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THE POLITICS OF PERSONAL RELATIONS: BEYOND NEOPATRIMONIAL PRACTICES IN NORTHERN CAMEROON

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> Virtually all students of politics in Africa . . . have misunderstood the nature of political legitimacy in African regimes . . . [W]e have tended to underestimate the importance of political culture.
>
> [Schatzberg, 1993: 445]

La presence de tous est vivement souhaitée ![1] For the last time, the local radio station in Ngaoundéré invites everybody to go to the airport and receive *their* new Minister. Al Hajji Baba Hamadou from Ngaoundéré had just been nominated *Ministre chargé de mission à la présidence de la République* by President Paul Biya and is on his first visit to his home town, Ngaoundéré, in northern Cameroon, after a few weeks in office.[2]

Previously the *Ministres chargé de mission à la présidence* have been well educated young men personally related to the President (Flambeau Ngayap, 1983: 119–25). Al Hajji Baba Hamadou's appointment is consistent with this custom: he holds a Master's degree in history from Yaoundé University and has long been a deputy for the Rassemblement démocratique du peuple camerounais (RDPC). The position of Minister *chargé de mission* serves as a springboard to greater power and prestige. Many well known Cameroonian Ministers and directors of national businesses started their political career as a young *chargé de mission*, including President Paul Biya himself, nominated *chargé de mission* at the age of twenty-nine under President Ahidjo (Flambeau Ngayap, 1983: 120). The duties of a *chargé de mission* include responsibility for daily functions at the presidential palace, its personnel and its budget and arranging the President's domestic and international travels. The holder is thus very close to the President. To be one of the President's chums is a very privileged position and offers excellent security for personal well-being in a state often described as neopatrimonial.

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[1] 'The presence of everybody is highly encouraged!'

[2] He was nominated on 19 October 1996 and came to Ngaoundéré on 14 November the same year.

NEOPATRIMONIALISM

The term 'neopatrimonial' derives from Max Weber's concept of patrimonial authority (1947/1979: 1013). To Weber patrimonial authority was a form of traditional authority characterised by personal rule acknowledged by tradition and personal loyalty. The ruler's personal preferences were more important than codified law, and the ruler treated the people under his authority as a patriarch treated his family. This implied that no distinction was drawn between the public and the private, and that policies were designed to benefit not the state at large but groups of people connected by personal ties with the ruler.

Since Jean-François Médard used the term to describe the Cameroonian state in 1977 it has been adopted by a number of scholars (e.g. Amundsen, 1997; Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997; Mehler, 1998). Basically, neopatrimonialism is understood as politics that stress the importance of personal political relations and in which political positions in the state are used as a means of accumulating economic capital through the personal distribution of public resources in a more or less hidden way. According to Médard, Cameroon is a neopatrimonial state because the pre-colonial and colonial systems of authority were never integrated and hence created complex postcolonial state structures (1977: 37). This non-integration has resulted in a state that is at the same time 'soft' and 'hard', soft by virtue of being profoundly corrupt and incompetent, and thus ineffective, and hard on account of the constitutional power accorded the President and because of his control over the administration and over society (Médard, 1977). The result of this non-integration is a state characterised as neopatrimonial: patrimonial because 'l'authorité politico-administrative est convertie en patrimoine privé par la bureaucratie' and neo 'parce que le phénomène est camouflé par une sorte de simulacre, dont le but est de construire une façade publique apparente' (Médard, 1977: 56)[3]

Similar concepts have been developed by other scholars to characterise the politics of the state in Africa. These concepts include presidentialism (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997), belly politics and clientelism (Bayart, 1993), economy of affection (Hyden, 1983) and prependal politics (Joseph, 1987). While the different concepts each have a slightly different focus, all of them stress the importance of the personal distribution of public resources and the personalisation of politics.[4]

In this article I try to understand how politics is manifested and experienced in a locality in northern Cameroon. To do so I focus on

[3] 'Political-administrative authority is converted into private patrimony by the bureaucracy . . . this phenomenon is camouflaged by a sort of simulacrum, the goal of which is to construct a visible public façade.'

[4] Médard (1994) argues that the differences between clientelism, presidentialism and neopatrimonialism are only semantic. For further discussion of the differences between the concepts see Hansen (2000: 117–23).

two actual happenings: the arrival of a Minister in his home town, Ngaoundéré, and the speech he gave to the traditional elites of the town. These two events bring together both 'modern' and 'traditional' actors in politics and illustrate how they are related. The article lends support to the concept of neopatrimonialism as imperative but not sufficient to explain politics in Cameroon. In line with the writings of Achille Mbembe, the article suggests the necessity of reflecting more broadly on the chaotically plural nature of the postcolonial political culture in order to understand power relations and politics in Cameroon today (Mbembe, 1992, 1995; Mbembe and Roitman, 1997). My aim is to emphasise notions of honour, status and hierarchy in the 'modern' state and in the ideologies of the 'traditional' elites in order to paint a more nuanced picture of politics in contemporary Cameroon.

HONOURS COMPARED

The entire elite of Ngaoundéré came to the airport that day: the Governor with his prefect and sub-prefect, the Mayor with his first and second deputy mayors, the Lamido[5] with an important entourage, the military lieutenant with some of his officers, the wealthiest person in town, Al Hajji Abbo, with some of his clients, and the most important businessmen and cattle owners. Everyone with any influence on politics in Ngaoundéré was at the airport early that Thursday morning in November 1996 to *receive* the Minister *well*. Only a few ordinary people, however, obeyed the radio message and betook themselves to the airport, several kilometres out of town. Those who did arrived by taxi or in small lorries made available by local 'Big Men'.

The Lamido arrived at the airport in his chauffeur-driven black Chevrolet with purple interior.[6] The police allowed him to drive past the barrier on to the runway and get out just in front of the airport building, where the Governor, Prefect and Sub-prefect were already seated in the shade.

By arriving later than the administrative elite the Lamido marked his high status. Dealy has argued that 'the later one arrives for an appointment, the more people who await one's entrance, then the more excellent one must be' (1977/1992: 51).[7] However, on this occasion no one waiting at the airport was able to influence the time of the plane's arrival. And planes did not arrive on schedule in Cameroon in those days, even if they were carrying a Minister. Not to be present when the

[5] *Lamido* is the title of a traditional Muslim Fulani ruler in northern Cameroon and northern Nigeria. The *lamido* of Ngaoundéré rules about 16,000 km^2, totalling roughly 200,000 persons.

