



Histoire et Analyses des Relations Internationales et Stratégiques

Revue de l'Association des Spécialistes des Relations Internationales et des Etudes Stratégiques Africaines (ASRIESA)



Editée par le Laboratoire d'Histoire des Relations Internationales, des Études Stratégiques et Politiques (LAHRIESPO)

Université Alassane OUATTARA

ISSN: 2709-5053

Histoire et Analyses des Relations
Internationales et Stratégiques
(HARIS)

N°016 Mars 2025

Revue de l'Association des Spécialistes des Relations
Internationales et des Études Stratégiques Africaines (ASRIESA)

ISSN: 2709-5053



Indexations internationales



<https://reseau-mirabel.info/revue/19498/Haris>



TOGETHER WE REACH THE GOAL

<https://sjifactor.com/passport.php?id=23388>

auréHAL
accès aux données
de référence de HAL

<https://aurehal.archives-ouvertes.fr/journal/read/id/224412>



Administration de la Revue

Directeur Scientifique :

Professeur M'BRA EKANZA
Simon-Pierre (Professeur
Emérite du CAMES,
Université Félix Houphouët-
Boigny)

Directeur de Publication :

CAMARA Moritié (Professeur
Titulaire d'Histoire des
Relations Internationales,
Université Alassane Ouattara,
Côte d'Ivoire)

Directeur de Rédaction :

KOUAKOU N'DRI Laurent
(Maître de Conférences
d'Histoire des Relations
Internationales, Université
Alassane Ouattara, Côte
d'Ivoire)

Coordonnateur de

Publication : SILUE Nahoua
Karim (Maitre-assistant
d'Histoire des Relations
Internationales, Université
Alassane Ouattara, Côte
d'Ivoire)

Trésorière : YAO Elisabeth
(Maître-assistante en Histoire
économique, Université
Alassane Ouattara, Côte
d'Ivoire)

Chargés de diffusion : KEWO

Zana (Maitre-Assistant
d'Histoire des Relations
Internationales, Université
Péleforo Gon Coulibaly, Côte
d'Ivoire),

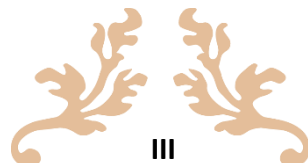
KPALE Boris Claver (Maitre-
Assistant d'Histoire des
Relations Internationales,
Université Alassane Ouattara,
Côte d'Ivoire)

Webmaster : Kouakou
Kouadio Sanguen (Assistant
Département de
Mathématique et
Informatique, Université
Alassane OUATTARA)

Éditeur : Laboratoire
d'Histoire des Relations
Internationales, des Études
Stratégiques et Politiques
(LAHRIESPO), Université
Alassane OUATTARA)

Website : <http://www.revue-haris.org>

Courriels : cerriua01@gmail.com / asriesa2012@gmail.com



Comité Scientifique

-M'BRA EKANZA Simon-Pierre, Professeur Titulaire d'Histoire, Professeur Emérites du Cames (Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny - Côte d'Ivoire)

-KOULIBALY Mamadou, Professeur agrégé d'Economie, (Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny - Côte d'Ivoire)

-Abdoulaye BATHILY, Professeur Titulaire d'Histoire (Université Cheick Anta Diop-Sénégal)

-Jean-Noël LOUCOU, Professeur d'Histoire Contemporaine (Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny Côte d'Ivoire)

-KOUI Théophile, Professeur Titulaire Etudes Ibériques et Civilisations Latino-Américaines (Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny Côte d'Ivoire)

-Francis AKINDES, Professeur Titulaire de Sociologie (Université Alassane Ouattara - Côte d'Ivoire)

-ALLADAYE Comlan Jérôme, Professeur Titulaire d'Histoire (Université d'Abomey-Calavi - Benin)

-SAADAOUI Ibrahim Muhammed, Professeur d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine, Université de Tunisie. President de la Tunisian World Center for Studies, Research, and Development et de la Tunisian-Mediterranean Association for Historical, Social and Economic Studies -Tunisie)

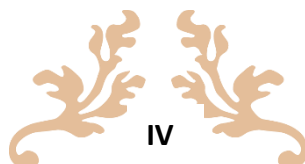
-Ousseynou Faye, Professeur Titulaire d'Histoire (Université Cheick Anta Diop-Sénégal)

-Samba Diakité, Professeur Titulaire de Philosophie (Université Alassane Ouattara- Côte d'Ivoire)

-Esambu Matenda -A- Baluba Jean - Bosco Germain, Professeur en Relations Internationales. (Université de Lubumbashi-République Démocratique du Congo)

-ASSI-KHAUJIS Joseph Pierre, Professeur Titulaire de Géographie (Université Alassane Ouattara - Côte d'Ivoire)

-GBODJE Sékré Alphonse, Professeur Titulaire d'Histoire Politique (Université Alassane Ouattara - Côte d'Ivoire)



Comité de Lecture

-BATCHANA Essohanam, Professeur Titulaire d'Histoire contemporaine (Université de Lomé - Togo)

-AKROBOU Agba Ezéquier, Professeur Titulaire d'Etudes Ibériques et Civilisations Latino-Américaines (Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny-Côte d'Ivoire)

-CAMARA Moritié, Professeur Titulaire d'Histoire des Relations Internationales. (Université Alassane Ouattara- Côte d'Ivoire)

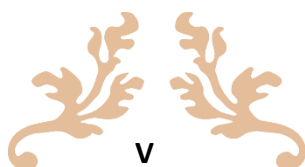
-GUESSAN Benoit, Professeur Titulaire d'Histoire des Relations Internationales (Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny -Côte d'Ivoire)

-N'Guessan Mohamed, Professeur Titulaire d'Histoire Politique (Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny -Côte d'Ivoire)

-Ernest YAOBI, Maître de Conférences d'Histoire des Religions (Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny-Côte d'Ivoire)

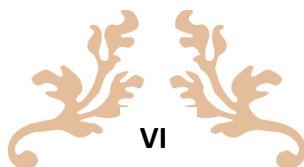
-GOLE Antoine, Professeur Titulaire d'Histoire économique (Université Alassane OUATTARA- Côte d'Ivoire)

-BAMBA Abdoulaye, Maître de Conférences d'Histoire des Relations Internationales (Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny -Côte d'Ivoire)



Adresse aux auteurs

La Revue HARIS paraît 4 fois dans l'Année : Mars, Juin, Septembre et Décembre. Les publications de Juin, Septembre et de Décembre sont libres en termes de thématiques des articles et autres contributions et celle de Mars portera à chaque fois sur un thème précis qui est communiqué six mois à l'avance. La revue ne publie que des contributions inédites et de fonds sur tous les champs de recherches des Relations Internationales et des Études stratégiques. La doxa de la revue porte sur la vision africaine des Relations Internationales mais reste ouverte à toutes les visions et points de vue venant de tous les continents. Les normes de présentation des manuscrits sont celles du CAMES (à consulter sur le site de la revue <http://www.revue-haris.org>). Le manuscrit doit comprendre entre 5000 et 8000 mots et porter les noms et prénoms du ou des auteurs, le nom de l'Institution de rattachement, le mail, et une photo format identité du ou des auteurs.



