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What is This?

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Indigenous psychologies predate psychology as an academic discipline (Nsamenang, 2006); as such, it seems curious to describe the movement for indigenous psychologies as an interesting new phenomenon in psychology (Allwood & Berry, 2006). This perhaps explains why scientific psychology has been referred to as a Euro-American “export” commodity (Danziger, 2006) produced by European enlightenment and imperialism. The roots of academic psychology in Cameroon, a country in west Central Africa with an estimated population of 20,030,362 (World Bank, 2011), are embedded in the history of Africa as the origin of the human species severely traumatized by Western imperialism and continuing neocolonialism.

The territory of present-day Cameroon was first settled during the Neolithic period. The longest continuous inhabitants, with their “Bubba” psychology, included the Sao civilization around Lake Chad and the Baka (Pygmies) in the southeastern rainforest (DeLaney & DeLancey, 2000). From here, Bantu migrations into eastern, southern, and central Africa are believed to have originated about 2,000 years ago (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2007). Having been the crossroads for the extensive migrations of many peoples (Smithsonian Institution, 1984), the country is home today to over 250 different linguistic groups (Che, 1985) and is called “Africa in miniature” or “all of Africa contained in a single triangle” (Dobel, 1977, p. 2) for its geological, ecological, and cultural diversity.

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Cameroon was abducted into European spheres of psychology, first, when Portuguese explorers reached its coast in 1472, noticed an abundance of the mud lobster *Lepidophthalmus turneranus* in the Wouri River, and named the territory *Rio dos Camarões*, the name from which *Cameroon* derived. Second, Cameroon became a German colony in 1884 until after World War I when the territory was divided unequally between France and Britain, a split reflective today in the differing orientations of English-speaking and French-speaking Cameroonians to psychology and issues of governance. Over the following few centuries, European interests regularized trade with the coastal peoples and Christian missionaries pushed inland. In the early 19th century, Modibo Adama led Fulani soldiers on a jihad in the north against non-Muslim and partially Muslim peoples and established the Adamawa Emirate. Settled peoples who fled the jihad caused a major redistribution of population (Fanso, 1989). Thus, psychology in Cameroon comprises a triple inheritance (Mazrui, 1986) from indigenous, Islamic-Arabic and Western-Christian strands.

Most, if not all, psychologists in Cameroon are Black. Judging from the number of persons who have earned at least a bachelor's degree in psychology, psychology is not as popular an academic discipline as in the United States or even Ghana, Nigeria, or South Africa because there are very few indeed. A Google search of institutions of psychology in Cameroon revealed seven such institutions: (1) Bamenda University of Science and Technology, Bamenda City; (2) University of Buea, Buea; (3) University of Douala, Douala; (4) University of Dschang, Dschang; (5) University of Maroua, Maroua; (6) University of Yaoundé I, Yaoundé; and (7) University of Yaoundé II, Yaoundé. The University of Bamenda has recently been added to this list. Few Cameroonian institutions run a "standard" psychology department; what they offer are applied psychology programs such as educational psychology, guidance and counseling, and inclusive education. The curricula for the few institutions that offer psychology do not concentrate on indigenous psychologies. For example, Professor Anne Petersen (2012) of Michigan University recently reviewed what she characterized as "an excellent curriculum for a BSc Degree in Psychology" proposed for the University of Bamenda but queried, "What flexibility do you have to make the curriculum more African?"

One remarkable feature of the psychology scene in Cameroon is its low-priority status in academic institutions and lack of esprit de corps and collegial interstimulation, even among psychologists within the same institution. There is even perceptible tension between French-speaking psychologists and their English-speaking peers, which is deep-seated in apparent differential colonial orientations to the discipline. Psychologists of both language blocks constituted a Cameroon Psychological Society in 1987, but this writer is not aware of any single activity it has ever undertaken. It is for this reason

that the Cameroon Anglophone Psychological Association was founded on May 5, 2012, with 42 persons in attendance at its foundational assembly, including some French speakers who are on the foundational executive committee. The Cameroon Anglophone Psychological Association is currently planning its inaugural psychology conference in May 2013, during which it will adopt its draft Constitution.

It is clear from the foregoing that the research scene is remarkable for its uncoordinated and modestly collaborative nature. A Google search revealed that most of the sparse research on Cameroon online has been produced by non-Cameroonians. Nevertheless, a few Cameroonians are active in international psychological societies, such as the International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development, the International Association of Cross-Cultural Psychology, Association de Psychologie Interculturelle, and the 30th International Congress of Psychology in Cape Town that gave birth to the Pan-African Psychology Union. Some have output remarkable works. For example, Nsamenang and Tchombe (2011) edited *African Educational Theories and Practices: A Generative Teacher Education Curriculum* that Opanya (2011) has described as a

monumental piece of work—covering nine thematic sections in thirty-six intellectually heavy weight chapters, mobilizing forty-six contributors from sixteen countries—breaks new ground in its efforts to address the challenge of *kutiwa kasumba* (brainwashing) that has been Africa's burden since the colonization of the continent and since its assimilation of western education. (p. xxv)

Much earlier, Nsamenang (1992) was the first social scientist from a less developed country to offer “a comprehensive, systematic account of human development which is sensitive to the needs, interests, and ecologies of non-western cultures and individuals” (as described by W. J. Lonner and J. W. Berry, the series editors).

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