[6] The Lamido had invited me to be with him that day, so I arrived with him in the car and was given a small wooden chair next to him at the airport.

[7] To arrive late is a common sign of importance in many parts of the world. See e.g. Ruud (2000) and Strandsbjerg (2000).

aircraft arrived would have been extremely impolite, and would have been taken as a refusal of the Minister's friendship or, worse, as a complete denial of his importance. By turning up as late as he did the Lamido ran the risk of being *too* late. However, he arrived in time, but later than official hierarchy and officious practice prescribed—later than the Governor.

This display of precedence created a tense atmosphere at the airport between the newly appointed Governor, Samson Enamé Enamé, and Lamido Issa Maïgari.[8] They had never met before, and the late arrival of the Lamido perhaps demonstrated to the new Governor, a Southerner, that in the North chiefs were important persons, and in Ngaoundéré very important indeed.

The Lamido's seat was more imposing than that of the Prefect and Sub-prefect. The Governor, however, was allotted the best chair.[9] The formal hierarchy was thus not respected at the airport, since all three administrators were of higher rank than the Lamido. The normal procedure in Ngaoundéré is for the Lamido to be positioned between the Prefect and the Sub-prefect. At the airport that day, however, the normal procedure was set aside in honour of the Lamido.

The make-up of the Lamido's entourage also denoted special status. He was followed by a group of twenty-three *faada* (royal council) members and eighteen *griots* (praise singers). All the men in the Lamido's entourage sat behind and beside him on the hot and dusty ground in front of the airport building. Many of them were dressed in cloth printed with the photo of the President and his party's logo to celebrate the Minister and the President, and to demonstrate the Lamido's loyalty to the party.

No other patron was accompanied by so many clients. To command a huge number of clients is a sign of importance, but it is also a sign of generosity. Even the most important and wealthy person will have few followers if he is not generous. Clients need expect no favours in return for supporting a 'Big Man' who is mean, and are sure to desert him for a more generous patron.

An important part of the Lamido's entourage at the airport was the praise singers, the *griots*. According to those present the *griots* relieved the boredom of waiting. But they honoured the Lamido by singing songs about his *grandeur*, and the songs made it clear who was the most important person at the airport that day:

Issa, Lamido of Ngaoundéré,
Issa, Lamido of Ngaoundéré,

[8] Samson Enamé Enamé later became Minister of the Interior in Cameroon. Lamido Issa Maïgari died in 1999 and was followed by his eldest son after weeks of debate among the kingmakers and the central administration. See Hansen (2000: 95–116) and Mahmoudou (2000: 255–88) on this issue.

[9] Although it would be interesting to know who arranged the chairs, and hence the hierarchy, I have not been able to find out.

Issa, the father of Hayatou,
Issa, Lamido of Ngaoundéré.
Nothing is like the power of Lamido Issa,
Issa, Lamido of Ngaoundéré.
The narrow-minded will find themselves near God.
Only the one who created you can end your life.
Issa, the father of El Hadji Hayatou,
Issa, the father of Prince Kabirou,
Issa, the father of Awalou,
Issa, the father of Prince Yaya,
son of Yaya and grandson of Abbo.
Nothing can change this, nothing will ever change this.
Issa, Lamido of Ngaoundéré.
Adamaoua is in the hands of Issa,
nothing is like the power of Issa.
Those who enter will spend the whole night until the morning.
Issa, Lamido of Ngaoundéré.
The whole of Adamaoua is his,
Issa, Lamido of Ngaoundéré.
The east and the south are his,
Issa, Lamido of Ngaoundéré.
The west and the north are his,
Issa, Lamido of Ngaoundéré.[10]

The genealogy of Lamido Issa Maïgari and the enormous territory under his control are emphasised in this praise song. By listing four of his sons, the eldest twice, and his father's and grandfather's names the *griots* remind the audience that Lamido Issa Maïgari is a direct descendant of the heroic Lamido Mohammadou Abbo, who was killed by the German army in 1901. Genealogy is the only formal criterion for the selection of a *lamido* and forms thus one of the major legitimising bases of his power. Focusing upon the large territory under his control presents the Lamido as a great chief, the most important in Adamaoua. The Lamido represented generosity, importance and *grandeur* at the airport that day.

While waiting for the plane to land the Lamido sat on his chair and received the salutations of the passers-by. Some took their shoes off as they passed, others just said, '*A sabje*, *Barkama*,' 'At your service, Great One!' while casting their eyes down. Removing one's shoes, calling someone *Barkama* ('Great One!') and averting the gaze are common signs of great respect known to everybody in northern Cameroon. Very few passed the Lamido without a salutation. Such a clear sign of disrespect he remarked with a small grimace.

Only a few of the most important people among the elite came up to the Lamido to speak to him. The Mayor, from the opposition party, the Union nationale pour la démocracie et le progrès (UNDP), came to

[10] Song by praise singer Oumarou; recorded by the author, translated by Mme Fatimatou at Ngaoundéré-Anthropos office and the author.

greet him. He took his shoes off in front of the Lamido and shook hands with both hands while kneeling and looking up into his eyes. This way of saluting the Lamido included many double signals. By taking off his shoes and kneeling the Mayor showed respect. By shaking hands, however, he showed that they were both 'modern' men.

Historically no one should ever shake hands with the Lamido. He should be honoured but never actually touched. For the Lamido to accept a handshake was to break with tradition, a sign of the influence of the Western world on his original position as an unapproachable, distant, sacred being in high office. For the Mayor to offer a handshake was to take the Lamido as a peer. However, shaking hands while holding the other's right arm by his left hand showed respect in a Cameroonian way. That is how businessmen shake hands with more important counterparts, or how a Cameroonian student would shake hands with a foreign professor. Thus the Mayor showed his inferiority and respect for the Lamido by shaking hands in this way while simultaneously representing them both as modern men.

After their friendly chat the Lamido remarked to me, 'He is my son. His mother and I have the same father.' By using the metaphor 'He is my son' the Lamido was stating a hierarchical relation between them. A son is supposed to obey his father. The mayor would obey the Lamido. A father should behave in a fatherly way towards his sons: instruct them, set an example and assume responsibility for them. He should look after them and be generous to them.[11] Generally the Lamido took every opportunity to present himself as the father of a broad community, a central element in neopatrimonial rule.