Sommaire

Mahamoudou OUBDA

Analyse des relations franco-africaines telles que perçues par Nobert Zongo à travers le feuilleton de folembroy.....9-23

Aristide EDZEGUE MENDAME

La Diplomatie Numérique, nouvel enjeu des relations internationales...24-36

Éric Inespéré KOFFI

Mondialisation Américaine et crise Africaine de la Démocratie.....37-50

Issaka K. SOUARÉ, PhD

Les relations bilatérales entre la Guinée et la France,1958-2024 : Les dynamiques d'un rapport complexe.....51-67

Aurelia Kihla BAMWAI (PhD)

Traditional classes of Sheey title holders in the Nso Fondom and their impact in post-colonial cameroonian society.....68-85

Aïcha PEMBOURA

Relations civilo-militaires et formation d'institutions démocratiques durables en Afrique : Une réflexion axée sur les pays du Sahel.....86-101

KACELLA Titus

Les Secrétaires Généraux de l'Assemblée Nationale dans la diplomatie parlementaire au Cameroun : Cas de Samuel Efoua MBOZO'O et Victor Yene OSSOMBA.....102-116

Ezéchiél SAWADOGO & Salif KIENDREBEOGO

La coopération bilatérale, moteur de développement du football au Burkina Faso (1970-2017).....117-132

ATSE Jeofroid

La Côte d'Ivoire dans le conflit angolais de 1975 À 2002.....133-148

Kouakou Roméo Yannick DAPA

Cerveau-esprit et réseaux sociaux : Une lecture neuropsychologique des enjeux des nouvelles modifications des algorithmes149-162

Abou DAPPAH

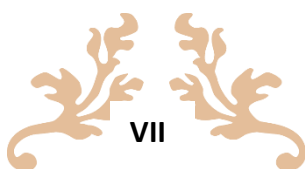
L'intérêt national dans la politique étrangère du Ghana : Un déterminant diversement apprécié sous Nkrumah et Rawlings.....163-178

Dr Hasan Yavuz & Dr DOUMBIA Ali & Dr DIAKITE Brahim

Le Parti de la Justice et du Développement (AKP) : Vecteur du dynamisme de la Turquie et de son influence en Afrique Subsaharienne (1998-2017).....179-196

Arnaud Noel VOULA EMVOUTOU

Les cercles concentriques des turbulences de la géopolitique d'Israël en Afrique : Grammaire d'une théorie de l'incertitude complexe.....197-213



Cyrille Aymard BEKONO

Libre circulation des personnes et intégration sous-régionale en Afrique Centrale : Le cas des universitaires (de l'UDEAC à la CEMAC).....214-228

MOKAM David

Les accords de Londres du 20 Juillet 1922 et le mandat de la Société des Nations (SDN) sur le Cameroun et le Togo sous administration française.....229-241

DIBY Kouadio Jean

La chute du Chancelier Otto Von Bismarck et l'exacerbation des rivalités politiques en Europe (1890-1914).....242-254

Donatien SOKOU

Recrudescence des accidents de circulation au Bénin : Eléments d'analyse pour une sociologie des déviances.....255-268

Guy Christophe ELOUNDOU ONGUENE

Injonction paradoxale schizophrénique en santé communautaire dans un territoire subsaharien : Théorie d'une double contrainte dans les pratiques biomédicales.....269-284

Lamine MANSARÉ & Sidiki KOUROUMA

Mares et communauté maninkas de Baro et de Huré -Kaba en Guinée.....285-297

Ilyass SINA DOUNHOUIROU

Le phénomène talibé à Djougou: Une tendance en pleine expansion..298-310

KOFFI N'GBOTTI RICHARD

Le Chemin de Fer dans les mutations socio-économiques du Moronou Ouest (1908-1945).....311-324





TRADITIONAL CLASSES OF SHEEY TITLE HOLDERS IN THE NSO FONDOM AND THEIR IMPACT IN POST-COLONIAL CAMEROONIAN SOCIETY

Aurelia Kihla BAMWAI (PhD)

The University of Yaounde 1, Department of History

Email: akihla@yahoo.com

Abstract

Before the 19th century and the advent of European colonization, Cameroon traditional societies were an epitome of every other African society that upheld traditional titles and used the title bearers in their respective traditional administration. In *Nso*¹, these title holders were very active in the administration of the *fondom*² and the acquisition of such titles thus became a sign of honour and prestige to those on whom they were conferred. These titles ranged from *Kibai*, *Shuufaay*, *Faay*, *Sheey*, *Yaa*, *Mfoome*³ amongst others. *Sheey* was amongst the low ranking titles in the *fondom* but was most sought after and experienced a proliferation during the Post-colonial period. The desire to understand the different categories of *Sheey* title holders and their impact in the Cameroonian society during the post-colonial period prompted this research. Using information from oral and written sources and applying a methodology of interpreting, analyzing and comparing information from both oral and written sources, we came up with the findings that the excitement of title award ran and has continued to run in the blood of many people who not only wanted to be noticed in the society, but equally contributed in running the traditional administration therein. The outcome of this was that title donors disregarded the status quo which required the title to be awarded pursuant to the initial traditional value fervently upheld by the ancestors of the *fondom*.

Keywords: *Sheey* Title, Traditional Clases, *Nso Fondom*, Impact, Post-colonial Period

Résumé

Avant le 19^e siècle et l'avènement de la colonisation européenne, les sociétés traditionnelles camerounaises étaient à l'image de toutes les autres sociétés africaines qui conservaient les titres traditionnels et utilisaient les détenteurs de titres dans leurs administrations traditionnelles respectives. Chez les *Nso*⁴, ces détenteurs de titres étaient très actifs dans l'administration de la chefferie⁵ et l'acquisition de ces titres est devenue un signe d'honneur et de prestige pour ceux à qui ils ont été conférés. Ces titres allaient de « *Kibai*, *Shuufaay*, *Faay*, *Sheey*, *Yaa*, *Mfoome*⁶ » entre autres. Le « *Sheey* » faisait partie des titres de rang inférieur dans la chefferie, mais il était le plus recherché et a connu une prolifération au cours de la période postcoloniale. Le désir de comprendre les différentes catégories de détenteurs de titres *Sheey* et leur impact sur la société camerounaise pendant la période postcoloniale a motivé cette étude. En utilisant des informations provenant de sources orales et écrites et en appliquant une méthodologie d'interprétation, d'analyse et de comparaison des informations provenant de sources orales et écrites, nous sommes parvenus à la conclusion que l'engouement de l'attribution des titres est intrinsèque et continue à couler dans le sang de nombreuses personnes qui non seulement voulaient être remarquées dans la société, mais qui également contribuent à la gestion de l'administration traditionnelle au sein de celle-ci. Il en résulte que les octroyeurs des titres ont ignoré le statu quo qui exigeait que ce titre soit attribué conformément aux normes traditionnelles établies, défendues avec ferveur par les ancêtres de la chefferie.

Mots-clés : Classe traditionnelle, chefferie *Nso*, impact, période postcoloniale, titre *Sheey*

¹ *Nso* is a patrilineal traditional society located in the NW Region of the Republic of Cameroon.

