

Ranèse TCHAMBA NGOTOM, "A postal history of Cameroon from 1945 to the late 1970s. Political support, communication networks and social practices", Ph. D. Thesis directed by d'Odile Goerg and Arnaud Passalacqua, University Paris Diderot Paris 7 - Sorbonne Paris Cité, 2019, 687 p.

This research which focuses on the in-depth study of a public service, the Post, presents the history of a political support, communication networks and social practices in the Cameroonian context. By the end of the second world war until the end of 1970s, the postal network established since the end of 19th century spread itself as a linear low-meshed grid from south to north of the territory. This network contributes to the appropriation by the State of the entire national territory and opening a post office appeared as important as opening a police office. By opening the post office in the regional capitals, then in the administrative subdivisions and finally in the country-side, the State pursues a logic that meets all its needs. After works carried in the 1950s in order to improve postal network's infrastructure and quality, the independent State initiates the quinquennial plans as early as 1960. These allow the postal network's reconfiguration and mitigate strong regional disparities as observed in the northern and ex-British parts of Cameroon since the end of colonisation. However, the postal remoteness issue remains unsolved.

Primarily established to meet the State's need, this communication's tool will gradually reach out to a broader audience which diversifies itself over the years. Until the end 1970s, this communication network contributes to an effective control and management of the territory without limiting itself to only administrative use. The usage and practices increase, and one can identify different social groups that take over these new modernity tools acquired since colonisation. As a political action support, this service also plays an ambivalent role in the emancipation's movements and the pre/post-independence conflict. From the 1950s until the second decade after the independence, the postal network is an efficient tool for the State that uses it to control information and to oppose some political opponent leaders' clandestinity. This network also serves as a structuring place for syndicalism and militant action, enabling postal workers to organize themselves in a trade union where their voice is heard, and they could defend their rights. This also serves as platform to some of them to stand out and impose themselves as political leaders.

In direct daily contact with the population, the postal service becomes a social relations observer during both colonial and post-independence period. The Cameroonian PTT administration is a big house composed of diversified workers coming from different sociological background. There is a contrast between those who ensure an active service on field, and those who work on site in the post office. The women's absence among the staff during the colonial period is noticeable, and one must wait till early 1960s after the independence, to see women integrating this specific service. The low quality of staff's training observed until the end of the Second World War greatly improves early 1950s after the creation of professional training centres.

The "Camerounisation" of the executive initiated at that time, continues after the independence and remains a major concern for the independent State. The higher national school of posts & telecommunication is then created late 1960s and becomes the new environment for training and qualification of the staff. Over the years, these agents involved themselves in a dynamic working environment where the friendly atmosphere creates a form of interactive social interaction between them and the customers. Nonetheless, many among them (the agents) fail to comply with professional ethics, leading to faults which tarnish this public service reputation. Despite of these difficulties, the Post stills play a pivotal role in the national economy. Considered as a country development's instrument, the

State finds it necessary to restructure it in the framework of new economical reforms which occur during the 1980s.