Eventually the aircraft arrived. Filmed by national television, CRTV, the Minister descended the ladder and was greeted by the local party leaders. Then he saluted the Lamido with both hands, in exactly the same way as the Mayor had done. He was honouring the Lamido, first by greeting him as the most important person there, then in the way he saluted him. In the manner of a father the Lamido, a superior with a duty of care, placed his left hand on the Minister's right, enclosing it in a friendly fashion. This kind of handshake demonstrated the Minister's respect for the Lamido and the Lamido's fatherly concern for the Minister. The Minister went on to shake hands with the other members of the elite and was driven home to his house in the old town centre. The plane left for Yaoundé and the entire elite drove back to their offices, starting the day's work four hours later than intended.

The paternal generosity exhibited at the airport makes the Minister's arrival a valuable illustration of neopatrimonial politics in practice. However, it takes a lot of energy to transform the arrival of a Minister—

[11] I asked a class of ten to fourteen-year-old pupils to write a homework assignment answering the following questions: 'What makes a good father?' 'How does a good father behave?' 'What are his obligations to his children?' 'What are his obligations to his wife?' 'What are his obligations to his friends?' This is what the large majority answered.

in itself a trivial, indeed banal, event—into an important happening. All the notables of Ngaoundéré were in attendance, various dance groups performed and the arrival itself was shown on national television. It is an excellent example of what Mbembe has described as '*le théâtralisation du commendement en postcolonie'* namely *'d'utiliser un événement banal . . . et anodin . . . dans le but de produire un surcroît de prestige, de fiction et de magie*' (1995: 56, 52). The *mise en scène* and desire for pomp and circumstance, the 'grand universe of auto-adoration' and the attentiveness paid to hierarchy at the airport suggest that the neopatrimonial model is necessary but not sufficient to convey an understanding of the plural political culture of Cameroon.

THE MINISTER MEETS THE *FAADA*

Three days later, on Sunday 17 November 1996, at eleven o'clock, the Minister gave a speech to the Lamido's councillors and servants, and to the members of the *faada*.[12] Most of the *faada* members arrived early in order to be present outside the Lamido's palace when the Minister arrived. I had been waiting for two hours, chatting to the guards in the inner courtyard, so as not to miss this important meeting. Even the Lamido himself had been waiting for some time when the Minister arrived.

The Minister saluted the Lamido. The Lamido explained that I was a friend from Norway, while he was given a seat next to me under the conical grass roof in the fourth entrance hut. The two men talked together in Fulfulde for a few minutes about national and local politics. Then the Minister asked the Lamido if the two of them could be alone for a short while. The Lamido invited the Minister into a *djawleru* (an entrance hut used for Islamic learning and important conversations) and they stayed for a minute or two, without any servant or foreign researcher present. In the following days the Lamido distributed only brand-new, unused banknotes straight off the printing press in Yaoundé, a source the Minister was said to have access to. This leads me to speculate that the Minister gave the Lamido a wad of new notes. The fact that this was done in private without any witnesses might suggest that the Minister felt it was illegitimate but nevertheless something he had to do to retain his prestige as a generous man. A conflict of obligations was satisfied by conveying the gift privately but in such a way as to leave little room for doubt that money had changed hands.

Emerging from their private meeting inside the *djawleru*, the two continued their discussion of politics. Suddenly they were interrupted by a lute-like instrument playing the Lamido's fanfare and by drumming as the members of the *faada* entered the courtyard. Each *faada* member greeted the Lamido on arrival by bowing, looking down

[12] The regular meeting place, hour and time of the *faada*.

and saying, '*A sabje, Najwa*' (Honour/At your service, Great One!). Praise singers sang of the greatness of Lamido Issa Maïgari.

The members of the *faada* entered the court after the Minister. This was contrary to normal practice in Cameroon, where hierarchy is generally to be followed during ceremonies and meetings. The less important you are, the earlier you arrive. The most important people always arrive long after the due time and always in hierarchical order. However, on this occasion the order of arrival was different. It may be that the Lamido sought to impress the Minister by showing openly how many loyal clients he had. Or it might be that the Lamido just wanted to demonstrate that inside the palace it was he, the Lamido, who dictated the order of precedence.

Most members of the *faada* were present this important Sunday: twenty-four free members and nineteen unfree. They all sat around the Lamido, barefoot in the sand. Everyone had his allotted place, the *maccube* (unfree) around the Lamido and the *rimbe* (free) in an outer circle.[13]

When everyone had taken his appointed place on the ground the Lamido started his talk. He spoke slowly and in a loud voice to be heard by everyone in the *faada*. As he spoke, after nearly every sentence the *faada* members replied, '*A sabje, Najwa*.' In this way they showed their respect for and agreement with the chief's speech. The *faada* members demonstrated to the Minister both visually and verbally their support for their *lamido*.

THE LAMIDO'S INTRODUCTORY SPEECH[14]

The Lamido introduced the Minister by focusing on the personal relationship between the *faada* members and Minister Al Hajji Baba Hamadou.

> I ask you to support our son, with the help of God. I beg you all to take him in your arms. He is no stranger, you all know him and you know his father.

First of all Lamido Issa Maïgari described Minister Al Hajji Baba

[13] The designation *rimbe* and *maccube* is not clear-cut. Normally *rimbe* is translated as 'free' while *maccube* is translated as 'slave' (e.g. Noye, 1989). Two hundred years ago, when the Fulani arrived in Ngaoundéré, all non-Muslims were considered *maccube* by the Fulani. Yet today many of the *maccube* dignitaries at the palace are Muslims. (On this issue see Sinderud: forthcoming.) According to Islam, no Muslim can have a Muslim as his slave, and slavery itself has been forbidden by law in Cameroon since the early colonial period. This indicates how complicated is the distinction between a *rimbe* and a *maccube*. The distinction is visible, however, as free men wear hats while the unfree go bareheaded.

[14] I recorded the entire speeches made by the Lamido and the Minister. Both gave their speeches in Fulfulde. I got Hammadou Dalailou, a Fulbe graduate history student, to translate the recorded speeches into French. The extracts presented here represent about one-third of the speeches. The entire translated speeches can be found in Hansen (2000: 241–4). Copies of the original recorded speeches in Fulfulde are deposited at Ngaoundéré-Anthropos Centre in Ngaoundéré.