² A *fondom* is a word used to describe a traditional society headed by a *Fon*. The *Nso* society is headed by a *Fon* and therefore called *fondom*.

³ The meaning of these titles will be explained in the body of the work.

⁴ La chefferie *Nso* est une société traditionnelle patrilinéaire située dans la région du Nord-Ouest de la République du Cameroun.

⁵ Chefferie est un terme utilisé pour désigner une société traditionnelle dirigée par un Chef (*Fon*).

⁶ La signification de ces titres sera expliquée au sein de l'étude.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional titles in organised African societies are not a thing of today. During the scramble and colonial annexation of Cameroon, the coastal chiefs were motivated with the award of titles by the British traders and missionaries, since they discovered that Africans loved titles. These titles empowered them to administer the local population on behalf of the colonial masters. This initiative was designed to make administration of the colony easier for the colonial masters in what was known as the British indirect rule. The local chiefs served as a bridge between the colonial masters and the local population, and were responsible for the mobilization of the population to carry out common initiative projects and communal work for the development of the colony. This was a great achievement and a sign of honour to them and consequently made many strive for the titles.

The *Nso fondom* is located in Bui Division in the North West Region of the Republic of Cameroon. It is a patrilineal *fondom* whose foundation dates back to the pre-colonial period and is regarded as the largest and one of the oldest *fondoms* in the Bamenda Grassfields, dating as far back as the 14th century (E. Chilver and P. Kaberry, 1968, p. 97). The award of titles in the *Nso fondom* dates back to the pre-colonial period during which local authorities realized that it was easy to administer the population with designated individuals charged with the duty of bringing together people to carry out development therein.

The acquisition of such titles thus became a sign of honour and prestige to those on whom they were

conferred, even though the titles were only awarded to those who distinguished themselves in society either by their achievements or by belonging to a particular lineage. However, it is obvious that the excitement of title award continue to flow in the blood of many people who see in it an opportunity not only to contribute to the traditional administration of the people and the society as a whole, but also to be noticed.

The administrative machinery of the *Nso fondom* is made up of title holders who are classified according to their importance in the society. The *Fon* represents the highest administrative head. He is assisted by the *Vibai* (great lords or state councilors), selected from a class of *Ashuufaay*, *Ataanto*'' or lineage heads with special palace duties, *Afaay* (lords), or lineage heads with no special palace duties, *Asheey* (lordlings), *Ayaa* made up of *Yefon* (*Fon*'s mother), *Yewong* (queen mother or priestess of the *fondom*), *Yesum* (mother of the farming estate), honorific *Ayaa*, and finally *Amfoome* who were military leaders especially in the days of wars.

The administration is also assisted by traditional societies like *Nwerong* (regulatory society), *Ngiri* (society of princes and male cadet royals) and the *Mfuh* (the highest lodge of military establishment). Within the inner core of *Nwerong* and *Ngiri* traditional societies, are found *Sheey* title holders of different categories, who assisted the traditional authorities in the running of societal issues.

Since 1972, there has been a rampant growth of *Sheey* title holders in the *Nso fondom* especially those of the non-hereditary class. The manner

in which non-hereditary titles were awarded seemed to have been the driving force behind the easy acquisition of the title. This aroused a lot of interest and anxiety in the researcher who sought to understand the different classes of *Sheey* titles and the extent to which these title bearers impacted the society. It is possible to think that the bed rock of the multiplicity of the *Sheey* title holders resulted from the challenge that came from the elite sons of the land who sought to have a greater say in local affairs by challenging the old institution that was built on hereditary titles.

In order to retain power over local affairs, the traditional power brokers created non-hereditary titles based on merit, and which could be used to integrate the elite of the land into local administration. Nevertheless, those who rendered meritorious services and did not have the opportunity to grab the titles spent huge sums of money to gain admission into the inner circles of the *Nwerong* and *Ngiri* traditional societies in order to acquire the status of *Sheey ngang*. This was contrary to the old traditional pattern of title award that was based on criteria like necessity, age, sex, as well as services rendered to the *fondom*. The rampant award therefore made the title that was held in high esteem by the forefathers of the land to look mean in the eyes of the ordinary man. This study however brings to lime light the traditional classes of *Sheey* title holders and their impact in the *Nso fondom* and society at large.

1. CONCEPT AND ORIGIN OF SHEEY IN NSO

Sheey like every other title was an appellation accorded to a person on the basis of some achievements or family connections. The origin of the *Sheey* title is not well known, but oral tradition has it that it was originally that of princes which was created and used for sub lineages (P. Mzeka, aged 74, interviewed by Author on the 10th of August 2008 at Bamenda). Other versions hold that it was introduced by the *Nso fondom* to assist the traditional administration in carrying out its duties within the community, especially due to the increase in the population of the *fondom*, and also as assistance to the *Faay* or *Shuufaay* whose compound or lineage became too large (P. Sevidzem, aged 37, interviewed by Author on the 3rd of August 2008 at Yaounde).

The *Sheey* title consists of hereditary, non-hereditary and honorific classes of title holders with five distinct classes; those of the *Minchan* (sacrificial) class, *Sheey Wan Nto* (Prince heading a large family), *Asheey vee Nto* (Palace Retainers), those of the *Ngang* (members of the *Yenwerong/Yengiri*) class and those of the *Mbumi* (honorific) class (P. Mzeka, 1980, p.71).

The old institutional framework that was built on hereditary titles was considered by many people as not responding to the changes in the society especially power sharing. In that light, the elite sons of the land who wished to have a greater say in local affairs pushed the local authorities to show some flexibility by creating non hereditary titles based on merit. This led to an increase in the number of title

holders in the society especially the honorific class. Those who could not meet up with the qualifications needed to be awarded a *Sheey* title and desired power forced their way into acquiring the title within the *Nwerong* and *Ngiri* class of title holders as *ngang Nwerong* or *ngang Ngiri*, by performing the necessary rights and obligations which required huge sums of money. This accounted for the increased number of *Sheey* Title holders found in the society.

2. TRADITIONAL CLASSES OF SHEEY TITLE HOLDERS

As already seen, the *Sheey* title is divided into five distinct classes. Each class differs from the other according to the nature of the title; whether hereditary, non-hereditary or honorific; the criteria and procedure for the award of that title, the role they play in the administrative set up of the society and the procedure for the burial of *Sheey* title bearers of a particular class upon death. However, the different classes of *Sheey* title holders will be examined from the historical perspective because modernization and the political crises within the region of study have greatly affected the face of the *Sheey* title within the *Nso fondom*.

2:1 Sheey Minchan

A *Sheey Minchan* was a title holder of the sacrificial class. He could be the head of a sub lineage which had been separated from the main lineage or he could be a deputy of the main head in the same lineage (P. Mzeka, aged 74).

A *Sheey* that was head of a sub lineage was a son of the lineage who for one reason or the other left his patrilineal compound and founded a

new home elsewhere. If the home grew large, it came under the dedicated leadership of an elder but still under the control of the main family lineage. If the family grew too large, the *Faay* of the head of the main lineage could advise the *Fon* to confer the title of *Sheey* on the individual or the elder delegated to head the sub lineage. After the installation, the lineage head of the parent line gave him a dry piece of ebony wood as mark of his authority to offer sacrifices for and to administer the lineage (P. Mzeka, 1980, p.74).

