics, I have been working on my dissertation "The Significance of N'joyas for the Cultural History of the Bamum Country" since 1960, based on my research

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