Hamadou as a son of everybody present, as a son of Ngaoundéré. By doing so the Lamido stated a relationship of mutual obligation within an apparent hierarchy. Placing the high-ranking Minister at the bottom, the Lamido implied that the Minister was expected to show loyalty and consideration to him and all the members of his *faada*. A son is expected to love and respect his father, and owes him gratitude (Schatzberg, 2001: 149). A son should obey his father. Hence the Minister should obey the *faada* members and the Lamido. But at the same time a father should behave in a fatherly manner towards his son. A father should take a son in his arms. He should instruct him, set him an example and act responsibly towards him. A father should be kind, affectionate and generous, always motivated solely 'by the thought of promoting the moral and material well-being of his children' (Schatzberg, 1986: 2). He should be concerned for the welfare of his children and be generous to them.[15]

To stress the personal relationship between the Minister and the *faada* members, the Lamido emphasised that they knew both him and his father. His father was one of the Lamido's trusted *faada* members. The Minister himself was born in Ngaoundéré and had worked there as a high-school teacher. The underlying logic of the Lamido's argument was that the *faada* should not deceive the Minister, as there were mutual moral obligations between the Minister and the community of Ngaoundéré. Without saying anything about national politics or political parties, everybody understood that 'to support' meant 'to give political support'. Such political support consisted of the banal act of casting a ballot in favour of the Minister's party, the RDPC, in the next elections. But it also meant being loyal to the party in word and deed on a day-to-day basis.

Schatzberg emphasises the use of father and family as metaphors in politics in Central Africa and argues that 'the government stands in the same relationship to its citizens that a father does to his children' (2001: 1). He argues that the use of such metaphors strengthens the natural aspect of hierarchical positions. A father should be just and compassionate, but firm and authoritative as well. When children err, they have to be punished. This metaphor stresses the assurance of security, it focuses on the natural in the relationship and the intrinsic in the unequal flows of resources. In fact it represents a complex political reality in simplified form (Schatzberg, 1986: 15, 2001: 1).

The Lamido's words to his *faada* could then also be taken as an indication of what they, the *faada* members and the Lamido, and in a broader sense the whole community in Ngaoundéré, expected of the Minister. A father who has nourished and protected his children well will also be 'entitled to "eat" parts of the children's labour or the

[15] It is erroneous to focus, as Jackson and Rosberg have done, only on one side of this relationship, namely the political father's right to be obeyed together with his power to instruct and punish his subjects (Jackson and Rosberg, 1982: 153).

product of their labour' (Schatzberg, 1993: 452). The *faada* members expected the Minister to behave as a grown-up son towards them. An adult son is in debt to his father for all that the father did for him when he was a child. If the Minister does not behave as they expect they will have to punish him. The best way to punish a Minister in these days of newly installed electoral democracy would be not to vote for his party at the next election. Thus by addressing the *faada* members in terms of the family metaphor the Lamido was clearly indicating to the Minister that they expected something from him in return.

The Lamido went on to explain why Adamaoua was one of the poorest provinces in Cameroon:

> Of all ten provinces, Adamaoua is the poorest. For this reason, since the President has seen our situation, I beg you, brothers and sisters, to support him.

Here too the Lamido drew on kin relations in his argumentation. He enhanced the *faada* members' prestige and hierarchical position by calling them brothers. Brothers are not always equal, but they are always contracted in a mutual relationship of help and loyalty. Social obligations to brothers are even stronger than those between friends.

Implicit in this rationalisation was that if you had a Minister from your own province, your province would progress and develop rapidly. Many people believe such to be the case, but it was far from reality. At the time Adamaoua Province had two Ministers: one RDPC Minister from Meiganga town and one Minister of the Mouvement démocratique pour la défense de la République (MDR) from Mbe village. Everybody knew that this had done next to nothing for the development of the province.

As we have seen, the argument for supporting the Minister was closely related to personal power, the diversion of public resources and personal patronage dispensing communal goods. The implicit logic of the argument was that if the *faada* members supported Minister Al Hajji Baba Hamadou by voting for the political party he represented, the RDPC, the province of Adamaoua would receive favourable treatment economically. The Lamido's argument was both denunciatory and alluring. Without mentioning the party of the Minister and the President, and without mentioning the forthcoming elections, the Lamido made it clear that if the *faada* members and people under their command would not vote for the RDPC they would have bad times, but if they voted for RDPC they would enjoy good times. Between 1966 and 1992 no general election in Cameroon had offered the voters any choice of party. President Paul Biya had been in power fourteen years, since 1982, when this speech was delivered. Nevertheless, the Lamido argued, only by voting for the President's party would the whole province of Adamaoua benefit.

This suggests that the Lamido was addressing the Minister as much as the members of his *faada*. The Lamido explicitly told them that this Minister, Al Hajji Baba Hamadou, would change material conditions in

Adamaoua for the better. Such expectations and prospects certainly put pressure on the Minister.

Lamido Issa Maïgari then explained how Adamaoua could be expected to become more affluent, more developed.

> Support, what does it mean? If for instance someone else took my place as chief, do you think he would be my friend? I think of the President. We all know that today there are people in the opposition who want his position. Because of this, since the President has been to see us, it is up to us to support him.

Here the double meaning of the Lamido's opening address to the *faada* became apparent. What he said could be understood as concerning President Paul Biya or himself. He mingled his examples, talking about himself in one sentence and the President in the next. If you support the President (or the Lamido) he will regard you as his friend.

Why was it important to be friends with those in power? The underlying logic was that of patrimonialism. To be friends with the powerful was an important way of gaining access to resources. Resources are distributed by those in power to their friends: from patron to client. In societies with scarce resources, however, patron–client networks are based not only on the redistribution of resources but also on the non-distribution of disadvantages. Most of the *faada* members were dissatisfied with the Lamido's generosity. Many of them told me that Lamido Issa Maïgari was a niggardly chief who gave little away. Nevertheless, not to be his friend was certainly unwise. *Faada* members tended not to fear the Lamido's *dogaris* (personal police/guard) to any great degree. They did fear the witchcraft the Lamido controlled.[16] This was also indicated by the Lamido.

> I know that there are people who do not like the President, who do not want the President to have power. Those are dead. Because those who are not with the powerful might as well be dead. Do not leave the true wielders of power just to follow a prince.

A prince in northern Cameroon is only a would-have-power person, not a next-to-have-power person. A prince is only one of very many men eligible to inherit the title of *lamido*. To follow a prince was a risky affair. You were not at all sure to win. However, if you followed the Lamido, or the President, you were on the winning side. You were with the powerful.