This wood piece (*kichi ke minchan*) was used for the *minchan* sacrifice and called in Lamnso as "*kwaa minchan*". At the fourth generation, such a *Sheey* was installed *Faay* who together with his lineage remained a vassal to the parent lineage and called a "*kisher*" of the main lineage (Yaa Nysi Nysi, aged 54, interviewed by Author on the 21st of August 2008 at Kumbo).

On the other hand, a *Sheey Minchan* who was a deputy of the main head in the same lineage was one chosen from within the lineage to assist the *Shuufaay* or *Faay* in carrying out family rituals (*minchan*). He was also a *Faay*'s representative in the compound when the *Faay* was not on seat (*Sheey* B. Nsotahka, aged 50, interviewed by Author on the 7th August, 2008 at Bamenda). He was addressed as *ngaiwir* (bigman) and expected to relieve the *Faay* or *Shuufaay* from the sacrificial, betrothal and judicial matters concerning the lineage, since the *Vibai* were too occupied with state matters (P.Mzeka, 1980, p. 74).

A *Sheey* of this nature could never rise to a full status of *Faay* because everything he did was by delegation (*Sheey* O.Tayun, aged 70, interviewed by Author on the 24th of August 2008 at

Kumbo). At installation, he was given a stick and a knife (*kichi ke minchan*) which he used for the *minchan* rituals. He acted like a healer in situations of illnesses especially in families where superstition was held in high esteem. He would grind *minchan* and rub on the forehead of a child or an elder who fell ill to prove his or her innocence, which if found, the illness would leave (*Sheey* B. Nsotahka, aged 50).

It is worth noting that *Sheey* title holders of the *Minchan* class who were traditionally installed were never called by their names, and never greeted with a handshake. They were called by their title of *Sheey*, followed by the name of the compound or lineage that they administered. For example, “*Sheey Woo’ Kedu*”, meaning *Sheey* of *Kedu* compound, and they were highly respected by their various lineages. Women greeted them by bowing down, while men greeted them with cupped hands. At death of such a *Sheey*, he was buried almost like a *Faay*.

He was stripped of the title and called by name (his personal name), after which a ritual (*ntangri*) was performed with wine on his grave before he was buried. A successor was then appointed, usually a man with good character and leadership qualities to continue from where he stopped (*Sheey* B. Nsotahka, aged 50).

2:2 *Sheey Wanto*

A *Sheey Wanto’* (prince) was an elderly prince heading a large family. Polygamy was an important aspect of the *Nso* traditional society and a prince who could marry as many wives as possible could become head of a large family within a short period of time and by right of birth he became *Sheey* and

head of his lineage.⁷ If such a lineage continued to grow larger and larger, the successor could be raised to a status of *Faay* (B. Chem-Langhëë, 1989, p. 22). This appointment was done by the *Fon* with the blessings of the parent lineage head and the title was now hereditary. The successors of the prince were addressed by the *Fon* and other personalities as “*Menkfen*”, which was not the name of the prince, but that of his father, the *Fon* (P. Mzeka 1980, p.74). For example, in a case where the prince was a son of *Mbinglo*, the successors were addressed as “*Menkfen me Mbinglo*”.

A *Sheey* of this category was responsible for administering his lineage with special guidance of the *Fon* until the lineage grew to the rank of a *Faay*. Since his title was hereditary, at death he was stripped of the title and called by name while some rituals were performed on him like those done to a *Faay* before burial. A successor was then chosen and installed by the *Fon* and other important personalities of the village. Thus this group of title holders could be said to have founded the *Sheey* title because the title of *Sheey* was originally created for princes with sub lineages (P. Mzeka, aged 74).

2:3 *Sheey Woo’ Nto’*

They were retainers or servants of the palace popularly known as “*asheey vee nto*”, that is *asheey* of the palace. They were young boys taken to

⁷ Polygamy was considered a criterion for selection of a *Sheey Wanto* to head the large family because since the period of migration and settlement, the *Nso* people longed for an increase in population which they believed could make them strong enough to be able to withstand pressure from hostile neighbours and polygamous marriages were seen as an easy access to achieving that ambition.

the palace between the ages of nine and eighteen to work as servants and messengers of the *Fon*, guard the palace and to serve as heads of *Nwerong* and *Ngiri* interneers called “*Nshiyselaw*”. These types of retainers were also found in most tribes of the Bamenda Grassfields. For example, they were called “*Nchinda*” in Bafut and “*Chindo*” in Kom (J. Nkwawir, 1990, p.3).

These retainers were boys who had been recruited into the retainers’ school (*Nwerong shiynto*) for a period of nine years (Sheey B. Nsotahka, aged 50). The intake into the school was somehow forceful and the boys recruited possessed leadership qualities, and other virtues such as honesty, smartness and resourcefulness.

The interneers were also said to have been boys of remote royal relations, sons of refugees, boys presented by tributary chiefs, sons of men of retainer status, boys presented to the *Fon* by men of wealth for serious crimes, first male born in marriage between a *Mtaar* (commoner) and daughter of retainer (E. Ngoran, 1986, p. 36). These interneers were heady boys who needed to be moulded up.

They were subjected to severe discipline during the period of confinement and appeared in public always masked (see plate I), escorted by palace page boys (*Nshiyselaw*), who were subjected to strict obedience, enforced by beating, sparse feeding, hard bed, and fearlessness in the discharge of duties. They were also taught tricks, proverbs, riddles and forms of carrying out instructions and messages (E. Ngoran, 1986, p. 36).

During their period of internment, they learnt techniques of knitting the *Nwerong* caps, decorating traditional dresses and also to weave and decorate *Nwerong* bags (B. Dudzenyuy, 2008, p.18). They alone had the right in the kingdom to do these things and it served like their means of livelihood after graduation (Sheey I. Lukong, aged 83, interviewed by Author, on the 24th of August 2008 at Kumbo).

The interneers were often recruited into the *Ngiri* and *Nwerong* society houses. In the *Ngiri* house, they were usually two. The superior one called “*Sheey nto*” (*Sheey* of the palace) and the other one called “*Taafu*”. *Sheey nto*’ was recruited from the royal family. He could be the *Fon*’s son or grandson, or the son of the lineage up to the fourth generation, while *Taafu* was recruited from any noble family, may be the son of a *Shuufaay*. While *Sheey Ntoh* appeared in public with a masked head, *Taafu* had no mask. They both served the palace for nine years and were liberated officially when they attained marriage age. *Taafu* was replaced only at death while a new *Sheey Nto*’ was recruited and handed over to the first to train (J. Nkwawir, 1990, p. 3).

Plate I: *Sheey Woo Nto*’ (wearing the mask)



Source : P.N Mzeka, *Core Culture*, P. 73

A Sheey wo nto (palace retainer) on a traditional official assignment out of the palace. During such assignments, the retainers dress in traditional robe and wear a mask as seen on the picture.

This group of title holders wore masks (*kiseer*), dyed with camwood and marked with cowries. On their heads, they wore carved wooden marks (see plate 1). These masks were meant to preserve their virginity by preventing them from talking to women, since they were not allowed to mingle with them. They were not also allowed to interact with the society. In situations where they happened to go out of the palace, either on private or official visit, they were escorted by newly recruited *Nshiyselavsi*, who attended to them (J. Nkwawir, 1990, p. 5).