The speech to the *faada* was related both to the war of power between the Lamido and his younger brother Yerima (Prince) Ousoumanou and

[16] This is a much more complicated issue, too complicated to be discussed here. For some indications of the importance of sorcery and power see e.g. Schatzberg (2001: 56–8). For a more general discussion of magic and witchcraft in Cameroon see e.g. Geschiere (1997).

to the struggle for power between the President and his great rival, Bouba Bello Maïgari, the leader of UNDP. The fact that Bouba Bello Maïgari was also a royal prince of the Garoua *lamidat* only made the metaphor even more pertinent. The principle of not deserting someone with real power just to follow a prince should be adhered to in national politics and local matters alike. In national politics too a prince is a want-power person who is not at all sure to gain it: 'those who are not with the powerful might as well be dead'.

Less than two months later this speech came literally true. Yerima Ousoumanou died suddenly on the third day of Ramadan (11 January 1997) without having shown any sign of illness. Whether the Lamido or anyone in his trusted entourage had anything to do with the death is of course not known. However, rumours in town said it was the magic of the Lamido which killed Yerima Ousoumanou.

In his opening address to the *faada*, without mentioning the RDPC or the forthcoming elections, Lamido Issa Maïgari made it clear that the *faada* members and their subordinates really ought to vote for the party. His argument was based entirely on personal relations with Minister Al Hajji Baba Hamadou. The bottom line was mutual solidarity and trust among family members, together with the personalisation of public resources and patronage. The Lamido's speech was thus a textbook example of neopatrimonial rule: the virtual message is never explicit but hidden as the underlying logic of a speech which focuses on the significance of personal relations in the distribution of public resources.

THE MINISTER'S SPEECH

The Minister also spoke in Fulfulde, using French words only for *démocratie* and *développement*. During his speech nobody in the *faada* said a word. They just listened. Hajji Baba Hamadou also started by emphasising that he was a son of the *faada* members whom everybody knew.

> I, certainly, am your son. You know me well. From my birth until now you have known me. You know my parents and you are aware of the struggle they have made for me.

Thus he too asserted a metaphorical family relation, a father–son relationship, with the Minister addressing the members of the *faada* as their son. As we have seen, to use the father–son metaphor was to state a hierarchy in a context of trust, confidence and mutual obligation; it gave rise among his audience to the hope of more to come. People in the same family help each other, and if one of them has more than he needs he is supposed to share it with the rest. A Minister is responsible for a budget, and to dispose of a budget means to have access to financial resources. To be in the same family as a person of ample means can be particularly important in Cameroon, where generosity is a

highly valued quality and the distinction between private and public resources is blurred.

It is well known from earlier elections in Cameroon that people from the same ethnic group as a Minister normally vote for the party he represents. In 1992 the great majority of the Dii people voted for the MDR because the Minister of Tourism, Pierre Soulman, was a Dii and represented the MDR. The great majority of the Gbaya people voted for the RDPC because they were represented by a Gbaya Minister from Meiganga town. Emphasising familiarity and personal bonds was a good tactic for the Minister to adopt.

Calling himself their son also said something about hierarchy: the Minister was less important than the *faada* members. In terms of age this was the case; most of the *faada* members were older than the Minister. On the political and economic scale, of course, the Minister clearly ranked much higher than any of them. Yet they belonged to different hierarchies, the Minister to the state order and the members of the *faada* to the traditional organisation of society. The first administers money, the second administers identity.

Minister Al Hajji Baba Hamadou was following a very important aspect of the Fulani way of life, *pulaaku*, modesty, when he said he was their son and thus ranked below them hierarchically. To be modest is one of the most important qualities a true, good Fulani can possess. *Pulaaku* is the Fulani's own code of conduct, implying politeness, hospitality, farsightedness, patience, self-control and modesty, as well as mastery of the Fulani language, Fulfulde (Ver Eecke, 1988; Burnham, 1991: 73–102, 1996: 52–4, 106–10; Hansen, 2000: 103–8).

Al Hajji Baba Hamadou showed the members of the *faada* that, despite his involvement in state politics away in the capital, he had not forgotten Fulfulde. Mastery of Fulfulde is an essential element of *pulaaku*. Many of the *faada* members did not speak any French, yet with Al Hajji Baba Hamadou as a Minister the inhabitants of Ngaoundéré would have a way of communicating in their own language with those who held sway in the capital.

Then the Minister explained that, even though democracy started in Europe, it can give rise to conflict if people do not respect their superiors and obey them.

> And today we live in a democracy in Cameroon. Democracy is in Cameroon thanks to His Excellency Paul Biya. Yet, if we do not pay attention, democracy can create conflicts between people. That is, not only here, but even in the white man's countries where democracy started. Some countries are always in a state of conflict. But here it is not good to live in conflict. It is not good for a son to disobey his father. It is not good for the *faada* to disobey its chief. We have obeyed our chiefs since we are children.

It is no accident that the Minister explained 'democracy' in terms of respect and obedience to a superior. Most people in Ngaoundéré seem

to think the word means the liberty to do whatever they want, if they have any idea of what it means at all.[17]

In the literature democracy is defined in distinct ways according to different theoretical positions and practical needs. According to Stybe, democracy can be defined so vaguely that nearly every political system can be counted as democratic (1972/1979: 101). Yet most scholars would agree that basic conditions like equality before the law, intellectual freedom and political freedom should be realised in a democracy. It seems as if the notion of intellectual and political freedom turned out for the commoners in Ngaoundéré to be mainly a question of personal liberty. Understood this way, democracy was antithetical to the way politics was lived out in Cameroon, namely as authoritarian, arbitrary and personalised.

Minister Baaba Hamadou explained democracy as obedience to a superior. This is bending the term quite some way from the usual meaning of the concept. Yet he probably knew that understandings of what 'democracy' meant varied a good deal among the population. Few, if indeed any, would be likely to object to his interpretation. He recognised too that the concept in itself embodied a positive value in the public mind, so he was attempting to change their definition of it, away from the voluntaristic concept of scholarly and local understanding and towards the idea of personal obedience to a superior.

It may be that the meaning of democracy could be transformed in this way only in a place like Ngaoundéré, where most Muslims maintain that Islam means obedience and submission. Democracy was virtually identified with Islam. Just as, in front of the Lamido, the local Islamic leader, no one could be against local mainstream Islamic notions of respect and obedience, so no one would dare to be against democracy. Thus the Minister exploited their uncertainty over what democracy really meant to persuade the members of the *faada* that they should accept the authority of the Lamido, the President and himself. He said explicitly that children should respect and obey their fathers and members of the *faada* should respect and obey their *lamido*. In a subtle way the Minister managed to say that if you are a good Muslim you should respect and obey President Paul Biya. And all without even mentioning elections or political parties.

The Minister then compared the force of Lamido Issa Maïgari with that of his neighbouring *lamido* in Rey Bouba, a well known friend of President Paul Biya, a despotic torturer who had not long since been accused of having political opponents beaten to death.

[17] At least, that is what is reflected in a survey which Dr Gilbert Taguem and I conducted together with ten history students from the University of Ngaoundéré. We asked more than 100 people from different quarters of the town and from different ethnic groups and religious backgrounds what democracy meant to them. A majority answered that they did not know what was meant by 'democracy'. Notwithstanding, most people stressed that democracy was a good thing. (*La démocratie, c'est bien!*) The second most frequent answer was that democracy was the liberty to do whatever they wanted (*Chacun fait ce qu'il veut* and *liberté de tout faire*).

> Now we know that the weight of the Lamido of Ngaoundéré is comparable with the weight of the *lamido* in Rey. This is not to honour you but it is the truth I am saying to you. . . . If people speak about Rey Bouba, for sure they will speak about Ngaoundéré. If they speak about Ngaoundéré, they will speak about Rey Bouba. The other chiefdoms have no power any more.

Amnesty International's country report of September 1997 states:

> In northern Cameroon, traditional rulers, known as *lamibé*, are responsible for harassment, illegal detention and ill-treatment and, in some cases, the death of political opponents. . . .
>
> The Lamido of Rey Bouba has consistently intimidated and abused members and supporters of the opposition. At least four people . . . were reported to have died during 1995 as a result of ill-treatment and neglect while held in illegal detention on the orders of the Lamido of Rey Bouba. A UNDP member of the National Assembly from Mayo-Rey Division, Haman Adama Daouda, died on 18 February 1996 after being attacked on 8 January 1996 by the private militia of the Lamido of Rey Bouba. [Available on http://www.amnesty.org/]

In Cameroon most people fear the Lamido of Rey Bouba. Notwithstanding, the Minister compared the power of the Lamido of Ngaoundéré with the power of the Lamido of Rey Bouba. It was widely known that Lamido Ahmadou Abdoulaye in Rey Bouba ill-treated, imprisoned and killed people he did not like, including political opponents. But he was still in power. He supported the President and was supported by the President. Both President Ahidjo and President Biya put their political opponents in the infamous Tcholliré prison under the Lamido of Rey's responsibility.[18] Lamido Ahmadou Abdoulaye had always been loyal to the regime. Before being elected *lamido* in 1975 he had been a deputy for Ahidjo's Union nationale camerounaise from 1960 to 1975. In contrast to Lamido Issa Maïgari in Ngaoundéré he had always been clear about his support for the President. While Lamido Issa Maïgari stated over and over again that he did not do politics, Lamido Ahmadou Abdoulaye of Rey had never claimed to be out of politics.

In the municipal elections in 1996, 99·5 per cent of the electors in Mayo-Rey department, the area under the Lamido of Rey's control, voted for the RDPC. To most people in Cameroon this was an indication of the power of the *lamido*, not of the loyalty to the President of the entire population of Mayo-Rey. Whatever techniques were used to obtain it, the result was seen as a sign of the power and strength of the ruler of the region. The *lamido*'s unswerving loyalty to the President put him in a position where he could exert his authority without restraint.[19]

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[18] *Der Lamidoen rår*, film by Stabrun, Norwegian Missionary Society (1967), and *Cameroon 100 hommes de pouvoir*, No. 7, available on http://www.indigo-net.com.

[19] In *African State and Society in the 1990s* the Lamido of Rey is described as 'the single most powerful northerner' in Cameroon (Takougang and Krieger, 1998: 171).

The Minister played on the *faada* members' fear to make them do as Lamido Issa Maïgari wished. By comparing the power of the Lamido of Ngaoundéré with that of his counterpart in Rey he was implicitly warning that the Lamido of Ngaoundéré was quite capable of behaving in the same way as the Lamido of Rey—of killing his political opponents.

Power in Cameroon was violent, and violence was tolerated, even instigated, by the powerful. The President used force to control people and the expression of their political opinions. All the members of the *faada* knew that the *lamido* in Rey was powerful. The fact that violence and fear were used as political tactics had nothing particularly to do with politics. A father may very well frighten his son with the intention of letting the son know who is the boss; the one you obey is the one you fear. Fear and power were closely connected in Cameroon.

The Minister continued his subtle intimidation by talking about what the Fulani love most; cattle.

> [W]e have to support Biya because we have no roads here. We have cattle. If a sickness arrives, do you think that, if we do not support the government, we will get the medicine? The government will take no notice and we will suffer.

In saying this he knew he would be touching a sensitive nerve. Cattle are the repository of Fulani fortune: their economic security. A Fulani would rather starve than sell one of his herd. Cattle are said to be the Fulani's *raison d'être*. What the Minister was really saying was that so long as he was in government he would make sure the President knew about any sickness that visited their cattle and they would get the requisite medicine. But he would not be a Minister if they did not vote for him. They had to support him by voting for the RDPC and the President. Voting any other way would be to risk the loss of their cattle.

Then the Minister became explicit about patrimonial politics:

> I will do my best to advance the country, and the advance of the country starts by developing one's own compound. After the compound, it is the quarter, after the quarter it is the town, and then the province, ending with the country.

Foreigners often accuse Cameroonian Ministers of putting the interests of their own villages before others'. In this speech the practice appeared as a natural way to use public resources. The Minister represented himself as someone who could divert public resources in the direction of friends and family.

> We have to be behind the *lamido*; being behind the *lamido* is being behind the President. That will result in an immediate development of our province. We have natural resources, but they cannot be exploited without the help of the government, and we, as individuals, can do nothing. Who can say in this province that he can tar every road? It is impossible. Only the government, with all its resources, its politics and its co-operation with foreign countries, can do it. Since they have nominated me, it is not for my own benefit, nor for

> that of my family, but for the whole province of Adamaoua. Pray God that we also help our children to develop our province and our country.