Two years prior to graduation, the internees were given a bamboo by *Faay Maamo*, indicating that they would soon be graduating, and the *Nwerong* society started building a house for the retainer which was usually completed at the end of the nine years course (B. Dudzenyuy, 2008, p. 19). At graduation, the internees were installed by *Ataanto'* and later taken to greet the *Fon*, after which they were presented to the public and escorted to their new homes with shouts of joy.

During installation, they were rubbed with camwood and given a cloth, supplied by the *Fon*. In acknowledgement of the services rendered to the state, the *Fon* awarded them the title name of the compound by which they were to be called, alongside a wife and a gun (P. Mzeka 1980, p. 72).

2:4 Sheey Ngang Ngiri/Nwerong

The *Sheey* title holders of this class were those admitted in the highest lodge of the inner circles of *Ngiri* and *Nwerong* and were known as *Ngangse Ngiri/Nwerong*, except ex-officio members of the *Nwerong* traditional society like the *Fon*, *Shuufaay Ndzeendzev* and *Shuufaay Tankum*. They were led by *Yengiri* and *Yenwerong* for *Ngiri* and *Nwerong* societies respectively.

This class of title holders was non hereditary and the award of the title was contingent on the performance of traditional initiation ceremonies made up of different stages. Statistics showed that they were the most dignified, admired and cherished by the *Nso* youths who very much desired to be part of it.

The acquisition of either a *Sheey Ngang Nwerong* or *Sheey Ngang Ngiri* title depended on well defined criteria. A person must belong to a lineage in order to become a member of this class because the criteria for selection therein depended on this fact. Prospective bearers were required to belong to the *Duiy* lineage. On the other hand, someone must be from the *Mtaar* lineage or the *Nshiylav* lineage to be qualified.

Another aspect was that of age which demanded that the bearer must have attained twenty years. Lastly, one was supposed to be of good behaviour, honest character and a role model in the traditional society. This is because it was feared that people of doubtful character and poor behaviour could help to ruin the society by exposing traditional secrets (*Sheey* P. Lukong Pius aged 42, interviewed by Author on the 21st of August 2008 at Kumbo).

Women were not admitted into the inner circles of the *Nwerong* or *Ngiri*, but could be awarded a *Sheey* title on the basis of honour from these societies known as “*Mbumi*”.

The procedure for securing this title entailed an initiation ceremony during which some traditional rites were performed. They were money demanding and time consuming. The rites were made up of two and four stages for the *Nwerong* and *Ngiri* traditional societies respectively, and individuals co-opted for full-fledged *Sheey* titles in both societies had to perform traditional rites at the two and four stages of the initiation ceremony.

With regard to the initiation ceremony of a *Sheey Ngang Ngiri*, the first stage was that of recognition, acknowledgement and acceptance. During this stage, the new member was ornamented with a vine (*konte*), to acknowledge his membership before he entered the *Ngiri* house. From that moment, he became *Sheey* with no insignia to identify him because he had not yet performed any traditional rite.

The only requirement from him at this stage was money for the construction of the palace (*mbam se kibar*), to the tune of 20,000 francs. The individual at this time remained a floor member, and participated in *Ngiri* activities with some limitation so as to gain reasonable experience that would enable him to forge ahead and at the same time prepare for the *shishur* (pepper) ceremony which was at the second stage (*Sheey* P. Lukong aged 40)..

The initiation ceremony proper was carried out during the second stage. The initiation sacrifice known as the *shishur* ceremony was performed at this stage, and this required a lot of

expenditure and preparation. The initiated *Sheey* was required to provide 100,000 francs for a special fund known as the *kibam ke Fon* (*Fon's* bag).

The amount of money offered as a token of appreciation of this honorable title depended on an individual's ability and financial standing. At this stage, the individual again contributed 100,000 francs to the building fund (*mbam se kibar*), 50,000 francs to the custodians of *Ngiri* (*kibam ke antaanto*), 50,000 francs to *Yengiri* (*kibam ke atav-Ngiri*), 12 fowls, 12 goats, 12 jugs of wine, four or more crates of beer and baskets of corn fufu (*Sheey* P. Lukong aged 40).

Other informants pointed out that the ceremony consisted of 20,000 francs for the *Fon's* bag, 50,000 francs for the building fund, 12-15 goats, 15 fowls, 50 or more jugs of palm wine, 3 obligatory crates of beer, 50 baskets of corn fufu each containing three loaves. The initiated member retained 2 fowls and a goat which were provided to the *Ngiri* society by the family members when the member died. However, the provision of these articles for the performance of the initiation ceremony depended on the financial standing and generosity of the individual concerned (*Sheey* E. Jaff, aged 41, interviewed by Author on the 21st August, 2008 at Kumbo). At the end of this ceremony, the individual became a full member of the *Ngiri* and started preparing for the third stage.

The third stage was known as the “*Mbun Ngiri*” stage. The recipient was expected again to pay 20,000 francs to the *Fon's* bag, 4-6 goats, 7-8 fowls, 2-3 crates of beer, and plenty of palm wine and corn fufu. The fufu and fowl were like communion, a symbol

that one was communing with the people (P. Mzeka, 1980, p. 72).

This is because the fowl was prepared and shared to all the members who together sat and ate with the corn fufu while the goat was slaughtered and a piece each shared to all to be taken back home. At this stage the initiated member was shown the mami *Ngiri* (*ma Ngiri*), which was mobile only at night. The new member was also given a red feather (*fev ye barr re*), and a vine tied round his arm (*Sheey* E. Jaff, aged 41). (See plates II).

Plate II: *Sheey Ngiri* title holders in traditional regalia



Source: Author's collection from *Sheey* Jaff Edwin's album

Asheey of the *Ngiri* Society dressed in traditional regalia during the Nso cultural week celebration.

Henceforth, the member prepared himself to face the final stage, or stage four which was called the "*Kitav*" stage. The requirements for this stage included 6 goats, 7 fowls, 3 crates of beer and a provision of 20,000 francs for the *Fon's* bag. There was no special decoration at this stage, and the bearer became a member of the inner core of *Ngiri* and identified by members of this stage. He then became a full-fledged

Sheey Ngiri and rose to the rank of general (*Sheey* P. Lukong, aged 42).

Membership into the *Nwerong* society followed two costly initiation ceremonies - the *shishur* sacrifice and another ritual known as *tang Nwerong* for the *Mtaar* and the non-*nshiyilav* clans. *Ngangse* of the *Nshiyilav* clan performed the ceremony of *ko'kitav* (climb the store of *Nwerong*), to be admitted into the innermost core of *Yenwerong* (mother *Nwerong*).

At the initial stage, one was admitted into the *Nwerong* society on the condition that he qualified. He performed his initial obligations by paying money for construction of the palace, and became a floor member while preparing for the *Shishur* ceremony. During the *Shishur* ceremony, the beneficiary provided money for the *Fon's* bag, paid the construction levy and contributed to the *Yenwerong* fund. Thereafter, the goats, fowls, wine beer and corn fufu for the ceremony were presented for inspection, first in the beneficiary's house before being taken to the palace. This was to ensure compliance with the required quantity. On the day of the *Shishur* ceremony, the *Fon's* bag was accompanied by a very healthy goat (*Sheey* E. Fondufe, aged 77, Interviewed by Author on the 2nd October, 2008 at Bamenda) and the amount was not fixed as it depended on the beneficiary's ability to provide.

He was then decorated with *Nwerong* bag, cup, cap and cloth. When the *shishur* ceremony was over, the beneficiary was then escorted to his house by the *Ngangse Nwerong*. At the entrance to his house, a bag was put for everybody entering therein to drop some money which was later shared by *Ngangse Nwerong*.

Their leader addressed the family and declared that the beneficiary was now a *Ngang Nwerong* and a peace maker who could not lay his hands on someone again (Sheey E. Fondufe, aged 77). The beneficiary then became a *Sheey Nwerong*, while preparing for the second stage.

At the second stage, known as the *Tang Nwerong*, the demands were a little bit absurd and the intention was to discourage royals and *Mtaar* members of the *Nwerong* from seeking admission into what the institution regarded as its mystical core. Initiation into this stage was based on the consideration that the beneficiary must have completed the *Shishur* ceremony and ascertained to be of good character by members of the *Yenwerong* cult (P. Mzeka 1980, p. 91).

During the initiation ceremony, the candidate again provided for the *Fon's* bag and two persons – a lady as the *Fon's* wife and a boy to serve as his attendant; a tradition which is fast dying out. The candidate again supplied drinks, fowls, goats and food, which was done in installments, and usually on three successive *Viloovey* (*Nso* week day).

When the initiation ceremony was over, the beneficiary was conferred the right of personally using the authority of *Nwerong* which consists of a staff, (a bamboo pole whose upper half has been marked with the alternating rings of black and white), and also with an emollient leaf (*mbor*) on his head (see plate III). This *mbor* was very symbolic whenever there was a state burial, either that of the *Fon* or *Yefon*. All the *Sheey* title holders of the *Nwerong* society who had attained this level were obliged to put on the *mbor* before entering *Nso* land (Sheey E.

Fondufe, aged 77). The candidate was finally initiated into the innermost core of *Yenwerong* where he was introduced to the *Nwerong vitse'* (night *Nwerong*) (P. Mzeka 1980, p. 91).

Plate III: *Sheey Nwerong* title holder in traditional regalia and decorated with *Mbor* (emollient leaf)



Source: Author's Collection from Sheey Fondufe's album.

A *Sheey* of the innermost core of the *Nwerong* traditional society, in a traditional outing dressed in traditional attires; *ndzey njav*(cloth), *kibam*(bag), *mbang*(staff), *tan*(cap), *kiburu* (scabalt) and *mbor* (emollient leaf) on the head.

Generally, the *Sheey* title holders of the *Ngiri* or *Nwerong* class possessed titles that were non hereditary. They could be greeted with a handshake, and called by their name with the title of *Sheey* attached to it as a prefix, for example *Sheey Pius*.

They were development pillars and acted as intermediaries between the *Fon* and the people. The *Nso* community honoured them wherever they went with special seats and preferential treatment. (*Sheey* I. Lukong, aged 83).

Whenever a *Sheey* title holder died, especially one who had performed the *Shishur* ceremony, he was buried by *Nwerong* or *Ngiri* depending on which society he belonged. The corpse of the deceased member was not seen by ordinary people. The burial ceremony was carried out in two phases. The first phase of the ceremony was started by family members and sympathizers, and the second phase by *Yenwerong* or *Yengiri* who performed certain rituals before completing the burial ceremony (*Sheey* B. Nsotahka, aged 50)

2:5 *Sheey Mbumi*

These were *Sheey* title holders of the honorific class, and their titles were non hereditary. The *mbumi* (honour) title was awarded by the *Fon* on the basis of personal or outstanding achievements which could be political, professional, social or economic. The acquisition of this type of title was not only based on achievements within the framework of palace activities and the *Nso fondom*, but could also be extended to folks who made substantial contributions towards the development of the village from outside.

It was also an encouragement to individuals to carry out activities that could impact the lives of others in the society and to achieve substantive leadership ability that could help in developmental activities.

This category of titles was different from the other classes of *Sheey* titles because it could be awarded to both men and women. Mzeka described them as "... the least of the least title holders in *Nso*" (P. Mzeka 1980, p. 71), because their title was limited to the person to whom it was conferred, and could not be passed to a successor. The title holder had no significant role to play in the society and no lineage to take care of.

The award was merely a sign of recognition by the *Fon* for one's achievements to the society and served as an encouragement to do more. The award could be in the form of traditional regalia from *Nwerong* or *Ngiri* society like a cup, cap, bag, cloth, staff, scabbard (*kiburu*), etc., to signify the status of the title holder. The *Fon* of *Nso*; *Sehm Mbinglo* (1947-1972), being a nation builder awarded a good number of these titles to his people especially those who massively supported him in his development projects. His successors, especially *Ngah Binfon* III (1983-1993), decorated many people with this title, notably those who supported him materially and financially towards the construction of the palace (C. Wirba, 1999, p. 10).

The honorific (*mbumi*) title award was followed by a procedure which required lots of money. Immediately after the award of this title, the beneficiary arranged for a day to present the *mbumi* (award) to the palace. He/she had to contribute to the *Fon's* special Fund known as "*kibam ke Fon or kibam kee nto*".

No limitation was placed on the amount to be donated to this fund. Another important contribution was to a fund destined for the women's corner

(*nsan vikiy nto*), which did not equally have any fix amount. The individual then proceeded to provide food and drinks for entertainment on that day. He/she then paid some money in return for the traditional regalia. In case the regalia was a special cloth known as the “*ndzei njav*”, a small piece was given to the individual who then used it as a sample to enable him or her purchase the cloth (*Sheey* P. Sevidzem, aged 37). After the presentation, the recipient then proceeded to present the award to the lineage head of his or her lineage for blessings.

The *Sheey* title holders of this class differed from every other member of the society in that they possessed traditional regalia which identified them as title holders and that they were called by their names with the prefix *Sheey* attached to it, for example, *Sheey* Sevidzem. Apart from that, they could be greeted with a handshake and when they died, they were buried like any other ordinary person. However, they were stripped of their title before burial. Society held them in high esteem as they were highly respected and offered preferential treatment especially during organized ceremonies.

3.IMPACT OF THE SHEEY TITLE IN NSO

The *Sheey* title holders were not only an asset in the traditional society but also indispensable components in the development process of the *fondom*. Majority of them were role models and their contributions to the welfare of the society left footprints on the bearers themselves, the society and the traditional value of the title.

3:1 Impact on Individual Title Holders

The acquisition of the *Sheey* title affected the bearers in different ways. They commanded a lot of respect and honour in society because of the high moral standards they attained as a result of the acquisition. These high moral standards stemmed from certain core values that *Sheey* title holders were required to adhere to, such as the respect of personal integrity and that of other people in the society (*Sheey* E. Jaff, aged 41).