Rhetorically the Minister set himself alongside the *faada* members as less powerful than the government. A few minutes before, he had emphasised that he was close to the centre of power, since he had been chosen as a Minister by President Paul Biya. In this way he managed to situate himself as an intermediary between the President and the people of Ngaoundéré. The members of the *faada* understood this as a pledge to tap the resources of the state for the benefit of Adamaoua, and especially for the benefit of Ngaoundéré. It was thus an assertion of his ability to personalise public money.

The Minister also asserted that Paul Biya had been elected by God, just as Al Hajji Baba Hamadou himself had been elected by God, and, as everybody in the *faada* knew, the Lamido was elected by God.

> Speaking about the government, I can assure you that it is better than us. But, as the Lamido just said, it is God who gives everything. God has elected me. God has elected Biya and it is God who chose me from among many other people.

Thus he sacralised a profane position. He sought to lend worthy, divine legitimation to the rule of Paul Biya.[20] It seemed not to matter that all the *faada* members were Muslims and Paul Biya was a Catholic. God had a hand in all these matters, hence there was to be no public criticism. To criticise Paul Biya would be to criticise God's choice and His will.

THE LAMIDO'S EPILOGUE

After the Minister's speech, without mentioning the party or the elections, the Lamido commanded the *faada* members to tell their people to vote for the RDPC:

> You the *faada*, you, the people of Ngaoundéré, you have to understand what we want. You have to understand what we are looking for. You, chiefs, you are responsible in the quarters, you should tell your subjects to support our son.

In conclusion the Lamido emphasised that the *faada* should unite and share:

> Love each other. If you have a family of two, eat together. If you have a family of ten, eat together too, all ten of you. That is what independence means. Those are my final words to you.

[20] This is quite common in many African countries. See e.g. Schatzberg (2001: 51–6).

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The imagery of food and eating is central to African political culture. In fact eating is such a common metaphor in the discussion of African politics that Jean-François Bayart subtitled his book *The State in Africa* (1993) 'the politics of the belly'. Michael G. Schatzberg likewise emphasises that 'Power and politics in African societies often have more to do with consumption than transformation' (2001: 40). The eating metaphor applies equally to food, to money and to people: all three can be 'eaten'.[21]

In the simplest sense 'eating together' means to consume food together, to share a meal. However, sharing a meal can be taken as a sign of friendship and confidence. Eating together implies a degree of intimacy, as the form of food 'suggests that it is a means of opening the body to the substance of others' (Weiss, 1996: 138). Thus eating and feeding are closely connected with affinity. To offer someone food is also a sign of generosity. Offering food confirms your capacity as provider as well as your willingness to share. For the recipient, the fact of being fed is to acknowledge dependence on the provider. The one who gives food has a certain level of control over the other (Weiss, 1996: 139). Thus the value of food goes far beyond its price or its nutritional content. Food represents potential political power; it enables a person to act the generous patron.

In a second sense, the act of consuming as expressed in 'eating' is connected with the domain of money. To eat money is a deceitful form of consumption (Weiss, 1996:135). In many African languages and countries 'to eat' is used as a metaphor for the embezzlement of public funds or other forms of corruption.[22] Conspicuous consumption of resources 'may be among the most visible outward manifestations of political power' (Schatzberg, 2001: 50).

Understood this way, the eating metaphor reflects closeness or distance between people. A power holder can maintain open channels of communication and reciprocity with ordinary people by consenting to eat the food they have prepared on occasions like festivals or funerals.[23] Whereas, if it is the power holders who feed the people, it is the generous act of distribution that is stressed rather than the act of consumption (Weiss, 1996: chapter 5).

Eating together could be understood as a metaphor for consuming and sharing commodities other than food; such as money or power. To be able to 'eat' money is a sign of power. Powerful people need to 'eat'

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[21] In this context, eating people, meaning to hurt or kill them by witchcraft, is less relevant and too complicated (and dangerous) for me to go into.

[22] In Cameroon *bouffe de l'argent* is used when money is 'corrupted', in Sierra Leone to eat in the Krio language is to spend money, in Kenya people doing well financially are said to eat well, in Senegambia to eat is used when the state expropriates from its citizens. For further discussion of this issue see e.g. Schatzberg (2001: 40–50).

[23] The Lamido himself, however, always eats in private and alone. By eating alone nobody knows what he eats, or *if* he eats. This is one way he uses to distinguish himself from ordinary people.

well. Or, if you eat well, you grow powerful. Eating together as a family could be interpreted here as a request to share power and available resources within the community. *That is what is meant by independence*.

THE AFTERMATH OF THE SPEECH

After the speech the Minister handed a huge envelope full of new banknotes to the most important member of the *faada*, the Galdima Foulbe.[24] It was handed over without a word being said, nobody saw how much it contained, or what sort of sum was involved, but everybody saw the size of the envelope. And everyone could see that the notes were brand-new and unused. The money was given neither in public nor in private; it was given in such a way that everybody knew it had been given but not how much. Undoubtedly it was from the Minister's pocket, but he had obviously 'eaten' it from the public purse. He had made public resources private in order to exert (more or less) personal patronage among influential people in the *lamidat*.

By distributing the money the Minister ensured his generosity was admired. No one who got his share would ever accuse the Minister of using public resources for personal benefit. No such act would ever be regarded as 'corrupt' or illicit, but only as legitimate, so long as it rested on the principle of common clientelistic accountability (Chabal and Daloz, 1999: 81). In fact these privatised public resources 'flow downwards from the top in exchange for recognition of the status and the power of the provider' (*ibid.*, 1999: 42). The Minister was merely showing that he was a real man, a generous man. A real man is one who takes care of his friends. A real man is one who distributes goods, benefits and money to his family and friends. On this occasion the Minister showed that he considered himself to be among friends when he was with the *faada*. By being generous in this way he wanted the *faada* members to believe that if they supported him there would be more to come.

But why didn't he say anything about the amount? Why did he bother to conceal the money in an envelope? Not, I think, because anyone considered the cash illicit or 'tainted'. The money was not straightforward remuneration or salary; it was to be considered not as payment but as a gift. The exact value of a gift is not of primary importance. Bourdieu even argues that in such symbolic exchanges there exists a taboo on making things explicit. The price or the value should remain an open secret. He says, 'to say what it really is, to declare the truth of the exchange . . . is to destroy the exchange' (1998: 96). Contrary to a payment, a gift enhances solidarity. The Minister's gift to the *faada* can thus be understood as a political statement. A gift engages the honour

[24] According to traditions about Garoua *lamidat* collected by Bassourou and Mohammadou (1980: 60) the Fulani *Galdima* was the dignitary who usually apportioned gifts designated to all the dignitaries.

of both the giver and the receiver in its reciprocity. Douglas noted that 'the gift cycle . . . supplies each individual with personal incentives for collaborating in the pattern of exchanges' (in Mauss, 1950/1993: xiv). The gift enhanced the moral engagement between the Minister and the members of the *faada*. The Minister gave it to the most important member, the Galdima Foulbe, and in doing so passed the responsibility of redistribution further down the system.