Upon admission, each member pledged to respect these core values and to lead by example in society. Sanctions were meted on detractors from these norms as they were either stripped of their title for serious misconduct or slammed a fine for light offences. In case of adultery with a co-member’s wife, the perpetrator was seriously punished by the disciplinary authority of the traditional institution and was likely to incur the wrath of the gods if he committed the offence with full knowledge of the facts, and in order to humiliate the co-member.

In certain circumstances the punishment for such objectionable behaviour was death inflicted on the individual by the gods of the land (E. Kisi, aged 42, interviewed by Author on the 19th August 2008). The respect of these core values was a virtue and this made *Sheey* title holders men of integrity in the society because their achievements created a great impact on the lives of many people and at the same time that they were regarded as role models, thereby motivating people to emulate their example.

From another standpoint, the *Sheey* title brought about an imbalance in the financial standing of many of its

members. Money that was supposed to be used in improving the lives of the beneficiaries as well as those of their family members was squandered in *Sheey* title adventure, especially those families that lived from hand to mouth.

As a consequence of the burning desire to acquire the title and fulfill the obligations arising from it, some people indebted themselves, and spent time and energy looking for the means to repay their loans. Because financial commitments were too many and very frequent, most of the title holders were constantly at loggerhead with their wives because of insufficient financial assistance to them and their children, and this often had the effect of jeopardizing the education of their children as many prioritized meeting up with the financial demands of acquiring the *Sheey* title as against their family responsibilities (*Sheey* P. Sevidzem, aged 37).

The consequences were sometimes far-reaching and could lead to a disruption in the balance of certain families and in some cases brought about breakdown of marriages and family disintegration (*Sheey* A. Lukong, aged 25, interviewed by Author on the 8th August 2008 at Bamenda).

3:2 Impact on the society

The society did not remain indifferent in the acquisition of these titles. The contributions made by the *Sheey* title holders facilitated the execution of community and palace projects. Their mobilization and coordinating role kept them abreast of the realities of the society and in constant touch with the general public thereby enabling them to update the society on new developments in the

socio-economic and traditional life of the *fondom*.

The increase in the number of *Sheey* title holders therein boasted the *Nso* culture both in and out of *Nso*. This contributed to the popularity of the *Sheey* title holders as they often distinguished themselves during manifestations and public outings by putting on the traditional regalia and carrying other insignias with them. This distinctive way of dressing drew not only attention and admiration from the general public but also a lot of curiosity from foreigners who developed the desire and interest to know more about *Nso* and its people. This attracted so many visitors and tourists from far and near to the *fondom*, with a lot of benefits (*Sheey* P. Lukong aged 42).

On the other hand, the *Sheey* title promoted inequality in the society. This inequality was inherent in the hierarchical structure of the *Sheey* title holders. It sowed the seed of competition and superiority complex, bred hatred and envy among the members to the extent that disputes were very frequent and could sometimes lead to the elimination of lives due to jealousy (F. Fai, aged 40, interviewed by Author on the 8th August 2008 at Bamenda). It created disparity in the society because of the distinction that existed between title holders and non-title holders in public places and the manner in which title holders were treated.

The massive acquisition of the *Sheey* title attracted a lot of criticism from the church, because many Christians who were awarded the title ceased to pay attention its doctrine and activities. The church criticized traditional institutions because their members worshipped their own gods,

carried out sacrifices and performed rituals that Christianity forbade thereby encouraging them not to submit fully to the teachings of the church (Z. Kenji, aged 52, Reverend Pastor, interviewed by Author on the 15th August 2008 at Bamenda).

Some church leaders were awarded the *Sheey* title, and a good example was Father Aloysius Wankui who was awarded the honorific *Sheey* title and he stood as an example which many Christians emulated (*Sheey* E. Fondufe, aged 77). If these Christians adhered totally to the prescriptions of the *Sheey* title, what explanations would they give to God about their ancestral rituals and sacrifices? The outcome was that society harboured *Sheey* title holders who were neither culturally enrooted nor religiously transformed. While Christians embraced the issue of titles, the Muslims regarded it as unorthodox and satanic (C. Wirba, 1999, p.10). Therefore titles became a thing for Christians and pagans, leaving out Muslims who never wanted to associate themselves with them.

The massive acquisition of the *Sheey* title especially by the youths affected their relationship with the elders who were either *Sheey* title holders like them or ordinary people. The ease with which some of the youths used their wealth to influence the *Fon* and his entourage to get the title and gain promotion was so alarming, as most of them became stuck-up, conceited and arrogant after acquisition to the extent that they forgot certain societal norms and virtues such as the respect for oneself and that of the elders (J. Njodzeven Julius, aged 26, interviewed by Author on the 8th August 2008 at Bamenda).

This was a serious moral problem in society even though the regulatory authority which ensured the proper functioning and discipline of the title holders intervened from time to time to straighten up individual title holders who were victims of this kind of behaviour.

3:3 Impact on the Traditional Value of the Title

The *Sheey* title was conceived in the early days with the intention that potential title holders were to assist lineage heads in running the affairs of their various lineages especially as the population of the *Nso fondom* was on the increase. In those days, there were very few *Sheey* title holders and the traditional value attached to it was high. As time went on, there was a change in the criteria of award of the title partly because of the need to meet the exigencies of the people, and partly due to the imperious necessity to ease the work of the *Fon* both in and out of the *fondom*. It therefore entailed a structural change in the traditional administration of the *fondom* as well as the mode of adhesion and acquisition which affected the traditional value of the title.

Formerly the award of the *Sheey* title was based on merit and achievement. As time went on there was a change in the criteria of award, as any person who had a good financial standing could be honored. This was because the title donors were in dire need of money to carry out projects in the *fondom* such as the construction of the palace and community projects like road construction, which were very demanding at the time.

The desire to manage the affairs of the royal family properly and to live up to the challenges of modernism and globalization were some of the reasons that made the donors of the *Sheey* title to modify the old tradition of the award of the titles.

The extension of the award of the *Sheey* title to women and unmarried men as well as to foreigners was also another avenue of change in the criteria of award. The extension was done purely on materialistic grounds because of the desire of the donors to obtain revenue for palace needs as well as those of the royal family. The old tradition recognized the award of the *Sheey* title to married and responsible men who had fulfilled the pre-requisites for the acquisition of such titles.

Similarly, a boy could not be made a *Sheey* while his father was still alive, in the same way as he could not be awarded the title if the father was a title holder himself. This old order gave way to the new one, as the child of a title holder as well as that of a live father could obtain the title only if they satisfied the new criteria that were set by the donors (P. Mzeka, aged 74).

The initiation ceremony (*shishur* sacrifice) also witnessed certain changes that created an impact on the traditional value. Initially, the ceremony was called the garden egg sacrifice (*shinyah* sacrifice) by the *Ngiri* traditional institution, while the *shishur* sacrifice was only reserved for the *Nwerong* traditional institution. The *Ngiri* society gradually changed the appellation of the *shinyah* sacrifice into *shishur* sacrifice thereby causing confusion and provoking conflict with the *Nwerong* society (*Sheey* E. Fondufe, aged 77).