That the powerful need to eat well is accepted by most people. Yet to become a man of honour one is also supposed to redistribute some of what has been eaten (Bayart, 1993: 242). If the Minister had not given them anything the *faada* members would have considered him selfish or powerless. A Minister with money but unwilling to share it is of no use to the *faada* members. A Minister who cannot 'eat' something from the state budget is no use, either. And nobody supports a useless minister.

Just after the speech, the director of the Ministry of Culture in Yaoundé, Adala Gildo, former *délégué de la culture* in Ngaoundéré and a personal friend of Lamido Issa Maïgari, entered the court room and asked the Lamido what the Minister had talked about. The Lamido explained that he had talked about politics and that they had tried to explain to the *faada* members the need to put party politics aside and support Al Hajji Baba Hamadou, since he was a child of their town. A bit eager, Adala Gildo turned to me and said, '*Ils n'ont pas compris ce que c'est la démocratie. Quand on a une personne au pouvoir, il n'est pas d'une partie, il est de la ville. La démocratie ne veut pas dire jeter ce qu'on a.*'[25]

POLITICS OF PERSONAL RELATIONS IN NGAOUNDÉRÉ

In some degree the two happenings described here can be understood simply as neopatrimonial politics in action. The family is used as a metaphor and stresses the paternalistic attitude in politics. The moral obligation of mutual help between members of an extensive family is emphasised, regardless of whether it is contrary to formal law. Different, often conflicting, moral obligations are simultaneously at work in postcolonial Cameroon. The point is also argued by Azarya: 'a public official who resists nepotism not only would be accused of being a bad parent or relative but also would be praised for being a good citizen' (1994: 92). When one has to comply with formal legal-rational laws and, at the same time, meet family, kin and ethnic-related obligations of solidarity and distribution, disguise becomes a natural solution. Incompatible obligations are answered with camouflage and masquerade, as in the case of the Minister's distribution of money to the Lamido and the *faada* members. Focusing on the lack of distinction between the civic and the personal spheres, and the way people blur the

[25] Gildo, 17 November 1996. 'They have not understood what democracy is about. When one has a person in power, he is not from a political party, he is from the town. Democracy does not mean throwing away what one possesses.'

formal difference, the concept of neopatrimonialism seems adequate to explain basic ideas of the political culture in Cameroon.

Yet if we had concentrated only on the personalisation of public resources and masquerade we would have missed aspects of the political process essential to an understanding of political legitimacy in northern Cameroon. One important factor missing from the neopatrimonial model is the use of force and the recourse to coercion. The neopatrimonial approach focuses too narrowly on the distribution of public resources to personal friends and sympathisers. Yet the example of the Lamido of Rey indicates that it is equally important to control violence and the non-distribution of disadvantages. Periods of economic decline and worsening poverty reduce the patron's ability to control people by distributing resources. In these circumstances the non-distribution of inconvenience, obstacles and violence seems as important as the actual dissemination of assets (see e.g. Chabal and Daloz, 1999: 82).

Mbembe argues that to understand power and politics in postcolonial Africa we have to go 'beyond institutions, beyond formal positions of power, and beyond written rules and examine how the implicit and explicit are interwoven' (2001: 133). With reference to Mbembe's earlier work, Michael Rowlands calls attention to the 'intersection of formality and the ludic' to come to terms with contemporary Cameroon (1995: 38–9).

According to Chabal and Daloz, 'Explaining the various ways in which elites in power are connected to those from whom they receive support' is fundamental if we want to understand contemporary African politics (1999: 31). We have to make sense of the complexities of nuanced and mixed political representations at stake in the postcolony. To do so should ideally involve being a specialist in local semantics and semiotics. To grasp the essence of contemporary African politics requires good knowledge of different local languages, knowledge of different oral traditions, understanding of traditional religions and beliefs, knowledge of traditional power structures and ways of exercising power, including forms of physical and psychological coercion. At the same time it requires fluency in the official languages of the state, including the contemporary international political vocabulary, knowledge of formal law and an understanding of national political structures.

In this article I have tried to use knowledge acquired through multiple periods of fieldwork over the last ten years, experience gained as a university lecturer in Ngaoundéré and Oslo and some years as a development aid worker dealing with West and Central Africa to describe two seemingly banal events in a town in northern Cameroon and to analyse their political content. By analysing a Minister's arrival in his home town, and the speech he gave to the traditional elites there, we have seen how different signs and metaphors of hierarchy and honour are used not only to separate the elite from the masses, but also to draw distinctions within the elites. The elites seem to demonstrate their position in different hierarchies physically and verbally on every

occasion. Thus we have shown that the neopatrimonial model is necessary but not sufficient for an understanding of politics in Africa today.

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with political culture in northern Cameroon. By analysing two happenings—the arrival of a Minister in his home town and his speech to the traditional elites—it shows how neopatrimonial politics is practised in a given locality. Important aspects of neopatrimonialism—such as the personal

distribution of public resources and the conflict between different moral obligations which results in illusory appearances—are described and analysed. Yet the complexity of symbols, behaviour and metaphors outlined in these two happenings suggests that we have to go beyond the neopatrimonial model of thinking if we want to gain a better understanding of politics in Cameroon.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article traite de la culture politique dans le Nord du Cameroun. En analysant deux événements à savoir l'arrivée d'un ministre dans sa ville natale et son discours aux élites traditionnelles, il montre comment la politique néo-patrimoniale est pratiquée dans une localité donnée. Il décrit et analyse des aspects importants du néopatrimonialisme, comme la répartition individuelle des ressources publiques et diverses obligations morales conflictuelles engendrant une sorte d'apparence d'illusions. Or, la complexité des symboles, du comportement et des métaphores, mise en lumière dans ces deux événements, suggère qu'il faut aller au-delà du modèle de pensée néopatrimonial pour mieux comprendre la politique au Cameroun.