In addition, the *Fon* used to be presented two women during each initiation ceremony, and there was a strict adherence to the rules and procedures of the ceremonies. Fees and other dues that were levied on the recipients of the title during these ceremonies were respected to the letter as confirmed by Chilver and Kaberry when they say: "Formerly these fees involved the presentation of two women to the *Fon*; and on three occasions, 40 calabashes of wine, 40 fowls, 40 goats and 40 baskets of food. Payments for *Yenwerong* and other societies were recorded on tally sticks", (E. Chilver and P. Kaberry, 1968, p. 102).

With the passage of time, the procedure for these ceremonies witnessed some changes. The quantity of the items to be presented increased and the beneficiaries of the *Sheey ngang* title, either in the *Ngiri* or *Nwerong* traditional societies could provide for the items as much as their financial capability enabled them to do. In addition, a cash levy was included in the list of items as a source of income to the palace. This enabled the *Fon* to run the affairs of the palace and the royal family smoothly.

The issue of presenting two women to the *Fon* disappeared thus facilitating the acquisition of titles. The whole ceremonial procedure therefore witnessed a transformation thereby altering the original criteria of award and creating an impact on the traditional value of the *Sheey ngang* title as was conceived by the ancestors of the *Nso fondom*.

CONCLUSION

This paper entitled “Traditional Classes of *Sheey* Title Holders in the *Nso fondom* of Cameroon and their Impact in the Post-Colonial Cameroon Society”, is an attempt to examine the different classes of this most sought after title by the *Nso* indigenes and the impact during the post-colonial era. This study enables us to understand that since conception, the award and acquisition of the *Sheey* title has remained a major issue in the *Nso fondom*. In order to have profound knowledge of the title, the different classes of *Sheey* title holders have been discussed and this ranged from the hereditary to the non-hereditary and honorific classes.

The different classes are an asset to the development process in the *fondom* and contribute in the enhancement of the various institutions that carry out meaningful development in society. During the study period, each class of *Sheey* title holders contributed in its own way and within the ambit of authority conferred on it by the title donors. This however formed a chain which ensured the smooth functioning of the institutions of the *Nso fondom* and the welfare of individual title bearers and the society as a whole.

This paper however stretched fought to examine the impact that the award of the *Sheey* title left on the title holders and the society at large, not leaving out the traditional value that was attached to it at conception before the advent of the new social order that imposed a new criteria for the award of the title, based on wealth, personal charisma and close ties with the title donors.

The study found out that the multiplicity of *Sheey* title holders in the

society somehow reduced the traditional value that was attached to it at conception by the fore fathers of the land thereby making many to describe these bearers as “ministers without portfolio” because the multiplicity of title holders failed to create the desired impact on the society. Thus the question that came to our mind was whether the massive award of the title by the donors was not a sign of greed and materialism which has helped to change the traditional value of the title that was held in high esteem by the ancestors of the *fondom*. In an attempt to provide answers to the baffling questions and maintain the traditional value of the title, this paper suggest amongst other things that.

The old order of not giving titles to sons of title holders still alive should be respected. Secondly, the old tradition of maturity and integrity in the award of the title should be revisited while the age of the recipient considered. He or she should be reasonable, married and ready to assume responsibility for their actions in society. Thirdly, he or she aspiring for the title should also be a man or woman of good character and capable of positively impacting the lives of other people in the society as well as setting examples for others to emulate.

With respect to the above criteria for award of titles by title donors, the original traditional value of the title may be held intact. Even though there is a strong influence of modernisation on the society of today, it will be for the interest of posterity, and especially those that would like to carry out research work in this area to get a firsthand knowledge of the originality of the *Sheey* title and the initial traditional value that was attached to it by the founders of the *Nso fondom*.

Sources Consulted

Published Sources

a) Books

- Chem-Langhëë Bongfen, 1989, *The Shuufaayship of Professor Bernard Nsokika Fonlon*, Yaounde, Ceper.
- Chilver Elisabeth and Kaberry Phyllis, 1968, *Traditional Bamenda: The Pre-colonial History and Ethnography of the Bamenda Grassfields*, vol.1. Buea Government Printers, 1968.
- Mzeka Paul, 1980, *The Core Culture of Nso*, USA, Jerome Radin Co., Agawam, Ma.

b) Articles

- Banadzem Joseph, 2002, "600 Years of History: History Landmarks of the *Nso Fondom*", in *The Nso went to Mvem: 16-18 December 1994*, Kumbo.
- Chem-Langhëë Bongfen et al., 1985, "Nto Nso and its Occupants", in *Paideuma 31*.
- Kaberry Phyllis, 1959 "Traditional Politics in Nsaw", in *Africa, Vol. 29(4)*, PP 366-383, Oxford University Press.
- Ngum Josephine and Lantum Noni Daniel, 2002, "600 Years of History: Leadership Role of Women in Nso Polity", in *The Nso went to Mvem*, Kumbo, Nso History Society Publication.

Unpublished Sources (Dissertations)

- Dudzenyuy Barah, 2008, "The *Nwerong Shiynto* (Retainer) School in the Nso Community of Cameroon", DIPES I Dissertation in History, ENSAB.

- Nkwawir Joseph, 1999, "Recruitment and Training of Asheey Vee Nto in Nso Traditional Society", Bachelor's Dissertation in Philosophy, STAMS, Bambui.
- Ngoran Emmanuel, 1987, "The Growth of Social Classes in Nso", DIPES I Dissertation in History, ENSAB.
- Wirba Charles Ngah, 1999, "Death, Burial and Succession of Title Holders in Nso in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries" DIPES II Dissertation in History, ENS Yaounde.

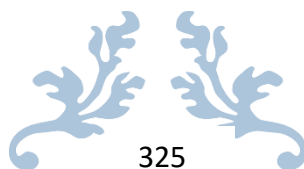
Oral Sources (Interviews)

Name	Age	Profession	Date of Interview	Place of Interview
Fai Frederick Kfebani	40	Byke Rider	08-08-2008	Bamenda
Kenji Zephaniah	52	Reverend Pastor	15-08-2008	Bamenda
Kisi Evelyn Bobongha	42	Trader	19-08-2008	Kumbo
Mzeka, Paul	74	Retired Civil Servant	10-08-2008	Bamenda
Njodzeven Julius	26	Driver	08-08-2008	Bamenda
Sheey Elias Banka Fondufe	77	Retired Civil Servant	02-10-2008	Bamenda
Sheey Jaff Edwin	41	Council Administrator	21-08-2008	Kumbo
Sheey Lukong Augustine L.	25	Mason	08-08-2008	Bamenda
Sheey Lukong Isaac	83	Contractor	24-08-2008	Kumbo
Sheey Nsotahka Bernard	50	Electrician	07-08-2008	Bamenda
Sheey Tayun Oliver	70	Farmer	24-08-2008	Kumbo
Shey Lukong Pius Banye	42	Teacher	21-08-2008	Kumbo
Shey Sevidzem Patricia	37	Teacher	03-08-2008	Yaounde
Yaa Nysi-Nysi	54	Housewife	21-08-2008	Kumbo

Numéro 016 Mars 2025
Histoire et Analyses des Relations Internationales
et Stratégiques (HARIS)

Revue de l'Association des Spécialistes des Relations
Internationales et des Études Stratégiques Africaines (ASRIESA)

ISSN: 2709-5053





HARIS N°16 Mars 2025